



## Press Release:

### The Ethiopian National Dialog Commission Coming to Hoodwink the Diaspora

July 19, 2023

We understand that the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission (ENDC) plans to canvass public opinion in the Diaspora via unstructured zoom meetings by invitation. As a matter of principle, we have no objection to a free exchange of ideas in listening sessions organized by a responsible government. The ENDC process, however, promotes neither dialog nor a genuine engagement with the Ethiopian public at home and abroad.

According to the proclamation passed by the Ethiopian parliament at the end of 2021, the 11 handpicked commissioners of the ENDC have been given a bold-sounding three-year mandate to undertake “a system of deliberations that will improve the relationship among the different segments of the population as well as between the public and the Government so as to enable the creation of new political dispensation that is marked by mutual trust.” We must recall that the ENDC is the latest of several failed commissions and councils, including on identity and boundary, peace, transitional justice, and economic policy by a rogue regime which continues to dismantle checks and balances and all other budding institutions of democratic governance.

The Commission has rhetorically promised to explore homegrown conflict resolution mechanisms in an inclusive, participatory, and transparent manner. It claims to forge a shared national understanding of the roots of political and economic polarization in order to establish lasting peace and social trust, transitional justice, national reconciliation, and even constitutional reform. The first phase of its work, supported by international donors, is to canvass public opinion at the level of local governments and major organizations with the end product being a laundry list of issues to constitute an agenda for national dialogue.

That Ethiopia is suffering deep-seated and multifaceted crises is hardly in doubt. That the country needs a systemic transition process to revamp its failed institutions is also self-evident. What is not clear is whether the ENDC has the power, the mandate, and the right strategy to chart a workable roadmap of institutional transformation. We think the ENDC is a flawed mechanism of make-believe public consultation that is cynically intended to deceive the national and international public.

Here is why:

First, a proper national dialogue should be truly independent, broadly representative, clearly mandated, and empowered to kickstart a post-ethnic transition process. This process must begin with the establishment of a credible council of national elders to oversee a caretaker government, establish commissions such as truth, justice, and reconciliation, and launch a constitutional convention to lay down the legitimate foundations of a democratic order.

Second, a national dialog that can produce “a new political dispensation” cannot possibly be overseen by a deeply corrupt, secessionist, and ethnicist regime that is actively fomenting inter-ethnic conflict (especially on the Amhara) and inter-faith conflict. The establishment of ENDC itself is a clear admission that the regime has failed to carry out its electoral mandate and must unconditionally resign.

Finally, the ENDC has curiously chosen the observer-participant model for canvassing public opinion from open-ended meetings on “any and all things.” This monologue is little more than a polling of public opinion from a population under siege on extremely complicated challenges facing the country. The challenges facing the country are elemental: the absence of accountability to enforce the right to life and property, honor basic liberties enshrined in international conventions, and the de-ethnicize state and economic institutions.

Ethiopians should always be open to meaningful dialog on contentious issues. But they should also reject the democratic pretensions of the unbelievably anti-Ethiopian Oromo and Tigrean secessionist warlords. ENDC, in other words, is nothing more than another thinly veiled attempt to distract attention from the horrifyingly violent project of unmaking Ethiopia.

CECA is currently studying effective ways of extricating the country from the deepening quagmire. We plan to present the proposal to the public soon toward a genuine and informed dialogue at home and in the Diaspora.

Thank you.