

Salient Steps taken by the government to make the upcoming May 2010 National Election more Democratic, Fair, Free and Credible in Ethiopia.

By: Tsehay Debalkew

Washington, Dc.

- 1 The Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in collaboration and with the active participation of the legal opposition parties in parliament re-structured and reorganized anew, the National Electoral Board, by appointing new members of the Board.
- 2 Four major political parties, including the EPRDF, held a marathon negotiation and consultative process that identified common issues with the view to creating an auspicious and conducive atmosphere for the running of the election in a democratic fashion.
- 3 As a result of the participatory consultation and discussion held, an agreement was reached by the four parties resulting in the preparation of an Election Code of Conduct.
- 4 The election code of conduct document which was thoroughly scrutinized and discussed by bringing onboard other 61 political parties from the width and breadth of the country, was bolstered and thereby, an enriched document was prepared by all 65 participating political parties that was produced.

- 5 This common and comprehensive document entitled "Election Code of Conduct" was presented to the parliament and after a considered and critical assessment and further enrichment by the parliament, it was finally ratified and enacted as the nation's election law, governing all participating and none-participating political parties that have vowed to engage in the parliamentary process by contesting in a legal and peaceful manner.
- 6 Based on the ratified bill of the election code of conduct, political parties formed "Consultative Bodies" from the federal down to the district level, to monitor the conduct of the election according to the law in consultation with pertinent electoral board offices across the administrative ladder.
- 7 The National Electoral Board prepared a timetable for the election and officially announced the document for implementation to the public after consulting with political parties. Before the board publicized the timetable it was provided to the more than 65 legally registered political parties, that discussed and contributed their input to the final bill. Accordingly, the time table put in positioned a suitable and sufficient timeframe for registration of voters and candidates and for voting, counting of votes and announcing election results.
- 8 The National electoral board in consultation with the Ethiopian Broadcasting Agency and the active input of all political parties prepared the allocation of air time on national radio and television stations and columns on the national publications in various languages.
- 9 According to the agreed upon media timetable spirited political debates between political parties have continued to be broadcast on air waves and television screens and to be carried by the different publications and media outlets of the country.

- 10 Election finance was channeled and reimbursed on mutually agreed upon budget allocation formula by all participating political parties and handed over to all contesting parties.
- 11 Some opposition party members, whose cases were under review by the courts and who were held in detention were released upon the request by the respective political parties after each case was thoroughly discussed by the consultative political fora formed at various levels of the administrative structure.
- 12 One of the main objectives of the conduct of the upcoming election is to ensure that it is credible in the eyes of both the Ethiopian people and the International community at large. In order to ascertain this objective, the electoral board has issued an election observation code of conduct governing observers both local and foreign to make the election fair, free, democratic and credible.

