

The Toronto Conference on Ethiopia Summary of Deliberations and Resolutions

A conference of various Ethiopian political, community, civic and religious organizations as well as prominent individuals, was held in Toronto, Canada from 12 to 15 July, 1990. The conference was organized by EPRP. Of the major multinational political organizations, EDU, EPDA, EPRP and Meison attended the conference.

While the main topic of the conference was the question of a transitional government, it discussed the subject under eight different headings.

(1) On Human and Democratic Rights

The conference expressed its firm conviction and respect for freedom of thought, religion, speech and the press; the right to form political organizations and labour unions and the right to strike, freedom of movement and due process of law, etc. It demanded the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners. It also called for the repatriation of all refugees and return of exiles without any restrictions.

(2) On the Question of Peace

The conference observed that the wars going on in the country have caused death, destruction and suffering and uprooted the lives of peoples in magnitude unprecedented in the history of the country. It emphasized the urgency of bringing the wars to an end, and especially the need for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Eritrea.

(3) The Question of Nationalities

Recognizing the prevailing unequal treatment of nationalities the conference urged the resolution of the problem peacefully and democratically.

(4) On Transitional Government

The conference recommended the establishment of a transitional government composed of political organizations and prominent individuals from the different sectors of Ethiopian Society. It also suggested that the duration of the transitional government be no more than two years.

(5) Functions of the Transitional Government

The functions of the transitional government outlined by the conference include:

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- seeking ways and means of alleviating the disastrous situation created by war and famine
- enforcing respect for human and democratic rights
- maintaining peace
- undertaking cease-fire arrangements and bringing wars to an end
- bringing all the different armed groups under the command of the transitional government
- rescinding all the anti-people laws initiated by the Dergue
- doing away with bureaucratic bottlenecks which hamper the revitalization of the economy
- ending all forms of administrative malpractice.

(6) Constitutional Convention

After a lengthy discussion on the nature and content as well as the mechanics of drafting a constitution, the conference resolved that :

a) a constitutional convention be convened through democratic election; and that intellectual, religious and cultural institutions as well as minorities participate in the process of drafting the constitution.

b) its functions include preparing a draft constitution, initiating public discussion on the draft and presenting it to the Ethiopian peoples for their decision. Along with the draft constitution, it shall also prepare an electoral law and present it for approval together with the draft constitution.

(7) On the Establishment of a Legislature and a Democratic Government

The main objective of the struggle of the Ethiopian peoples is to establish a pluralistic democratic state. Accordingly,

- a) the ratification of the constitution shall be followed by a general election, the convening of a national parliament and the formation of a new government based on the results of the election
- b) the transitional government shall be dissolved upon the transfer of power to the elected government.

(8) In view of the progress achieved at the conference the participants affirmed their belief in the

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necessity of continuing the process of dialogue initiated at the conference. The conference observed a spirit of cooperation and willingness to work together on the part of the various political organizations which in the past have each conducted their own separate struggles and expressed its hope that this spirit of cooperation will be strengthened and yield positive results in the future. With this in mind, the conference established an ad hoc committee which, on the one hand, while informing the Ethiopian and international communities of the deliberations and resolutions of the conference, is on the other hand, mandated to convene a broad-based conference in which as many political forces as possible can participate.

CALLS AND APPEALS

In accordance with its mandate the ad hoc committee, on behalf of the conference, has issued appeals and calls to the Ethiopian peoples, political groups, the national assembly, the armed forces and the international community.

The Ethiopian Peoples

It called upon all Ethiopians to actively support the spirit and recommendations of the conference and participate in the effort to bring about peace and reconciliation in Ethiopia.

Political Forces

a) It urges the political forces which did not attend the Toronto conference to take positive steps so as to resolve the problems in Ethiopia by peaceful and democratic means.

b) It called upon all political forces to resolve their differences peacefully and politically and to coordinate their struggles so as to form a transitional government through peaceful and political means by jointly negotiating with the government in power, or if a negotiated settlement with the government becomes impossible to wage a coordinated struggle with a view to overthrowing it and establishing a transitional government.

The National Assembly

The conference called upon the national assembly

to recognize the grave danger that the country is in and to join forces in the struggle to bring about a peaceful transition toward a democratic Ethiopia.

The Armed Forces

- considering the untold misery and oppression that the Ethiopian people, including the armed forces, have been subjected to by the present government;

- and considering the actions of the government which have exasperated the situation and gravely endangered the very existence of the country; the conference calls upon the members of the armed forces to join the struggle on the side of the Ethiopian peoples.

The International Community

The conference calls upon the international community to exert its influence for a peaceful resolution of the conflict and to support democratic forces advocating a peaceful transition in Ethiopia.

*Contd. from page 2***Peace Talks in a dead lock**

But in the futile search for "decisive military victory" all the parties to the armed conflicts reject this path to peace as proposed by the country's democratic opposition forces.

The Dergue and TPLF reject the idea of a multi-party democracy. EPLF refuses any participation in a democratic transition arrangement without which the genuine exercise of the right to self-determination can hardly be envisaged.

The call being made for a dialog to continue, be it by Ethiopian religious leaders or the international community, should take into account these obstacles to peace and specially the rejection of multi-partism by the Dergue and the TPLF. This call will be heard only when all those concerned support and encourage the efforts being exerted by the country's opposition forces to offer a credible democratic alternative to the present dead-lock, which if allowed to continue, can result in yet other untold tragedies, not only for the people of Ethiopia, but for the entire region.