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ETHIOPIANS MOBILIZING FOR PEACE

The conference on Ethiopia held in Toronto (Canada) from 12 to 15 July 1990 initiated a process of dialogue and willingness to work together by various opposition organizations and other concerned Ethiopians residing abroad. The AD HOC committee established to inform the Ethiopian and international communities of the deliberations and resolutions of the conference was also mandated to convene a follow-up peace conference.

The AD HOC committee, with active support from and in coordination with representatives of the three political organizations most involved in the Toronto process, is now planning to convene the 2nd follow-up peace conference in March after attempts to organize it in January failed because of financial and other material reasons.

Compared to the enthusiasm this initiative has raised and the broad-based support it enjoys among Ethiopians both at home and abroad, the least one can say is that support and encouragement from the international community leaves much to be desired.

To be sure there is no lack of concern about peace in Ethiopia and the Horn. As we pointed out in the last issue of NEW ETHIOPIA, on the contrary an awareness of the problem of peace and democracy is growing constantly. The United States, the Soviet Union and other European governments and non-governmental organizations particularly in Europe have been increasingly involved in mediation efforts specially over the last three years.

Now Ethiopians themselves are deciding to cast away their past differences and to work together to put an end to the sufferings and plight of the Ethiopian people. This initiative by Ethiopians on the one hand and those coming from concerned quarters in the international community on the other hand are not necessarily contradictory. But although the final objectives of peace and democracy are the same, there are some differences in emphasis and orientation which must be taken into account if these efforts are to be complementary and reinforce each other to help the country and the region out of the crippling crisis. Peace efforts initiated by the international commu-

nity are characterized by attempts to mediate between the warring parties and to initiate and encourage dialogue. Our initiative differs from these in that it tries to emphasize the need to mobilize the millions of Ethiopians who are victims of these conflicts and to organize a vast movement in favor of peace and democracy capable of putting pressure on those of the warring parties which refuse democracy and peace.

Initiatives from the international community rarely go beyond calls for negotiations and a just and democratic solution. This in fact is as it should be. It is up to the Ethiopians themselves to mobilize and come together to work out the appropriate concrete solutions to their problems. The resolutions of the Toronto conference contain proposals on how a democratic transition towards a democratic and pluralist Ethiopia should be envisaged. The follow-up conference will try to mobilize and organize Ethiopians on the basis of these objectives while at the same time attempting to persuade all the warring groups to adhere to these proposals and to struggle on the side of democratic forces to achieve a lasting and democratic peace in the country.

The struggle for a democratic transitional government, which is the declared objective of all those who participated in the Toronto conference, is a response to this double challenge of bringing peace and putting our country on the path of democracy. It is hoped that the second follow-up conference which will be attended by substantially more political groups and representatives of Community centers, human rights groups, religious organizations, professional associations and prominent individuals, will elaborate on the proposals and work out a strategy of action.

We believe that all those concerned about peace in our country should consider these efforts by Ethiopians as complementary to the ones they are initiating themselves. One way of giving tremendous momentum to their worthy efforts- which unfortunately have not borne fruit to date - is a resolute support and encouragement of the Toronto process which we hope will live up to the great expectations it has aroused in all sectors of Ethiopian society.

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