

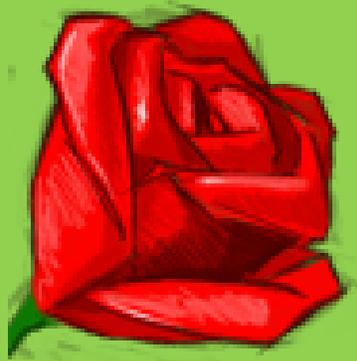


PARLIAMENTARY ACCOUNTABILITY: LIVING UP TO PEOPLE'S EXPECTATIONS
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Speech delivered by

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Speaker of the House of Federation
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Mr./Madam President,

Honorable Members of Parliaments,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Permit me at the outset to congratulate you, Honorable Mr. President, on your election as President of the 124th General Assembly of the Interparliamentary Union. It is also my pleasure to take this opportunity to express my deepest appreciation and sincere thanks to the Government and the people of Panama for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to us since my delegation's arrival in Panama City.

We came together to discuss on parliamentary accountability and how to live up to people's expectations. In a continuously globalizing world facing major political conflicts, economic and environmental crises and social challenges, a major expectation of the people is increased international cooperation, reconciliation and dialogue.

Allow me to share some ideas on the Ethiopian context in order to get a better understanding of the expectations of the Ethiopian people.

Democracy and accountability and even peace are relatively new concepts in Ethiopia. Democracy has been established by this government after overthrowing the previous dictatorship less than twenty years ago. Since then, we went a far way ahead.

With the country literally being in ashes in 1991 and on the crossroads to civil war and disaster, we had to accommodate the diverse interests of a variety of highly armed ethnic groups as well as to set up workable structures for democracy and development to eradicate poverty. A federal form of government with open, transparent and democratic governance ensures the rights of all citizens.

The right to self-determination of our nations and nationalities ensures the identification of the citizens with their state and makes citizens the owners of political and economic processes and progress. The citizens are the main pillar of our development.

Ethiopia has not only increasingly become a stable, peaceful and economically fast developing country, Ethiopia is also among those countries which will achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We even intend to go beyond them.

The expectation of the people in us is to eradicate poverty and to lead the country into faster development. The efforts of government, private sector and the people have resulted in a two digit economic growth during the past years. Our new strategy summarized in the Growth and Transformation Plan is to transform Ethiopia into a middle income country within 10 to 15 years.

Our newly adopted strategy intends to strengthen and increase these efforts by maintaining a yearly economic growth of 11 to 14%. We will intensify the industrialization of the economy, double the productivity of the agricultural sector and further increase access to services. More and better services lead to a better quality of life, especially of women and the youth which meets another expectation of our people.

We will raise the production of electric power by 500% relying on renewable environmentally friendly hydro energy. All current and future hydro-power plants are based on environmental assessments and will not harm anyone. On the contrary, by meeting growing energy demands and leading the continent out of darkness, they will not only benefit the Ethiopian people, but also provide development opportunities for other African countries.

While our integrated policies and approaches achieve fast and sustainable development through democracy and peace, some challenges remain.

Still being an emerging country, we are looking for cooperation partners in order to keep the momentum. We hope to find the necessary technical, financial and economic support in our long-standing partners as well as in new partnerships. In cooperation with our partners we can overcome our capacity deficits both in the private as well as in the public sector. Together

we can ensure that Ethiopia becomes a model for other developing countries.



Mr./Madam President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have established good governance and accountable government because we have learned that there are no alternatives to democracy. Our government is highly responsive to the parliament and the parliament fully accountable to the people. Not only on the national level, but on all levels of government: from the national to the regional, down to the local level of the smallest units where half of the people actively participate in local government through elected councils. By actively participating, people learn democracy much faster than by voting only. The structures we set up ensure democratic ownership of all political processes by the people and of all development processes by the people, the government and the private sector which is the secret of our success.

This democratic ownership ensures accountability. People who identify themselves with the state they belong to, people who regard the state as theirs, have strong interests in holding their governments and parliaments accountable. Parliaments as the representatives of the people are expected to be transparent and accountable, to foster dialogue with the society and to respond to their needs. Parliaments are the link between the people and the government and should therefore ensure that they are provided with necessary information from the executives.



Mr./Madam President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are not only accountable to the people in our national context. In a globalized world full of economic and environmental interdependence we have a joint responsibility for the whole world. We are also accountable to future generations to leave this planet to them. What does this mean for our work in parliaments?

First of all it means that we should restrain from narrow-minded, purely national and short-sighted interests. Second it means that we have to have a broad, international and sustainable vision when taking decisions.

This second point is of elementary importance. People expect from parliaments decisions based on a maximum of valid information. This gives us the responsibility to critically review and evaluate any kind of information we get. Before entering into conclusions and before making decisions we have to verify all information, irrespective where it comes from. In any country and in any context, there are always some individuals or organizations following their own self-interest and seeking their own advantage by disseminating distorted information. If we do not carefully evaluate information we are endangered to get trapped in these self-centered and selfish attempts to spoil peace, democracy, stability and development. Let us ensure that we don't allow anyone to spoil the people's trust in us and let us ensure that the spoilers have no chance to hamper our achievements.



Mr./Madam President,

Honorable Colleagues,

Currently, international terrorism and piracy emanating from failed or failing states, wars, economic crises and environmental disasters are affecting peace and economic stability all over the world. People expect parliaments to clean their own house first. Having done this, we gain a high level of dignity and satisfaction we cannot get in any other way.

When national efforts and institutions fail, parliaments do have a responsibility beyond their borders to intervene and to decide on pertinent strategies helping others.

Ethiopia has proven to be a stable, secure and reliable partner. We are actively supporting peacekeeping and peace building processes through IGAD and the African Union. We also engage in parliamentary cooperation through different organizations.

Being located in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia is surrounded by an unstable environment. In order to maintain our role as stable and secure country, we need partners and strengthened cooperation. We encourage you to enforce the UN resolution on Eritrea in order to stop international terrorism and piracy emanating from there. The policies of the Eritrean government hamper peace, security and stability in the Horn of Africa and beyond. This has to stop. This has to stop now. We expect from our partners to help to protect peace, security, democracy and development in the region by either convincing the Eritrean government to change their attitude and to become a partner or by taking actions in order to prevent this state from failing.

We also expect from parliaments to increase the support for the transitional government in Somalia and to support good governance all over the region to achieve more stability, more peace, more democracy and more accountability.



Mr./Madam President,

Honorable Colleagues,

Expectations in parliaments are to be understood in both, national and international contexts. In the name of democracy and in the interest of peace we have to ensure that we live up to these expectations.

In the national context people expect parliaments to represent their interests, to be transparent and accountable. In the international context, parliaments are expected to work in the same accountable manner towards equitable and just development, democracy, peace and stability across the world. Developing countries and their parliaments need the support of the developed countries to overcome poverty and instability.

International experience exchange, discussion and knowledge sharing help us to meet these expectations. With this perspective I wish us all fruitful deliberations and progressive declarations.

I thank you very much for your attention.



