

ENCDCs Historical background-

አበጋግሳ ሃገራዊ ባይቶ ንደምክራሲያዊ ለውጢ

ትርጉምን እንታይነቱን

ብፍስሐ ናይር

አብ ዝሓለፈ ሰሙናት እቲ ብ 2011 ብደንበ ተቃዋሚ ሃገራዊ ዓርባ ኤርትራውያን ዝቆመ ጽላል ብሰም ሃገራዊ ባይቶ ንደምክራሲያዊ ለውጢ ዝፍለጥ ካልኣይ ጉባኤኡ ኣብ ሃገረ ስዊድን ኣካዲዲ፤ እዚ ካልኣይ ጉባኤ ድሕሪ ክንደይ ዘተን ልዝብን ኢዩ ክኸውን ክኢሉ። ብዛዕባ ዚ ጉባኤን ሓዳስ ዝተመርጹት መርሒነቱን ከምቲ ኣብ ማዕከናት ዜና ዘንበብናዮን ዝሰማዕናዮን ኣብ ሓቂ ዘይተመርኩሰ ክዝረብን ክጻሓፍን ቀንዩ፤ ብዙሓት እውን ኣበጋግሱን ትርጉምን እንታይነቱን ኣፍልጦ ስለዘይጸንሱም ነዚ ጽላል እዝን መርሒነቱን ጊጉይ ኣገላልጻ ይህብዎን ንኣና ኣይውክለናን ኢዩ ብምባል ኣብ ክንዲ ነቲ ትሕዝታትዚ እዚ ጽላልዚ ዝምርኩሱ ኣብ ሃገራዊ ጉዳያት ክንዲ ዝእምቱ ኣብ ውልቀሰባት ኢዶም ወጥ ዮብሉ፤ ብስምዒት ድማ ጸለመ ኣብ ልዕሊ ሃገርውያን ዮካይዱ ፣ ን ኣብነት፤ እዚ ጽላልዚ ናይ ኢሰላም ኢዩ፤ እናበልካ መርዛምን ፈላላይን ዝንባለታት ኣብ ንሕና ንሳቶም ዝብል ሓደገኛ ዝንባለ ንሕዝብን ሃገርን ኤርትራ ብሰላም ዘናብር ስለዘይኮነ እቶም ብድሕሪ መራኸቢ ብዙሃን ኩንኩም ነዚ መርዚ ትነዝሑ ቅድም ቀዳድም ታሪኻዊ ድሕሪ ባይታ ምቛምዚ ጽላልን ትሕዝቶታቱን እንተ ተንብቡ እሞ ዘሎኩም ሓናዲ ርእይቶ ምስ እተቅርቡ እቲ ተመራጽን ደምክራሲያውን ኢዩ ነፍ እንተኾነ ክሳብ ሕጂ ኣብዚ ዝሓለፈ 27 ዓመታት ናይ ቃልሲ ካብ ምልክነት ናብ ደምክራሲያ ኣይተረጎሙናዮን ዘሎና፤ እቲ ኢሳያስ ኣፈወርቂ ብግስ ክብል ከሎ ብኢስልምና ንሃገራውያን ከጥቅዕ ዝዘርኦ ናይ ጽልኢ ፖሊቲካዊ ሕጂ እውን እዚ ሓዲሽ ወለዶ ወሪስዎ ይቅጽሉ ኣሎ። ኣቦኹምን ጌይታኹምን ኢሳያስ ገዲፉኩም ኣነ ንኤርትራ ኣይኮንኩን ዝተቃለስኩ፤ ድሕሪ ደጊም ሕዝቢ ኤርትራን ኢትዮጵያን በበይኑ ኢዩ ዝብል ሓቂ ዘይፈልጥ ኢዩ፤ ንቀዳማይ ሚኒስተር ኢትዮጵያ፤ ድሕሪ ሕጂ ንስኻ ኢኻ ትመርሓና፤ ክሳብ ዝመውት ንኢትዮጵያ ክሞተላ ኢዩ፤ ምርግጋእ ናይ ኢትዮጵያ ኢዩ ዝገድሰኒ፤ ዶብ ምሕንጻጽ ኣገዳሲ ኣይኮነን፤ ክንዲ ናብዚ ካሓዲ መራሒኹም ኢድ ወጥ ተብሉ ኣበይ ኣለዉ እቶም ነሕምቆም ተርፍ መረፍ ጀብሃ ኢልኩም ዘይተኣደነን ወፈራ ምኽያድኩም ዘሕዝንን ዘሕፍርን ኢዩ፤

ኣብ ናይ ሎሚ ጽሑፊይ ምምስራት ሃገራዊ ባይቶ ንደምክራሲያዊ ለውጢ ኣበጋግስኡን ትርጉምን እንታይነቱን ዕላማታቱን ብናተይ ኣፍልጦ ኣብቲ ግዜቲ ዘቅረብክዎ ኩነታት ኣመጻጽ ኣ ሃገራዊ ባይቶ ንደምክራሲያዊ ለውጢ ከመይ ከምዝቆመን ሰለምንታይ ከምዝቆመን ዝገልጽ ብቋንቋ ኢንግሊዥ ኣንብቡ፤ ሃገራዊ ባይቶ ንደምክራሲያዊ ለውጢ

ናይቶም ካብ ምልክነት ናብ ደሞክራሲያዊ ክቃለሱ ዝጸንሑን ዘለዉን ድኣ እምበር ንሕና ወከልትን ገዛእትን ናይ ጽባሕ ኤርትራ ኢና ኣይበሉን፤

እዚ ኣብ ልዕሊ ኣባላት ዚ ጸላል ዝካየድ ዘሎ ልክ ዕ ኢሳያስ ኣፈወርቂ ኣብ 1967 ቅድሚ ሜዳ ም ውጹ ኡ ዝነዝሖ ዝነበረ ሃይማኖታውን ጐጃጃልን ሎሚ እውን በቶም ሓደስቲ ወለዶ ይቅጽል ኣሎ እቲ ዘሕዝን ድማ በቶም ደለይቲ ለውጢ ዝብሉ ኣብ ማሕበራዊ መረጃ-ራኽቢ ብዙሓን 24 ሰዓት ዓንገርር ክብሉ ዝው ዕሉን ዝሕድሩን ኮይኑ ኣሎ፤ እንድሞ ድሕሪ ወድቀት ምልክነት ከምቲ ናይ ሊብያ ወይ ሶማልያ ከይከውን ዘፍርህ ኢዩ፤ እንታይ ኣነ ብ ኢስላም ኣይግዛእን እናበልካ ምፍካር፣ መጀመራይ እታ ምግዛእ ትብል ቃል ብቋንቋ ትግርኛ ኣብዚ ግዜዚ እንጥቀማ ቃል ኣይኮነትን ኣብዚ ግዜዚ ምሕደራ መዝነት(Leadership & Management & Responsibility) ድኣ ኢዩ ዝበሃል እምበር መግዛእቲ ኣይኮነን ስለዚ ኣጠቓቕማ ቃላትና ኣብ ዘመናውን ልዩብን ክኸውን ኣለዎ፤ ሃገራዊ ባይቶ ንደሞክራሲያዊ ለውጢ ኤርትራውን፣ ብኤርትራውያን ዝቆመ ምእንቲ ኣብ ኤርትራ ፍትሓውን ደሞክራሲያውን ስርዓት ንምትካል ዝቃለስ፣ ሃገራዊ ሓይሊ ኢዩ፣ ንዝያዳ መበርሂ ምስዚ ሓተታ ነዛ ኣብ ታሕቲ ሰፊራ ዘላ ጽሕፍቲ ተመልከቱ፤ እዘ ወረቀትዚ ኣ ብ2009 ዝተዳለወት ኢያ። ኣካደምያዊ ጽሑፍ ዘይኮነስ ተመክሮኣዊ ጽሕፍ ኢዩ፤

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Forward

The Eritrean National Commission for democratic change founded in 2010 after the national conference held in Addis- Ethiopian capital city enjoys the support of all the civil and political organizations and women and youth associations. With a mandate to mobilize public opinion, media campaign, financing and organize a national congress inside one year, the commission promotes and facilitate national and international dialogue to enhance and strengthen the democratic forces in Eritrea. The commission is committed to make contributions to the democratic transition through which inclusivity and participation of all Eritreans is assured, therefore adopted that dialogue is the best mechanism to resolve their internal and external conflicts.

I am convinced that dialogue on democratic development within and among countries is the best method in managing, resolving and preventing conflicts.

Acknowledgements

This document is based on the outcomes of the Eritrean national conference for democratic change which took place in July 31st to August 9th -2010 in Addis Ababa- Ethiopian Capital. The Eritrean Democratic Alliance organized the conference, in collaboration with the Eritrean Civil society organizations with the financial support of the Saana Forum¹.

Mr. Amha Dominico head of the Eritrean national commission for democratic change, Dr. Mohammedkheir Omer från Norway and Mr. Fesseha Nair from Sweden wrote this document on the basis of the inputs and outcomes of the conference.

The drafting of this document benefited greatly from the contributions of the participants and the workshop papers discussed on the core issues of the Eritrean national unity, values and rights of the citizens abused by the dictatorship in Eritrea.

The EDA leadership and the preparatory Committee of the conference deserve a special acknowledgment for their strenuous efforts despite many internal and external obstacles made the conference successful.

The conference organizers are grateful to the Ethiopian Government and the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front under the leadership of Meles Zenawi, prime minister of the Ethiopian government who provided tremendous support for this initiative.

This document is dedicated to the memory of martyr Tesfahuney Mesfin Who was one of the active organizers of this conference which laid the foundation for democratic change in Eritrea suffering under a brutal dictator. Mr. Tesfahuney was a Vice- Chairman of the Eritrean Peoples Democratic Front. / EPDF

He was instrumental in encouraging participants to intervene constructive and innovative outcomes. He was a true pioneer who passed away tragically on his way to the conference held in Addis

Summary

¹ Saana Forum is a cooperation Forum between Ethiopia, Sudan and Yemen

This document is based on the oral and written contributions of the participants to a conference, *National Conference for Democratic Change, Building a partnership between the Eritrean political organizations and civil society organizations*, that took place on 31st July – 9th August 2010 in suburbs of Addis – Ethiopian Capital. It reflects the important discussions that took place during the conference and formulate the views and opinions expressed by the participants in their individual capacities in a conceptual framework and articulates the concrete change proposals in Eritrea.

The conference was organized by the Eritrean Democratic Alliance/EDA in collaboration with the civil society organizations and with financial support of the Saana Forum. Over 330 representing political and civic organizations, academia and veteran fighters, youth and women associations met in their individual capacities to discuss the problems and opportunities facing the Eritrean people.

Policy options are articulated here and change proposals developed as part of the national agenda to support and advance the democratic aspirations of the Eritrean people in the context of partnership between the political organizations and civil societies. This document is to provide both the conceptual framework on which the conference for democratic change could be based, as well as a more practically oriented action plan on how to replace the dictatorship and build a democratic Eritrea. Many of the ideas on national unity, means and modes of transition to democracy need to be discussed and debated further. In this regard, the document can be seen as an identifying or mapping out the issues on the agenda; it represents an , “ invitation” for further dialogue and encouragement to the reader to engage in the debate. With this document the Eritrean forces for democratic change are grateful for this opportunity to contribute in the struggle from dictatorship to democracy in Eritrea.

A Newly born partnership

The Eritrean political organizations and civil society partnership built after the conference is a gradual expansion of popular mobilization towards building vibrant civil society against the dictatorship. A number of developments have contributed to this formation preceding the conference the formation of networks between the various civil society organizations in Europe, USA, Canada and Australia. These experiences contributed to the formation of the partnership between political organizations and civil societies to join their efforts in order to overcome the oppression and build a multi-ethnic democracy in Eritrea.

The expansion of these dimensions in the partnership is a reflection of a new era in the Eritrean politics, which is profoundly influenced by the new struggles from dictatorship to democracy. New ideas and complex demands on organizing a state have been discussed by the Eritrean elites but still not reached a common understanding. Democratic changes cannot come without the participation of the people in any country. The agenda of Eritrean national conference for democratic change were integrated and were the current conflict issues of the Eritrean political life.(National unity, Modes of transition, Charter, Interim Constitution) which are the pillars of the roadmap.

The conference has dealt the challenges it faces and opted for the modalities and options to strengthen the democratic process and promote the culture of democracy in Eritrea. The partnership is entering a new era and the conference, to a large extent, covered uncharted territory.

The unique contractual nature of the cooperation, the culture of partnership guiding the conference relations and the ambition of both the political and civic society representatives to build a strong opposition promoting democratic principles, empowering the citizens, and advancing the freedom of the Eritrean people from dictatorship together is an innovative approach to practicing joint civil governance on issues of common interest. This dimension of cooperation found at the conference is now expected to play an important role in the coming national congress. The meetings run by the Eritrean National Commission for Democratic Change globally is one of the evidences that Eritreans are capable to good governance and democracy.

Much of the debate and negotiations about the future of the political and civil society focus on two issues; the formulation of the,” essential elements” of the partnership which form the basis of the political cooperation and the joint struggle against the dictatorship. In a way these two points constitute the backbone of the partnership. However, there remains a vast Eritrean population inside Eritrea how to support democratic changes in sustainable manner. This requires innovative thinking and new approaches. The conference’s papers on future broad united front calls for renewed commitment to partnership, based on a new policy foundations and more effective dialogue backed by a commitment by political and civil society organizations with greater flexibility in implementation.

Objective of the document

There are two main objectives for this document, first, to develop and structure a conceptual framework for dialogue for democratic change and second to translate this framework into an action plan by articulating and advancing

practical policy options to implement a democratic change agenda. The document tries to provide policy makers in Eritrea with the Eritrean context.

The document is organized in four parts. Part I provides on the historical experience of the Eritrean national unity and its present situation. It outlines the essential elements of the unity and the modalities for dialogue in order to achieve the genuine unity in diversity in Eritrea. Part II deals on the methods and means of struggle against dictatorship to democracy. Part III analyses on the provisions of the charter examining the structure and then the guiding principles presenting many proposals on how this could be advanced during the struggle against the dictatorship and in the aftermath of the dictatorships fall. Part IV looks at the interim constitution that should be adopted directly after the fall of the dictatorship in case of vacuum of political power. Part V is on conference resolutions and recommendations adopted at the conference for democratic change. The focus of this document has been on producing a user friendly document that can be read and accessed by all Eritreans as well as foreigners.

Part 1 National Unity Experiences- its challenges and opportunities

1.1 Introduction:

It is a matter of common knowledge that, the term “Eritrea” is an ancient name derived from the Greek name of the Red Sea (Sinus Erythris) according to the most preponderant narrations, consequently, the Greeks are the ones who had given our country “Eritrea” its name, that was right after the Greek occupied Massena in the 3rd Century B.C. The Royal Decree issued in January 1890 by the Italian King Hebert(I) represented an official acknowledgment of the Politically significant name of the country, on the other hand, the meaning of Eritrea had outrun its political significance and submerged deeply in the emotional-feelings of the peoples inhabiting this geographical territory and constituted part of their entity, hence, Eritrea has become an identity and a source of belonging to its inhabitants whom are proud of it and would sacrifice their lives for it, a sense of belonging which is an integral part of any given geographical entity and the populations inhabiting it, which gives denotation to the phrase “one people under the canopy of one country”, whereas shared cultures, common history, societal mingling and reciprocated political-and-economical interests are unambiguous and needless to be detailed here.

The afore mentioned factors are not an immoveable inert destinies, in the contrary, they are an ever-moving characteristics, often exposed to an ebb-and-flow depending on historical events and opposing or coexisting interests, Therefore, in spite of assuring the presence of such factors, Eritrea had witnessed many turning points in its history, in which these factors stood out, to the extent that made us think of it as an invincible factors, nevertheless, other events of different features would have make these factors seem as insignificant, and questions would rise whether we are one people and would be able to continue being defined as such ?

Apparently, the major challenge that is confronting the project of our National Unity was, still exists to be, the Eritrean regime, which is ruling since the independence of Eritrea, A regime which is playing games with our people's trifling contradictions for the sake of prolonging the period of its reign, as a result, the entire National Unity's Project is at a stake, unless the whole political forces, civic society groups and the diverse segments of the Eritrean people exert a relentless efforts to overcome it.

With the above facts in mind, the National Conference for Democratic Change which symbolises the oneness of the Eritrean people, couldn't, and shouldn't overlook the issue of the National Unity Project and the dangers surrounding it; this document comes in line with the efforts in the searching for dynamics to salvage the National Unity.

1.2 Geography of Eritrea:

Eritrea is located at the western coast of the Red Sea with a territory covering 124,000 square kilometers, it lies north of the Equator between latitudes 12-18, the Red Sea detaches Eritrea from the Arabian Peninsula, Eritrea borders the Sudan in the North and Northwest, Ethiopia in the South and Southwest, Djibouti in the South and The Red Sea in the East.

Eritrea possesses the longest coast along the Red Sea, compared to the other countries overlooking the Red Sea from its Western Coast, Eritrea's coast extends to 1.080 square kilometers, in addition to a large group of populated Islands, Dahlia Archipelago is the largest among the Eritrean group of Islands, Halib and Fatima Islands are the closest Eritrean Islands to The Bab-el-Mandeb strait.

Eritrea has a distinct topographical variety of landscapes that could be divided into three geographical territories:

1/ The Highlands: which consists of the central plateau and the Northern hills sloping down towards the eastern and western lowlands of Eritrea, the Eritrean Highlands represent a natural extension of the Ethiopian Plateau.

2/ The coastal Plains: That consists of the coastal areas along the Red Sea.

3/ The Lowland Plains: This comprises the Eastern Plains that include a large land mass of the Dankalia province and the Sahel Provinces, these areas are surrounded by a variety of plateaus and mountain ranges, whilst the western plains start at the ends of the central plateau's slopes and extends toward the Sudanese border, The Lowland plains constitutes the largest Eritrea's province and the climate that prevail in Lowland plains is of Savannah features, the lowland plains are considered pastures for grazing of livestock except for the areas in the west of the Gash-and-Setit basin.

Eritrea: Urban Geography.

Eritrea is well distinguished for its ethnic and clannish diversity, which is a natural feature concerning most of the African countries, though, Eritrea's diversity is of significant indication compared to its relatively small population, this diversity is considered one of the factors effecting the Project for National Unity, according to the majority of historical reference books, The groups that constitute the Eritrean society are descendants of the groups migrated from the Nile River and the African Great Lakes regions, , in addition to other groups of Semitic and Cushitic origins which extend to the Ethiopian plateau, The Semitic, Sabaeans and Himyarites, are considered the latest groups migrated to Eritrea at the time after the destruction of the Marib Dam, the migration of the Agazian tribe of Yemen is one of the key factors in the formation of the Eritrean society, its legacy is still animate in the plateau, reflected in the Tigre , Tigrigna and Amharic languages. Nevertheless, the trail of migration from Arabia continued even after the advent of Islam to the Arabian Peninsula, there had been a flow of migrations to Eritrea, the most famous tale in this regard is the migration of the Sahaba (companies) of prophet Mohammed which is mentioned in the History Books of Islam, while the latest migration from Arabia to the Eritrean coasts is that of the Rashaida Tribes in the 19th century C.E, the Rashaida tribes inhabit the Far North of Eritrea and extend to inside the Sudanese boarder.

A variety of Eritrean tribes and clans were formed as a result of these frequent migrations, each of it attributed its ancestry deeply in history, though, the realities on the ground would testify that in spite of the variety of these groups and the societal mingling through intermarriages, juxtapositions and shared lifestyle, even though we can identify the linguistic groups that probably belong to different ancestors, these groups include speakers of Tigre, Tigringa, Saho, Blin, Afar, Kunama, Nara, Hidareb and Arabic.

1.3 History of Eritrea

Eritrea is deeply rooted in the memory of History; an ancient Egyptians had addressed it as the (punt land) and regarded it as a source of Ivory, elephants and perfumes, since the era of Hatshepsut (1468-1486 BC), Pharaoh vessels frequented the Eritrean coasts, Greeks had given the name of Eritrea as derived from the old name of the Red Sea "Sinus Erythreum" and they left their marks in the country, during the reign of Ptolemy (I) 323 B.C.E Ptolemaic Kingdom

had influenced Adulis Port which is 40 Km South of the contemporary Massawa Port.

The Eritrean coasts remained part of the Umayyad state, and then transferred to the Abbasiya State, Eritrea remained under the Abbasiya State until 1517 CE when Caliphate Mohammed Bin Yaqub Al-Mutawakil Ala-Allah (IV) gave it up to the Ottoman Sultan, Salim (I). As a result, Eritrea had become one of the Ottoman States until 1557 CE, after the successful campaign of Mohammed Ali Pasha, Eritrea became under the domination of Egypt from 1820 to 1887 CE.

In 1869 CE, an Italian pastor Pop Joseph Sabeo rented a land lot camouflaged as representative of the marine services company called “Robatino”, he rented the land from Sultan Ibrahim Shaheem and his brother Hassen, which meant the launch of Italian occupation to Eritrea, as a consequence an Italian Army occupied Massawa in 02/05/1885 and proceeded to dominate the entire Eritrean coasts which was accomplished in 1890.

After the defeat of Italy in the Second World War 1941, Eritrea was placed under British administration following the “Conference of Lausanne” in Switzerland which was convened to share the Italian colonies in Africa, later on, Eritrea was annexed to Ethiopia in a coercive confederation, in spite of the patriotic voices raised to call for giving Eritreans the right to self-determination, Ethiopia betrayed the confederation deal and occupied Eritrea until 24/05/1991 the day Eritrea’s independence dawned, followed by the successful referendum in 24/05/1993 which culminated in the official independence of Eritrea , thus Eritrea had become a sovereign country, part of the United Nations and the international community.

The Momentous Events in Eritrea’s Modern History.

The collective mindset of the people of Eritrea, couldn’t mistaken the distinctive events that contributed to the make up of the Eritrean Nation with all its current Political and social Characteristics, these events were of international, regional and domestic magnitude and formed the key indicators of the Eritrean Identity, events that had been, and still is, of major effects on the National Project, the most significant events are as follows:-

National Self-determination.

The fate of Eritrea was discussed within the Italian colonies after the defeat of the Axis Powers in the Second World War, but the super-powers had put off the option of self-determination motivated by two focal reasons.

a-The strategic position of Eritrea on the Western coast of the Red Sea that overlooks The Bab-el-Mandeb strait, addition to its unique position as an associating point for the communication network between the super-powers in the Middle East and the Nearest East.

b- To satisfy the ambitions of the Ethiopian Empire (being a key strategic ally to the Super-powers) to set its foot on, and secure an access to the Red Sea, which seemed impossible unless, somehow, via associating Eritrea to the Ethiopian Empire.

It was obvious, that, the two above reasons had made it possible for the fate of Eritrea to be annexed to Ethiopia, therefore, Ethiopia started its mobilization for the project of uniting Eritrea with Ethiopia through the Eritrean Andinet Party, and it had pursued all possible maneuvers be it religious, financial, intimidation and even assassinations. On the other hand, Al-Rabita Al-Islamiya Party emerged as an opposite project demanding the independence of Eritrea, another project emerged demanding the division of Eritrea between Sudan and Ethiopia, this was one of the momentous junctures in which the Eritrea's National Unity was seriously threatened, but Eritreans ,encouraged by their shared traits, managed to overcome internal and external challenges ahead and avoided the dangers when our gallant forefathers convened in Dekemhare in 1949 and formed a united national front composed of six parties known as the Independence Block which constituted the initial core for the long march of the Eritrean people toward National unity.

1.4 The Era of Armed Struggle.

The deal of Federal unity was turned to nonexistence as a consequence of Ethiopia's interferences on Eritrea's internal affairs; Eritrean compatriots started thinking about means of resistance, the Eritrean Liberation Movement surfaced as a project for national independence, documents of that epoch would evidently testify that the project of ELM was one of the various projects that reflected the qualities of National unity, then The Eritrean Liberation Front came into view with all its energetic brilliance, despite historical barriers and the factors of the consign were the Eritrean resistance originated , add to that, The Ethiopian campaigns to undermine the Eritrean resistance exploiting religion and poverty which the Emperor played games with, it did not take much longer time for the Eritrean

people to take part in the ranks of the Eritrean Resistance, the entire components of the Eritrean society with all its religious, ethnic and regional diversity enforced the project which had become an embodiment of nation unity, in spite of inaccuracies encountered the struggle as a result of immaturity, blurred political vision and contradictory ideological trends that fettered the struggle, as external interferences whether to secure and improve ones own interests or Ideology played a key role in the creation of the widest crack on the wall of national unity , and by this we mean the Eritrean Civil War.

The Civil War:

Talking about this era need a lot of caution and accuracy, but the important point here is that all the secondary contradictions such as religion, nationality, region, ambitions, organizational and individual and foreign interferences, all of which were factors that led to that dark phase in the center point of the ambitious national project (The Armed Struggle), these factors had incited Eritreans to find a theoretical justifications sufficient to take up arms in the face of their brothers , which led to the blood spatter, resulted in piles of hatred and bitterness which are still insists to form a painful thorns in the body of the national unity that requires a lot of wisdom to be erased from the individual and collective historical memory , however, that this phase was not al-evil, as it encouraged many positive initiatives beyond the secondary contradictions such as ethnicity, religion or ideology, towards the mobilization of all Eritreans against the major contradiction which was the Ethiopian colonization at that stage, and perhaps the popular enormous pressure towards overcoming that ugly phenomenon was of an aspect that would fill every Eritrean with pride, and the immense popular committees which emerged to mediate in this conflict , to the extent that the citizens of Asmara stood out in large masses in the lines between the two skirmishing factions, this phenomenon reflects that the secondary contradictions that the Eritrean Regime along with some forces are exploiting in order drive a wedge of division to undermine the unity of the Eritrean people is not new, it had been tried before but the project of national unity prevailed in the end because it is deeply-rooted in the collective consciousness of the Eritrean people.

1.5 Independence.

The date 24 of May remains a memorable day in the history of Eritrea, transpired in the deepness of national project in its brightest image in

which the most segments of the Eritrean population overlooked the differences with the EPL, spontaneity of the marchers who turned out joyous in all cities where Eritreans lived as exiled and refugees, hopes and expectations which had long been ravaged by years of internal conflicts and the humiliating lifestyle in the refugee camps increased, the capable sectors of the people in exile began to return in spontaneous and voluntary repatriation, also many high-ranking leaders of the Eritrean political organizations have forgotten about their differences with the EPLF, they left their positions to join the procession and to contribute the reconstruction and building of the nation, despite the negative signs which the leaders of the EPLF's "interim government" began to show, But the euphoric hearts and minds were eager to the dawn of freedom and does not distinguish or did not believe those negative signs and regarded them as a natural consequence of the inexperience and immaturity in the part of the leadership of the new state, particularly, as a revolutionary mentality need time to accommodate the requirements of the State and entitlements. The processions of the repatriation and the returning masses continued towards Eritrea, also the morale of others who could not return due to extraordinary circumstances increased, and the state of public euphoria overwhelmed the people at home more than those who were abroad, the people breathed the Eritrea dream, soldiers postponed claiming their rightful prerogative, the public tolerated the clear abuses committed against some of them, and new returnees overlooked some forms of insults and provocations in the spirit of endurance reassuring themselves that the upcoming future would be much better, the euphoria was limitless as the regional and international communities joined in and had shown unrestricted support.

The Referendum:

After two years of hovering over the heavens of fine dreams forgetting all the bitterness of the past, which unfortunately have not been met by eligible interim government or the EPLF, on the contrary, the EPLF had indicated that Eritrea is going to a stage of unknown fate through its official statements by means of rejecting to recognize the Eritrean Political and organizations and demanded them to enter Eritrea as individuals after denouncing their political organizations, also refused the National call made by a number of organizations. The EPLF also entered into quarrels with some of the ethnic components of Eritrea, all these wicked deeds did not shake the Project of National Unity in the collective mind of the Eritrean people, then, the defining moment arrived when 98% of the Eritrean people voted in unison "yes to independent and united Eritrea" in a referendum arranged under the supervision of the United Nations and

other international and regional organizations , but EPLF picked up the signals of the 98% and construed them according to its erroneous decoder that the result of a referendum was a testimony to its own popularity and not of national nature, EPLF'S mentality had made it possible for the nation to loose a rare opportunity that could have been the right moment of drafting a project for national Unity built on the pillars of stable consensus that is rarely seen to be achieved in the history of nations and peoples.

How long is the distance between us and our Project of National Unity?

Now, since it is over 120 years of the Italian Royal Decree, that gave Eritrea its political overtone, and Eritrea had passed through an Italian, British colonization then was entered into a fragile federation followed by forced annexation to the Ethiopian Empire , then political and armed struggle with all the bitterness and the cost of martyrdom and disability, homelessness and asylum, and a repugnant authoritarian rule to a period of nearly two decades , we find that the Project of National Unity is at the crossroads, more than ever before, especially as the challenges of history in itself was reason for the strength of the project after a short period of meditation and self-examination because whatever the external powers attempted to exploit our secondary contradictions they remains an external factors whose presence a matter of strengthening our national unity, but the challenge now is of different nature which revived an internal controversy that remains dominating the details of the daily lives of many sectors of our people, the irony is that, the preservation of the National Unity Project in itself has become one of the threats of the project, we have kept hearing a dummy run that, the current regime is the only one who can preserve the unity of this country, this rehearsals coming from a quite considerable number from among the segments of the population that couldn't be bypassed anyway, therefore, the National Conference for Democratic Change being held at a decisive stage, the questions poising ahead of us would be as follows, : Are we in fact one people? And, Whether to live in one nation is as much an inescapable or is an option which can be considered within other alternatives?, And whether there are real possibility to live in peace within this country?, All of these questions are supported by well searched documentations of the memories and bitterness of the dark periods in our history, the eyes could not find sufficient incentives to search for the bright periods, in which the project of national unity was reflected in its strongest features, and perhaps it would be useful to enumerate some of the factors that brought the Project of National Unity to the current “defining moment”.

Geographical dispersions

Unhappy as it might be, the Eritrean people have known no period of stability in which the nation's components could come together and be able to detect and strengthen the shared values between them, working for the placement of the secondary contradictions in the right cart, so as to utilize them as a catalyst for

constructive competition that leads to the development of nations, nations doesn't measure periods in years and decades but in centuries, the strategic position of Eritrea had made it a target of every aspiring colonial power, a colonial powers that certainly make their interests a top priority, employing the theory of divide and conquer which manifests itself in the fueling of the secondary contradictions as insurmountable barriers, in which a number of Eritrean political activists were made unable to live in their country and were compelled to migrate to the neighboring countries including Egypt which was a hub for revolutionaries the Nasser era, the Ethiopian colonization was the worst of colonization models, Ethiopian interests necessitated the displacement and eradication of the Eritrean people because Ethiopia never cared about the people, its major interests were only the sea and the land of Eritrea, the Eritrean people stuck to its land, its legitimate right to freedom and its revolution, to make matters worse, Ethiopia launched the policy of the Scorched Land, to freeze the sources of the Revolution, a policy that resulted to a devastating consequences, a large segments of the Eritrean people fled to the neighboring countries of Sudan ,Yemen, Djibouti, Ethiopia, the freedom of movement within Eritrea was no longer accessible, thus, the geographical dispersions had played a key negative role against the emergence of the Project for National Unity as it was desired, Eritrean refugees had been influenced by the cultures of their respective host countries and in which they found themselves in, especially the second and third generations, , In this aspect , We should not forget that some of the factors were also positive where sections of the people abroad were able to develop a common language beyond the barriers of ones own language, race and culture, they intensified intermarriages between all tribes, identified each other and mingled in national spirit, alas, the habitats where such mingles occurred did not enable the improvement of the Project of the Eritrean National Unity. Not only that, but that, the flame of the struggle flares attracted enormous sectors of the Eritrean people regardless of their ethnic background, hadn't the Eritrean Revolution witnessed political splits, the factors above alone would have been a safety valve for the project of national unity.

No doubt that geographical separation is naturally followed by differences in culture, concepts and interests, which had made the Project of National Unity a matter of dispute between the off springs of different environments, and today in this forum, which brings together public figures, diverse components, environments and cultures of different interests, it is necessary to compromise on a common understanding of the Project of National Unity beyond the limits of geography, cultural environments and interests, in order to meet all the aspirations of our people, regardless of ideological and political, religious, regional backgrounds, A National Unity where every Eritrean person finds his own self and his interests mirrored in it , a National Unity that every Eritrean could embrace and defend.

Different Interpretations of History:

As noted earlier in this paper, Eritrea is relatively a new political entity, but its geographical entity, population and civilization is a deeply rooted in history, without a doubt, as reflected in the Eritrean history, but none of Eritrea's history be it an ancient or modern had found a professional historians to express its details as is a customary regarding histories of nations, almost every nation had its own history considered as undisputable sacrosanct, and history is one of the tools of formulating a collective mind of nations and peoples, this is to say that, our failure to transit our self from oral, mouth-to-mouth, history into a professionally written history, contribute to the weakening of the Project of our National Unity.

The drafting of national history, well-researched according to the norms of proficient methodologies, would surely result in what is known as restorative justice process that embraces the virtues of exchanging of apology and forgiveness, which is very important towards the collective healing of the memories of the people. Accordingly, the Project for National Unity would be based on a common history. This requires a committee of experts as well as requires a consensus on the establishment in which the history could be based, and recognizing of its binding oblige, in addition to the procedures contained, Perhaps the model of the experience of South Africa in this regard would be worthy to illustrate lessons from, also our own Eritrean heritage contains a lot of good models, that could be applicable to resolve the differences and overcome the bitterness, we have an inexhaustible examples that could enforce the Project for National Unity.

The Ruling Regime:

Perhaps, the most significant challenge facing the Project of National Unity is the existence of the Eritrean dictatorial regime, and the longer the regime survived the bitter our challenges would be, as the pillars of our National Unity would keep collapsing one by one as long as the dictatorial regime is in power, because the survival of this regime depends on exploiting secondary contradictions among our people at the expense of the Project of National Unity, the negative effects of the existence of the regime on the Project of National Unity are greater and by no means

could be contained in this paper, though, it would be helpful to tap on the issues as a starting hints bellow.

1.6 The Absence of National Vision of the Ruling Regime:

Throughout its history, the Eritrean regime never made the national unity one of its concerns, it has always desired to cling to power, the president of the regime had revealed such a mentality in a statement he made one year after the liberation, that Eritrea will not become festivities place for political organizations, ever since, the Regime had ignored all the appeals made by opposition forces in an organized manner and suspended dialogue with the then Revolutionary Council, also the regime rejected all attempts of reform from within that was initiated by academics sympathetic to the group of (13) , ending with the arrest companions against the founding leaders of the EPLF, a group known as (G15) , as well as all attempts made by friends to mediate and talk about a national dialogue was ignored by the leadership of the regime.

It is obvious that a regime which is not concerned about the internal unity of its own organization, can never be willing to enhance the Project for National Unity, and if the doors are closed to dialogue within a single institution, it would be illogical to expect that the prospects for dialogue to be opened to the others, so, the term “institution”, seems inapplicable to today’s Eritrea which has become a State of one man.

The Regime's Practices as a Result of the Absence of an Overall National Vision:-

The Practices of the Eritrean regime which were reflected in its rejection of all initiatives towards a National Dialogue has created many problems, earlier in the period of Eritrea’s independence , the Regimes practices have been interpreted as an ethnic , religious and cultural prejudice, we would try to mention bellow some of the regimes practices

- The problem of dividing the Eritrean people into ethnic groups on the basis of linguistic groupings, the regime’s denial to some components of the people their right to have their own distinguished identity in line with their own cherished characteristics, an issue that has nothing to do with political power , societies have been existent before the formation of political states.

- The Regime had practiced the policies of discrimination since the early years against the education institutions of Eritrean Muslims including schools and institutes and arrested teachers and Sheikhs whom were made to disappear with unknown whereabouts and without a trial

- the Regime had initiated prosecution of religious believers of some groups with respect to their religion based attitude towards the National Service, the regime pursued punitive measures rather than trying to understand the motives behind their rejection of the National Service, a matter that was supposed to be addressed with a little of wisdom within the National Unity Project, in order to accommodate all the various intellectual and doctrinal beliefs.

- the Regime had excluded the Arabic language from the official transactions arena dealing with the issue of languages as a matter of *Fait accompli*, the regime also imposed a mother tongues in the education, trampling upon the wishes of the people and against their will, as a result, today's Eritrea had become a representation of a single component in the fields of education, media and the entire public life.

- The Civil Services sector is one of the important arena's which emphasizes that the ruling eplf/pfdj regime is not concerned about the Project of National Unity at all, numbers and statistics had reflect that, more than 90% of the civil service is exclusively controlled by a single component out of the various components that constitutes the Eritrean people.

- Although the regime had been bragging about equality the Eritrean languages , but in reality those languages are none existence in everyday life and the media, worse, Eritrean languages and cultures have been confined to Expo festival shows or songs that are being aired in the state owned media, to add insult to injury, the songs, dances and the folklore of the Eritrean ethnic groups are being performed by trained professionals who are alien to the respective languages or cultures.

- The issue of land, settlements and demographic engineering that has been taking place under the regime ruling over Eritrea is one of the critical threats to the Project of National Unity, it should be well-understood that the issue of land is a matter-of-life -and-death for the components of the Eritrean Nation, land ownership is an authenticity existed prior to the State of Eritrea itself, it is a serious problem that will have great consequences on the future of the Nation, unless it is settled through a realistic methods of fairness wisdom.

- The indefinite National Service combined with arming all of the sectors of the Eritrean people, had made the Eritrean army in confrontation with the just and legitimate rights of the Eritrea people to live in freedom, democracy and peace, the army had become a tool of protection of the dictatorial Regime, a regime which had never made the Unity of the Eritrean people one of its agendas.

- The Fabricated wars with neighbouring countries, and a political hostilities with regional and International Communities, and International organizations had been playing an influential role in the destabilization of the Project of our National Unity.

- The absence of the constitution and laws had made the State of Eritrea resembles a private property of a single individual , as the events of the past and the present had undeniably shown, this certain individual was not ,and will never be, a fan of the Project of National Unity.

- The ongoing violations of human rights, the situations of terror experienced by the citizens of Eritrea, where a fear of what will happen in near future had been one of the chief premonitions of the Eritrean citizens, a fear from the indefinite military recruitment of their children, a fear of a war that could flare at any moment, a fear of the lands that are being seized, a fear of being arrested for no

reason, a fear from a friend who might turn out to be a snitching spy and leads to arrest, a situation which gives no incentive for the individuals to be productive, a situation that hampers the sense of belonging to the nation.

1.7 The Eritrean Opposition Forces

Nowadays, The term “Eritrean Opposition” in its wider sense is far beyond the Eritrean political organizations, in the Eritrean political arena inside or outside the Eritrean Democratic Alliance EDA, even it goes beyond the Civic Organizations declared in the Diaspora, the debate is always on the regulatory frameworks where the political dimensions are ascribed to an Ethnicity or a religion , even the civic organizations are distributed a similar frameworks, some are dedicated to scientific or humanitarian projects, this multiplicity had been a subject of debate about the extent of the impact, positive or negative, on the Project of National Unity, which is a legitimate debate, the organizations that address them selves as religious or Ethnic or those adopt military action against the regime are always accused of threatening or weakening the National unity, but the reasons for the emergence of organizations based on religious or ethnic claims are created due to two major reasons- :

A / The injustices perpetrated by the Eritrean Regime are enough reasons to make resistance under any slogan really legitimate and justified, particularly, since the grievances that the Eritrean regime has been committing are manifested on the basis of religion and Ethnicity, targeting specific sectors, it is natural for those sectors to resist and mobilize their own constituencies that had on the receiving end of systematic injustices, in such cases, it is well known that the mobilization under a specific banner bears an emotional support and gets the response of the largest public.

B / The organizations that aloft the “National” slogans fail to address the concerns upon which the ethnic or religious organizations were established, on the other hand, the ‘National’ organizations are unable to pacify the fears and anxieties (in the part of the Ethnic and Religious groups) of repeating the experiment of the dictatorial regime with regard to fundamental rights relating to land, religion, culture that legitimate beyond the ballot boxes and needs to be confirmed in the constitution, so that the rights of minorities would not fall prey to a compromising rivals depending the moods of the voters.

Most of these organizations are members of the Eritrean Democratic Alliance EDA, and are signatories to its charter, even the organizations which are outside the EDA have recognised and approved the EDA's charter, which says the following on paragraphs 1, 2 and 3

1- To maintain the national sovereignty and preserve the unity of the people and the land of Eritrea within its internationally recognized geographical borders.

2- Preservation and improvement of the national unity which was consecrated by decades long heroic struggle of the Eritrean people.

3- Realization of the principle of justice and equality between the components of the Eritrean community, Proceeding from the principles of democracy and peace, human rights and the equitable distribution of power and wealth.

The Charter of the Eritrean Democratic Alliance EDA - although it characterizes a Minimum Program for all the components of the EDA – it is to be deemed an important safeguard of the Project of National Unity, particularly, if it is enhanced, through a series of frank dialogues about the issues of divergences, and upgraded from an ink-on-sheets, to a Programme of Action for EDA as one entity as well as among the political organizations of EDA.

Another point is the option of adoption military action against the ruling regime, the Charter of the Eritrean Democratic Alliance provides in article (2) paragraph (5) the follows: The Democratic Alliance follows all available means to topple the dictatorial regime , even through the legitimacy of all available means, according to the above article, but fears remains about the negative effects of the military wings of the organizations on the project of national unity, what is required in this stage is the development of coordination and unity between the military wings of political organizations and the creation of joint command and single military doctrine based on the following:

A / that the legitimacy of military action is legitimized as a result of the injustice perpetrated by the Eritrean regime against the Eritrean people, the Regime rejects dialogue on these wrongdoings, as long as all the prospects of other solutions are blocked, there are no means available other than the military action, which intend to force the regime to undo the grievances, refrain from further violations and come to the table of dialogue, or to be toppled. This is to say that the actions which are deemed legitimate are limited to forcing the regime into dialogue or overthrowing it.

B / in the case of the fall of the regime, the military wing must be developed to be part of the Eritrean National Army, where its task turns automatically to maintaining the National Unity in its broader sense, and to preserve the constitution with no meddling in the political and democratic choices to the people, once the mission of regime change is accomplished, the relations between the political organizations and the military forces must be dissolved, the political organizations should have their programs that would be subject to democratic competition and not through military force.

The Contradictory Interests of the Components of the Nation- :

The critical circumstances through which our people have been living, had blurred their perceiving of the National Unity, and the reason is that, our people, as we have already mentioned, is diverse in terms of races, beliefs, religions, ethnicities and regions, each group looking for its interests, which creates major conflicting-interests between these components, Perhaps, the two factors mentioned bellow, might be the reasons that led to this situation- :

1- An extensive frustration that regime had brought about after the liberation, the people who had already endured enormous sacrifices for the sovereignty and liberation of the country, would naturally expect the outcomes of liberation to be reflected positively in the independence and offset the huge sacrifices, but the magnitude of frustration was to the extent that made some to embark on comparing the colonial era and the era of ruling regime, and others began to wonder whether the independence worthy the sacrifices that were made.

2- The political Opposition did not raise its political agenda to accommodate the Project of National Unity, A project that could bear financial, psychic and materialistic towards for the entire Eritrean components against the sacrifices they had made, in fact the political programs of the National Opposition forces never exceeded the hollow emotional rehearsal of the “National Unity”, an emotional rehearsals that could not be sufficient enough to encourage the people pay new and fresh sacrifices.

Therefore, we find that a large segments of our people have started looking for other temporarily alternatives, which will have a negative effects on the National Unity Project, we find that a large segments our people looking for resettlement in the neighbouring countries or in the countries of developed world, according to the wizards initiated

by international organizations to tackle the issues of protracted refugees, also a large portion of the Eritrean youth did not find any hope for their future within the realms of the Eritrean regime, on the other hand, the Opposition forces did not develop its political discourse to accommodate the expectations of the youth, thus, the desperate youngsters had been taking risky measures to get rid of the devastating situations by fleeing through dangerous borders, such as the Egyptian-Israeli border, aquatics and the Sahara deserts, not only that, but we find that the individual attitudes towards the regime and the opposition alike are being taken according to ones-own individual, group, sect or societal interests, so the means and the level of opposing in itself depends on the extent of the damage caused by the regime to the macro-interests of a given individual , a group or component, nevertheless, the acceptance or rejection in the part of individuals and groups to the political discourse of the opposition depends on the expectations the opposition could bring to a certain group or class.

1.8 The Impacts of regional and international on national unity

Perhaps, the countries of the region are the most ones engaged to the Eritrean cause, especially the bigger countries like Sudan, Ethiopia, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Egypt , as the interests of these countries directly or indirectly is attached to Eritrea, such an interests are deemed to take the positions of key players in Eritrea whether for or against the Regime or its opposition, followed by decisions and actions may conflict with the concept of National Unity sought by This political powers, because in theory the Project of National Unity that can accommodate or at least does not conflict with the interests of these countries must be formulated after studying all these aspects, it is well known that when countries face threats to their interests they would intervene in order to protect those interests or policies by exploiting the gaps in cohesion of the nation, these gaps are naturally a product of the failure in the part of the National Unity Project to bridge the gaps that serve as a tool in the hands of other countries.

The Conflicting Interests of the International Powers: -

It is no secret that today's world is driven by interests, and all decisions taken by the international community through its international organizations, or taken by

major countries alone are able to meet or comply with its own interests, for example, the resolution 1907 resolution under Chapter VII (punitive measures) of the Charter of the United Nations , has nothing to do with the aspirations wishes of the Eritrean people , in reality it has more to do with the interests of the superpowers, or the neighbouring countries in implementing its political vision for the region, such a decision has no doubt a significant impact on the Project of National Unity whether negatively or positively. This is only to demonstrate the international impacts on the Project of National Unity and not to analyze the effects of the (1907) resolution on our national unity

1.9 National Unity and its Methods

A quick search on letters and brochures of all political organizations or civic organizations, media, we find out that the Project of National Unity is a fundamental pillar in each of their programs, but this concept at each point is different from the other, so agreeing on a common concept of national unity to become persistent in the brochures and guidelines all key players is one of the main objectives of this forum what is the national unity that we seek- :

The definition of National Unity:

The term, National unity, is used to denote the union of different groups of people brought together by specific characteristics in a geographical territory and having a political authority, this unit generates a sense of belonging and loyalty to this political entity, geographical location, as required by the circumstances of cohesion to protect this entity, according to the multiple interests achieved under the status unity for those groups, with security and prosperity being the most important among the interests . In the case of Eritrea as noted above, the limited geographical area, and the relatively low population has given Eritrea the definition of a multi-ethnic nation, most of the inhabitants of Eritrea are Muslims and Christians, and there are natural religions, whom had been distributed to different political and ideological doctrines throughout their history , with all of this, the necessary characteristics to fulfil the project of national unity have been available and visible so you can not trample on it, a source of pride for all Eritreans and perhaps an epic of struggle for the liberation of the entity have enhanced this sense and provided unlimited emotional dimension where every Eritrean could have sense of preserving the unity of the Eritrean entity is our covenant to the our martyrs, but all this is not enough to maintain ,the country is going through all the challenges that we have mentioned above and by the Project of National Unity, we seek it must be a conscious

choice bear that would the consequences and entitlements for the satisfaction and conviction, it also must be based on the following: -

Voluntary.

The components of the Eritrean people are no doubt the pre-political existence of the state, when the Italians demarcated map of Eritrea, the demarcation was done with the interests of Italy on the top of their priorities, but as matter of fact the did not come blindly but in terms of identifying participants and factors that could pave the way for one nation and one people, But under the circumstances in which we live, and we strive to preserve the oneness of the nation on a new foundations , we must included in the Project of National Unity , that should be an option for compromise and voluntary for all of the components of our ethnic, regional, political and religious characteristics, and not a project that can be imposed by force , by a certain component claiming to ensure national unity, which is the case in today's Eritrea under the ruling regime.

Unity in Diversity:

The Project of National Unity should not be at the expense of the characteristics of the components, but it must be like a painting with its integrated colours to give a meaning and a value of a Nation, the project must respect the characteristics of the cultural and geographical components that had entered into a contract to maintain the oneness of the nation, a project that rejects dilution, domination, assimilation or exclusion

Mutual Interests:

The Project for National Unity should not be based solely on the pillars of emotional importance, but it must be backed by interest-list to the parts contracting to the Project, especially since today's world is one of integration and unity, to establish a project on an idea of establishing a politically and economically strong country, regions and support the renaissance of each other through fair criteria by the central authority, which consists of voluntary and compromise by all, only then is the project for national unity, the desire to preserve it also becomes a necessity for all.

A Sense of Belongingness and Pride:

The project of National Unity should reflect the values and cultures of all, so each of the components its own characteristics reflected in the colourful unity, and therefore, supporting the project or defending would be a self-defence for each component, the factors could be found on language, religion, values and media, holidays, and representation in the institutions are all factors that makes a person develop a sense of belonging to the nation, , the sense of belonging is crucial to human being to stand in defence of the entity of his belonging, if the sense of belonging is fading or lost, it would certainly that one can not defend it, in the contrary he would look for other alternative options.

Mutual Confidence:

As the Project of national unity is the union of different components, the sustainability of this union depend on the confidence of the parties upon each other, any doubt that this project will be used for a certain class on the expense of the others, or that it is a trap set up by a certain class to legitimize their gains, or a project that is imposed by one component on the others, such a project would be built on fear tactics until the possession of force. The Project of National Unity can not be enforced overnight but is a long project that should show good intentions at the starting point, a good intentions that could be translated into a Programme of Action to deal with the history, present and future.

Positive Competition:

The Project of National Unity must allow space for competition between the various components of culturally or geographically differences, as this competition is the secret of the construction of the universe, and the competing nations are those which innovate and excel with the rising of each new dawn, but that competition must be governed by a central rule of values, so that to make it positive competition in the arts and trade, science and other walks of life.

Preserving Regional and International Interests:

It is known that Eritrea today live in a planet connected with neighbourly relations and continue to be connected to cultures and common interests with a large number of forces and organizations, in this relationship Eritrea could be impacted positively or negatively, and the project for national unity must take into account these relationships and interactions regionally and internationally so as to be realistic and viable.

The National Conference for Democratic Change and the National Unity: -

The NCDC is a historic event, that comes from the uniqueness of the event on one hand, and the presence of the key players of our nation in the project of national unity on the other hand, we mean the masses of the Eritrean people represented in the organised civil or political forces, religious figures, intellectuals, writers, pioneers of our armed struggle and the unions of youth and women, therefore this event is required to lay a solid foundation for the Project of national unity on the grounds mentioned above, and then we can build on this basis in the future through an agreed on mechanisms and therefore this paper proposes the following

1 / National Charter with greater legitimacy, taking into consideration the components of our political, ethnic, religious, cultural, regional and class interests, to build a national unity on the basis of a new agreements, then to be construed it on the ground and preserve it, and prevent the exploitation of the shared responsibility we all bear, each one of us according to his position and responsibility.

2 / A Code of Conduct between the media outlets that any act of gambling with the religious, cultural, geographical and ethnic contradictions must be considered red-line that can not be tolerated.

3 / developing of mechanisms for the struggle against the Regime, the regime stay on power contradicts with the Project of National Unity, as it depends on the regime's continue to play on the secondary contradictions and alienating the diverse segments of our society against each other, so the regime's removal is no longer an option, but a necessity and a precondition for our country to be or not to be.

4 / to grasp the opportunity of the excellence gathering in this forum (NCDC) and initiating the formation of a committee of the wise and sensible personalities it could be called the "Committee of Elders" and involve the various components of our religious and ethnic components to defuse the tension caused by the practices of the Regime and the task of preparing a model for national reconciliation, recourse and disclosure, recognition and amnesty and forgiveness, our Project for National Unity cannot register a break-through on a society with a collective memory occupied by hatreds and animosities and purifications , the initiative of the Committee of Elders is very important for the realism and the success of the Project of our National Unity.

5 / the task of purifying of the collective memory needs to dive into the events of history, a political and social history that would written in the most professional and unbiased method, because building a nation on basis of history, the determined generations are those who will shape the future of the country while not knowing much about the history books including all its pros and cons, and although the writing of history is a complex process but we have to start this project now before tomorrow.

2. Means and Mechanisms for Democratic Change.

2.1 Introduction

It is a mockery of sorts to convene today probing for mechanisms and mediums in a search for democratic change, almost twenty years after independence. Eritreans failed to build a constitutional state characterised by its physical basis of the state, the institutions of the state and the idea of state.

The physical basis of a state includes defined territory, population, resources and wealth. The institutions of the state comprise the whole machinery of government, including its executive, legislative, administrative, and judicial bodies as well as the laws, procedures and norms by which they operate. Thus

our struggle's demands are fundamental and need a clear methods of struggle to bring fundamental changes. The Eritrean opposition has never experimented a variety of means, in the last 2 decades, to bring about democratic system, during the first two decades the Eritrean people was able to realize the independence of the nation, as a result , Eritrea had become a recognized sovereign nation and a member of the international community, though the dream of the Democratic State is not realised yet. It is not easy to scrutinize the exact factors and reasons that led to the result of the current undemocratic state in Eritrea, but it would be useful to investigate the reasons behind the status quo in Eritrea, which might help us pick the mechanisms that could led to our aspired democratic change:

2.2 The Experience of armed struggle during the liberation period

When Hero-Martyr Hamid Idris Awate shot the first gunshot at Mount Adal in 1961, he was expressing his rejection of the Ethiopian colonizer; this rejection was a typical modus operandi of the ELF throughout the first decade of the revolution, where the term “Liberation” had meant the concept of defeating the Ethiopian Colony without investigating what “liberation” would involve and what was the connection between liberation, man and the land, the concept of democracy was fading before the cheerfulness of liberty, whereas undemocratic practices emerged, practices that could be expected from a force struggling to realise democracy, the focus on the major end to “defeat the enemy” had justified such undemocratic practices, even the victims tolerated the calamities falling on them considering it a charge that they must pay for the sake of the liberation.

The vagueness of the concept of Democracy.

The middle of the last century is well-known to be the epoch where various ideologies flourished, the cold war and the conflicting interests had played a key role in defining alliances according to ideological affiliations or shared interests. The ideological orientations infiltrated the ELF in this context, either due to the perception that the socialist camp supported liberty seeking nations or due to the influence of ideologies, as socialism was perceived as a driving force for the liberation movements of the Third World. Whatever the reason might be, but the concept of democracy was vague within the ELF to the extent of bearing conflicting interpretations manifested in undemocratic practices, albeit the First National Conference had approved to replace all forms of colonizer's institutions with national democratic institutions, it was the same First National Conference that stated that the Eritrean Struggle arena would not stand more than one single-revolution under one single-leadership. Whatever the justifications behind such a resolution, we would like to bring to the attentions that the concept of democracy then was not clear enough in the part of the political and civic organizations as is the case nowadays.

The influence of the culture of violence in absence of democratic practices.

The ambiguity of the concept of democracy in one hand and the influence of ideological thoughts on the other, addition to the immense eagerness to realize liberty that had been shrunk to merely “defeating the Ethiopian colonialist enemy”, all these factors combined had driven the Eritrean revolution towards a civil war, specially the experiences of the Eritrean revolution dictated that whatever you perceive to be your legitimate right could only be restored by the use of force, the more the use of force flourished the more the practice of democracy shrunk.

The lack of civic society, transparency and pressure groups (lobbies):

The kinship based structures or fabrics of the Eritrean society doesn't contribute positively towards the creation of genuine democracy, this is clearly reflected in the Eritrean political and civic organizations and also in the structure of the Eritrean Government, in spite of the importance of civic associations such as the unions of students, youth and women in nurturing the concepts of democracy through strict observation to the practices of the political bodies. But in Eritrea, such associations have been twisted to fit the partisan agendas of political and military organizations, and we have had a case in point the associations that the Eritrean Regime had created like the unions of youth, students and women that could never contribute positively to the struggle for democratic change whether theoretically or in practice.

2.3 Methods of democratic struggle

Two decades had elapsed since the independence of Eritrea, and we are still a way back from what we aspire to be, where our nation has been classified as a Failed State, unable to manage a balanced relationship with its own people, there is no constitution, no democratic institutions, and no separation between the legislative, executive judicial authorities, no civil societies or watch-dog organizations to back-up and improve the concepts of democracy, nonetheless the institutions of the Eritrean opposition suffer weaknesses starting from its organizational structure. But the improvement could be clearly noted in the concepts of the opposition whereas the political programs state clearly the inevitable of democratic change and the importance of struggle to that end, also the Eritrean Democratic Alliance EDA had embraced the concept of democracy, albeit materializing the concept of democracy would require a range of comprehensive programs in a variety of aspects, namely, political, diplomatic, information, popular, economic, military, administrative and the unity of all political organizations and civic associations.

Political Discourse:

The historical circumstances behind the renaissance of most of the Eritrean opposition organizations makes them closely related to their respective old programs, and even a large number of the opposition leaders are historical leaders, to the extent that the spirit that influenced the political discourse and the leaders in the era of struggle against colonization still more or less reflected in the political performance of the Eritrea Government and the opposition alike, and this discourse undoubtedly instilled in the Eritrean people, particularly the younger generation that has emerged in the beginnings of the eighties of the last century, not to mention the generation born after the independence of Eritrea at home who haven't been acquainted with the opposition and its political discourse, consequently lacks the needed stimulus to participate and support the opposition, therefore the political discourse of the opposition must undergo a radical change of mode through broader modernization in concepts and terminologies, and that should be reflected in the practical performance of the political forces and civil rights' organizations.

The opposition today requires a political discourse that would combine the history with the present, highlighting that the values of democracy are fundamental rights that doesn't allow compromise, founding its political discourse on the concepts of human rights, the political discourse must attract the wishes of the new generations to encourage them participate in the bid, highlighting the benefits of the moral and material meaning of home, the opposition's discourse must make use of the modern media communications which would surely attract our young generation, This discourse is based on - :

1- to stress the legitimate right of the Eritrean people to own their political decision and share the wealth of the country and to take their deserved part in ruling over their country, by the well-defined means of democracy (elections), and the right to enjoy justice by the virtues of the law that they established through their representatives in the parliament

2- To focus on the concepts and values of democracy and human rights .

3- To pay much attention to the civil society, especially the associations of youth and women, and to involve them in the formulation of the political discourse so that they would be empowered enough, because they know how to conduct a successful dialogue to win over their peers.

Popular Mobilization

Since the Eritrean masses as stakeholders would directly benefit of the democratic change, then the opposition must mobilize the entire sectors of the Eritrean Public at home, as well as abroad in the process of change through the mobilization and raising public awareness, the political and civic organizations which are leading the endeavours towards change should recognize the differences in the political programs and coordinate a mechanisms and consolidate a unified political discourse to accelerate the project of democratic change in Eritrea

Today the Eritrean public needs a glimmer of hope that could encourage them to work for democratic change, they need a leadership that could convince them about the credibility of the struggle for change, alas the opposition leadership seemed to be dominated by the differences over secondary issues that dominate and hinder its unity on the key issues and consequently keeps the public away from any mass action, public mobilization must be bases on the following:-

1- Build-up of credibility through positive attitudes and behaviour on the part of the political leadership interacting with the public.

2- Paying much attention to the suffering of the public and provide alternative solutions, especially the issues relating to the legal status of refugees and migrants, particularly with countries that have good relations with the opposition

3-recruiting the public in the branch-offices of the opposition and mandating of leaders that can serve as role models to help the public come close up to the opposition, and not the kind of leaders that scare people away from the ranks of the opposition.

4- The establishment of service sectors, that could serve the public such as education and health services, wherever Eritrean communities existed, and to refrain from providing such public services according to ones political or organizational affiliation.

5- Establishment of grass-roots associations such as youth, women, workers and other sectors and to give those institutions a real attention through professional understanding and practice.

6-establishment of branches combined of members of collective umbrella of the Eritrean national council for Democratic change/ENCDCand to furnish information and programs for the public to ensure improving it beyond the organizational differences of the EDA components.

Diplomacy/international relations

Countries are no longer islands isolated from each other in our era of intertwined interests, as the foreign policies of countries are driven by interests, therefore, it must be well-understood that foreign countries would have to take their respective positions towards Eritrea according to their political and economic interests, perhaps it is an irony that the foreign policies of the Eritrean Regime had to play a catalyst helpful role on the part of the opposition to pursue a constructive productive and effective diplomacy in their struggle for change, but the Eritrean opposition, despite the just and legitimate cause in the struggle to bring about democracy, but it has shown incapability to win the sympathy and support of foreign states, the opposition have to make use of the diplomacy based on the know-how of the modus operandi of international relations which had been administering the world today, the interests of countries with national sovereignty, and international organizations attends to the interests of international security, regional organizations that sponsor the security and interests of the countries in the region, as well as non-governmental organizations that has become of great influence in international politics and overseas companies with a significant impact on the process of political decision-making.

Therefore any formulation of diplomatic action plan must be based the above mentioned backgrounds, it would be helpful to point out some important guideline here bellow:

1. A diplomatic action built on positive interaction, that is to say, there are parties in the world who have their respective stakes in Eritrea, who need to be convinced that the opposition can be faithful to their interests as long as not inconsistent with the national interests of Eritrea, therefore countries which their interests have been damaged by the Eritrean Regime will cooperate with the opposition, but first, the opposition must confirm its credibility and seriousness

- 2- a diplomatic action built on negative interaction, and we mean that there are parties in the world that Eritrean Regime constitutes a source of concern for their respective national security, whether serious or minimal concern, such forces would be more than happy to watch the Eritrean Regime disappearing, they have genuine interests in the disappearance of this Regime due to the keenness to their respective national security, but these countries can not risk to establish relations with the opposition unless ascertained in the seriousness of the opposition, for fear that the establishment of such a relationship might deteriorate the internal affairs of their respective countries, the Eritrean Regime is notorious in exploiting the internal contradictions of foreign countries, which

constitute a threat to the security of those countries, the seriousness of the opposition would be associated with its political discourse and its mechanisms.

3- A diplomatic action built on bilateral policy and attitudes, where some countries are in harmony with opposition on their stance towards many issues, attitudes towards public issues is inconsistent with the positions of the Eritrean Regime, therefore compatibility with opposition or contradiction with the regime, is stimulus for diplomatic cooperation between the opposition and the foreign nations.

4- Diplomatic functioning based on lobbying through local communities, civic organizations and individual relationships, where every vote counts on the part of the Western countries in times of elections, the grouping of communities and activating civic organizations or take advantage of individual relationships can influence and stimulate the policies of Western states towards Eritrea.

5- Benefit from Non-governmental Organizations of certain areas of concern, such as human rights organizations, and organizations concerned with freedoms of religion or press, or transparency and those NGOs fighting corruption, and even the relief and health humanitarian organizations that the Eritrean Regime refused to give access to providing aid to the Eritrean people, all these factors could be valuable for the diplomatic advancement of the opposition if used properly.

The Eritrean opposition need to muster the factors that manipulate world politics through a specialized and skilful apparatus the make use of its political and administrative authority, and perhaps the most important aspect in this regard is appoint united-external-political unit. The following points might be useful in this respect.

- 1- Formation of diplomatic apparatus for the Eritrean Democratic Alliance to run the international relations with political and administrative competency and capabilities.
- 2- Consensus on the features of the external political discourse of the ENCDC.
- 3- Coordination of the foreign policies of the political organizations through a united committee consisted of the external relations officials of the ENCDC organizations. With the task of making ENCDCs' foreign policy a non-partisan policy through the evaluation of external policy functioning, exchange of information and proposal of plans, and

benefiting from the relationships of organizations and individuals in this area .

- 4- Coordination with the civic organizations that support the overall objectives of the opposition, especially in Europe, America and Australia, and take advantage of their relations, and to mandate the civic organizations to implement and illuminate the foreign policy of the Eritrean opposition.
- 5- To draw a maximum benefit from the partnership's presence in the capital of the African Diplomacy Addis Ababa, where the African Union Head Quarters is located, beside a high-ranking diplomatic missions of the most important powers, the ENCDC diplomacy should approach these countries by taking advantage of the public events that these missions held as well as the occasional events held in the host country , Ethiopia, and to constantly send messages in the occasion of public National Holidays of diplomatic missions.
- 6- improvement of ENCDC's website so that it could be a reference to all the questions that may arise in the mind of any policy-maker or a diplomatic mission, as well as writing leaflets carefully prepared and in different languages .

3. The Media:

In today's world, which is dubbed as the “age of information evolution”, though the media of the Eritrean opposition is not commensurate with the magnitude of the cause it is raising and the challenge it is facing, despite the progress that opposition media has registered in general, but that is not enough to deliver the message of opposition, especially when the regime it is opposing has an information outlets that are considered the most prominent strengths of the regime.

even the improvements that opposition's media outlets have shown are due to efforts without any coordination which is not enough to deliver the message of the opposition , most of the oppositions media outlets lack professionalism, most of the ENCDC's organizations have their own media outlets which lessen the effectiveness of the spirit needed for change, even the oppositions media outlets are often used to highlight the secondary political contradictions between ECDC organizations , we could point out the following points in this respect:

- 1- Formulation an information policy with clear goals and instructions to convey a convincing message through all available information means.

- 2- Tolerate secondary contradictions of political and civil forces, and focus on the overarching challenge of removing the dictatorial regime in Eritrea.
- 3- Coordination of work between media organizations and the signing of the Code of Conduct for the media outlets, so that the media war between the organizations, degradation or questioning of the principles, personal attack would be perceived as a red-line.
- 4- development of the radio through the creation of an independent radio with working-hours for as long as possible pursuing a dynamic approaches in conveying the opposition's message to resist the Regime and to deliver ENCDC's message in an intelligent way.
- 5- Diligences in founding a TV-channel to convey the goals of the opposition and reflect the suffering of the Eritrean people, and work to highlight the abuse of the regime against our people. Establishing ENCDC' Satellite TV challenging the PFDJ's ERITV.
- 6- Develop opposition websites on the web and make it more professional and more easily viewed, and more substantive and meaningful .
- 7- Pay much attention to the Internet to benefit from groups on facebook, Twitter and other tools that gains the attention of a large number of sympathizers.
- 8- The importance of training and the adoption of assigning media work according to individual competency and not organizational affiliation.
- 9- Opening up communication with TV channels, news agencies, global and regional newspapers and magazines and all that can contribute to delivering the message of the opposition.
- 10- Use the universal language in the media, in terms of focus on the concepts of human rights, democracy, transparency and good governance.
- 11- Documentation of the regime's Violations, and reporting the evidences in figures and images because it makes the message of the opposition more credible and acceptable to the recipient.
- 12- Adoption of mechanisms and means to evaluate the feedback such as surveys, questionnaires and others to determine the effect of the message on the recipient

4. The economy:-

The biggest dilemma of the opposition is how to finance its activities, as it is known , that, those who lack financial sources cannot fully own their decisions, The people of Eritrea have had an honourable history in financing and

supporting the Eritrean revolution, therefore the opposition need to explore extraordinary alternative plans to attract support and to discover funding sources, its economic plans must not depend only on funding sources, but in drying-up the support of the Regime, especially as the Regime draws-in support from neutral places where the opposition exists.

We can refer to the following points in this respect :

- 1- Authentication of the relationship between the opposition and the public, encouraging the people to bear the responsibility of regime change as the sole beneficiary of the change, this can be achieved only through a high degree of transparency and openness, and building bridges of trust between the opposition and the public .
- 2- Establishing a constructive relationship with countries that can accumulate with the political positions of the Eritrean opposition, then to make use of these relations in opening economic cooperation to finance the activities of the opposition
- 3- presenting partnership projects with organizations that have relations with the Regime such as the European Union in order push them towards parallel treatment between the Regime and opposition, through pressure by voters in the European countries, and to benefit from these projects in financing the opposition in particular with regard to the entrenchment of the values that form the agenda fixed in the concerns of the European Union and organizations alike.
- 4- cooperation with NGOs on human rights, freedoms, gender,transparency etc., and enter into partnerships with them to serve the common goals of the organizations and the opposition alike.
- 5- Search for investment projects, and not necessarily to be at the centre level, but can be done at the branch level, so that the opposition activities can be financed by its own projects.

The above points are relevant to improving the financial capabilities of the opposition; the following steps are to cut off the sources of financing of the Regime.

- 1- on the official level, by persuading countries and organizations that sponsor projects in cooperation with the Regime until it stops financing of such projects, or at least could proceed funding the Regime's projects but after imposing its own terms and conditions, to prevent the Regime from using such funds in the oppression of our people.

- 2- at the grassroots level to stop the tax imposed by the Regime on Eritrean nationals living in Diaspora, and projects that the Regime claims to support the families of martyrs and the disabled, especially since the Regime is using the means of blackmail and intimidation in the collection of such tax which contradicts the laws of the countries in which the Eritrean communities live .

2.4 Partnership between the political and civic organizations

As it had been known, The Eritrean National Conference for Democratic Change has been attended by about 600 from political, civic organizations and independents , despite of the fact that multiplicity of organizations would enrich the political life and action in democratic systems, our multiplicity has been playing a negative effect in the struggle, as per the collective mind of the Eritrean public, our plurality is associated with the divisions that overwhelmed the Eritrean revolution that led to the Civil War and were the seeds that eventually culminated in the failed state of our present , the struggle project against dictatorship is limited to events that would lead to regime change and then hand over power to the people, our current plurality do not have a patronage backing, many aspects our diversity in not built on political programs and solution oriented projects, but is linked to historical events, or the social components, or even the whims of individual leaders, therefore, the steps taken in recent times and led to the convergences between the organizations and the establishment of fronts in this area can refer to following - :

- 1- Convergences among organizations should be based on political programs, and projects for future solutions for these organizations .
- 2- Convergences among organizations should be made after an ample consideration so as to avoid setbacks and divisions that might add further frustration of the Eritrean people.
- 3- Convergences and unity among organizations should be done in a great deal of transparency and clarity, to avoid taking the wrong interpretations.
- 4- Preservation of the EDA the umbrella of the opposition and the development of its performance, and its charter to be the basis for a democratic constitution in the future .

- 5- to consolidate the concepts and practices of democracy in the EDA umbrella and the organizations with the EDA, which includes political parties and organizations.
- 6- organize collective networks of civil organizations with similar goals and programs that would complement each other, or according to a geographic region.

Coalition building is a democratic practice in the modern democratic countries then why are the so called democratic elements in the diaspora against the EDA need more clarifications by the academic of Eritrean democracy.

3. The Charter of the partnership/ Covenant

3.1 Preamble

We , the forces of democratic change , who have convened at the Eritrean National Conference for Democratic Change, representatives of political forces, civil society organizations, categorical sectors, and social components from different political, ideological, ethnic, geographic diversity, inspired by history, we look forward to the future , bearing in mind our political history and struggle and the commandments of our martyrs in building a Safe, peaceful, democratic and prosperous nation, taking an advantage of this historic event, we pledge before ourselves and our people to work hard, sincerely and unrelentingly to achieve the just aspirations of our people founding a State of the rule of law, freedom, democracy and peace on the ruins of the authoritarian and dictatorial regime, which had perched on the chest of our people and our homeland since the eve of independence in May 1991 up to pres

3.2 National Values and Citizens Rights

- That the state of Eritrea is relatively modern, and its founding factors are not different from the rest of the African countries, where colonization powers had demarcated its borders so as to meet the colonizer's own aspirations, and not necessarily to formulate a social, ethnic, religious and political homogeneous nation.
- The Eritrean people are deeply rooted in the history of the Eritrean land and had gained its own distinct characteristics and identity which is a hybrid of Arabic and Abyssinian cultures and civilizations congregated on the Ethiopian

plateau, with such a unique characteristics the Eritrean people is equipped with the most significant criteria to assemble the two civilizations together and play a key role in bridging the gaps found between them

- The social mingling among the components of the Eritrean people through intermarriage relationships, historical ties, shared cultures, life style and shared interests , all these had made the Eritrean people distinguished with its own characteristics which are enough qualifications for a nation to coexist in peace and build a common prosperous future.

- Today Eritrea is a sovereign state recognized by the international community as a result of the sacrifices of its people with all its political, ethnic, religious, cultural, geographical diversity. The ultimate price was paid by the innumerable martyrs and wounded in addition to the patience in times of suffering the bitterness of refugee life and displacements, for objective of enjoying the homeland and create peace, security, democracy and prosperity.

- Under the grip of the dictatorial system, Eritrea had proved unable to realise the aspirations of our people. On the contrary, it has consisted a big shock for our gallant people when never expected it to turn out so, in a clear violation to the aspirations of our people to live in freedom and dignity, all these were turned out to the nightmares of restricted rights under the independent State of Eritrea, the rights to political decision-making that would make the present and the future of Eritrea peaceful coexistence between the internal components of the nation as well as with the regional and international communities, the priority should have been given to the reconstruction of the present and future of a modern country like Eritrea.

- The negative aspects of the regime did not depend merely on the political despotism , absence of constitutional legitimacy, economical and social collapse, but had made a painful strike at the heart of the Project for National Unity, which was brought about by martyrs' blood, so that the regime's survival depends on playing games with the secondary contradictions of our people, thus the regime had brought the project of national unity to a stage of great risk, which doubles our responsibility to confront all that as a nation and a people at a crossroads.

- the responsibility of changing the current regime lies on the shoulders of the Eritrean people, and above all the political forces and civil organizations. So as to replace the current regime with a democratic system that would meet the aspirations of our people in peace, security, democracy and social welfare.

- Despite the great developments that the opposition had witnessed in the wider sense of opposition, where most sectors of the Eritrean people are opposing the dictatorial system, but the efforts made so far, to frame a large-scale public opposition to the regime, are less than what it takes to challenge the largest threats facing the future of the nation and the gaps that need to be bridged towards bringing about regime change

● Primarily building on the above facts, we, the Eritreans congregated at the Eritrean National Conference for Democratic Change, will coordinate our struggle backed by hard work and unparalleled dedication to achieve and maintain the following- :

1- Preserve the unity of the Eritrea within its internationally recognized political and geographical territory, and maintain its sovereignty, after all Eritrea is the legacy we inherited from our forefathers, a commandment of our martyrs and the hope for the future.

2- to strive in building a national, popular, voluntary unity based on the values of social justice and respect for the distinctions and differences between the components of the Eritrean people's ethnic, religious, political diversity, drawing lessons from the bright moments in our history, such as the experience of the Independence Block, the collective struggle of our people and the referendum, where our unity was manifested in its brightest image.

3- To work honestly and faithfully to build unity on the factors of mutual trust, mutual respect, common interests, equal rights and duties, equitable distribution of wealth and power free of domination, exclusion or absorption.

4- to relentlessly struggle and work hard for the removal of the current regime and replace it with a democratic system based on the principle of citizenship regarding individuals, and a multi-party system in the competition for power regarding political organizations and parties with full recognition of the right for any organization to embrace any political program that would convince the public to be a good governance program, the adoption of elections' mechanism to access a system according to the will of the people that respects the characteristics of the religious and ethnic cultural and regional diversity.

5- the principle of citizenship and fair competition in power and wealth could not be guaranteed under the imbalance caused by the absence of equitable participation of the components of our ethnic and regional political powers and the consequences on the basic services such as education, health and information, we must apply the principle of (Affirmative action) until there is a balance between all the regional and ethnic components, only then the principle of citizenship would come in accordance with the principle of justice.

6- a full commitment that the State and the society would work to ensure the empowerment of women in taking their pioneer and natural positions in the society, to legislate the laws needed to overcome the norms that limit their contribution and participation in public life and the fight against harmful traditional practices that degrade their dignity and humanity, the elimination of discrimination against women in political and public life, and give them the right to vote and run as candidates and to hold office and participate in political parties and organizations and trade unions on an equal footing with man, To bestow an Affirmative Action on women in the fields of education, employment and public policy.

7- a strict pledge to exchange power peacefully, and to solve the differences between the political, civil, religious and ethnic forces by peaceful and democratic means, in accordance with the established and approved laws or customs, to collectively condemn the use of force and consider it a red-line, the perpetrator of the use of force must face accountability and punishment.

8- respect and preserve the human dignity of the Eritrean human being, as the most important wealth that we have, including the maintenance of the right of the Eritrean human beings to enjoy the wealth of the country, and the right to religion, belief, expression, movement, property, rights that must include preservation of the Eritrean citizen's rights even when abroad (outside his country) because the dignity of the citizen is the dignity of the state and the nation.

9- Future Eritrea should reflect all the values, cultures and heritage of the components of the nation, so that every component find itself reflected in the image of the country, therefore, every one would feel proud of being part of the nation and would voluntarily defend it.

10- Equality of all Eritrean languages among them the Equality of Arabic and Tigrigna languages as two-equal-official-languages of the country, besides giving the all Eritrean Ethnic Groups the right to use and develop their own language.

11- To embrace all the Eritrean cultures, customs and beliefs as part and parcel of the heritage of the Eritrean Nation, and then work to maintain and develop them through all possible mediums especially the national media.

12- Full commitment to abide by all international conventions, especially those relating to human rights, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants on Civil and political rights and economic and social development. Then to legislate and pass laws based on these principles.

13- Work towards making the National Civil Service an interface that represents the components of our people, in a manner that could achieve national harmony and coexistence.

14- To make the Military and Security establishments an Eritrean national institutions that would reflect the diversity of Eritrea, nevertheless, the Military and Security institutions should refrain from meddling in political disputes, and maintain a national professional institutions that reflect and maintain the prestige of the state and sponsor the Constitution.

15- re-evaluation of the current indefinite national service and specify the period that young people should spend in national military service, according to the constitution, furthermore to seek education and training opportunities for those who have become victims of the current indefinite service, the State should consider the young sector of the society , as half of the present ans the whole future, so that should give a greater portion of its attention to the youth, and to upgrade the youth through strategic planning in education, training and employment

16- Adoption of a decentralized system of governance so that the authorities are parallel between the Centre and the Region, the local population would be able to rule themselves and develop their wealth and take advantage of the powers conferred by the Constitution.

17- Since Land pre-existed the political State, and that the existence of human beings is inseparable from the land, and that civilization is defined as the interaction between the man and the land, thus all the usurped lands should be returned to their legitimate owners, otherwise the land owners should be compensated accordingly, in compliance with a mechanism of mutual-satisfaction and compromise.

18- To exert relentless efforts to restore all material and moral rights to their respective owners, and to hold accountable violation perpetrators before the court of law, having all the meaningful justice mechanisms in accordance with international standards.

19-To release all political prisoners, prisoners of beliefs, thought and conscience, and to compensate them for the sufferings they survived, also to compensate families of prisoners for the deprivation they have suffered, and to prosecute the perpetrators of injustices according to the values of justice.

20- Accreditation of mechanisms and commissions of professionals for the purpose of writing the Eritrean history in unbiased professional manner, and then adopt a mechanism to recognize physical and mental wrongdoings and encourage the victimised societies to forgive the offenders, then proceed towards purifying the collective memory of the people of Eritrea from the residues and suspicions of the past and then cross to the future of new era with open hearts and minds.

21- To maintain and preserve the standard umbrella of the opposition (Eritrean Democratic Alliance EDA), and work to develop its charter, and to exert material and moral support to it, and sustenance of its internal and external activities, and to improve its political and media apparatuses towards enabling it lead the process of democratic change.

22- to develop the concepts and practices of democracy within the forces of Eritrean Democratic Alliance EDA along with its political components not excluding the political and civic forces outside the EDA, in order to deepen the concepts of democracy in the theoretical visions and practical programs, because democracy evolves by practice, the forces and organizations that do not practice democracy while in the opposition are not expected to practice it when on power.

23- to work hard to help Eritrea get rid of the regional and international isolation caused by the regime's reckless policies, and to adopt a balanced strategy based on good neighbourliness and non-interference in the affairs of other countries, dealing on the basis of equality and the development of mutual interests and respect for international law and the signing of international

treaties in relation to human rights , politics, trade and environment, in a limitless cooperation with international and regional organizations.

24- To strive for the implementation of the border demarcation between Ethiopia and Eritrea based on the binding decision that would contribute to strengthening peace between the two brotherly peoples and the region.

4.The Transitional Period

The way to the Transitional Period

The access way to the transitional period requires a series of necessary steps that could be abridged in following:

1- The Eritrean Democratic Alliance forces should pursue the securing of the elements of those who seek to change regime from within the institutions of the regime, and to coordinate with them to ensure a smooth change that would lead to democratic change which our people aspires .

2- Preparation of well researched studies to the state of affairs in Eritrea, and the damages that the policies and practices of the Eritrean Regime would leave bind, in an independent and detailed manner, focusing on various fields, and the perception for dispensing the present imbalances.

3- The necessity of examining a range of possibilities for change, the more likely possibility, Whether from within the regime or from outside by the Eritrean Resistance Forces, and the level of compatibility between the two, followed by an evaluation of the pros and cons of each possibility, then proceed to make every effort to skew the successful probability for better prospects.

4- the mobilization of all means and mechanisms of change which the Eritrean Democratic Alliance EDA possesses, and the positioning of all the means and mechanisms in a united single front, in order to enhance the effectiveness and raise the morale of the various sectors of our people at home and abroad, to increase its contributions to the moral and material struggle towards democratic change in our country.

5- Ensure the unity of the forces of the Eritrean Democratic Alliance particularly, in the case of admitting of the dialogue in the part of the regime, as well as in the case of sudden collapse of the regime.

6- To unify a vision of the components in the Eritrean Democratic Alliance EDA, on the transitional period in more detailed manner, and including it in the Eritrean Democratic Alliance's Charter.

4.1 Period of Transition

Transitional Period is an era following the demise of a certain regime. In the case of colonial or dictatorial regimes, Transitional Period becomes the toughest and the most complicated stage that peoples and nations could experience, as it encompasses a transformation from the situations of sturdy scourges and wounds that usually colonial or dictatorial regimes leave behind into an atmosphere full of hopes and aspirations towards an era of security, stability, freedom, justice, peace and prosperity, which are inexistence under colonial and dictatorial regimes.

Today, the truth of situations in Eritrea embodies such a toughest and most complicated stage. Since the independence of Eritrea in 1993 which was a direct result of the struggles of our people for more than four decades. However, the people did not enjoy the happiness other than a short-lived euphoria of the victorious independence; the repressive practices of the regime soon reared its head, The Eritrean people had lost the security and stability for over two decades under the regime. Today, Eritrea had become a giant prison that every one looking for any possible occasion to get out of it at any price, compelled to live a humiliating life in refugee camps in the neighbouring countries and beyond, in spite of the substantial risks involved.

The concept of rule of law and a state of institutions had vanished under the Eritrean regime of oppression and the terror of the secret police and gangs, assassinations, night raids of kidnappings, prisons and detention centres in the mostly underground dungeons, the Eritrean regime had practiced the most heinous crimes against humanity. The regime has trampled on the concepts of freedom, political rights, economic, religious, cultural and administrative in flagrant violation of the principles of justice and equality. Putting the national unity and social peace in Eritrea at great risk and threats that requires urgent efforts to overcome it before it is too late.

Definition of the Transitional period:

Transitional period encompasses the span of time extending from the downfall of the regime to the moment of the formation of a democratically elected government; the authority in such a period is run by interim and transitional governments respectively.

A- Interim government: is a category of governance established immediately as a replacement of the overthrown regime, and which is formed by the victorious forces struggling for change.

1-Period of interim government: six months effect from the date of assignment until the date of handover to the transitional government.

4.2Tasks and Responsibilities of the transitional government

1- Establishment of the required security and stability apparatuses, dismissal of the high-ranking military and security leaders of the former regime, besides preserving the security, military and police institutions.

2- The release of political prisoners, journalists, advocates of religious values and prisoners of conscience, the abolition of all unjust commandments and laws that fetters the public freedoms, the closure of all prisons that violates or don't meet the international standards in this regard.

3- The annulment of the exclusion policies that had been formulated by the regime, such as the Constitution along with the unimplemented laws and regulations pertaining elections and political parties.

4- Termination of all agreements and conventions that the regime has made whenever such dealings violate the interests of the people or undermine the sovereignty of the nation.

5- Termination of any activities of the ruling party and travel ban to be imposed on the leaders of the party, at least until the end of the period of the interim government.

6- The defence of the nation's sovereignty and preservation of its wealth against misuse and corruption

7- Arrangement of a largely attended Nation Conference with a specified appointment to:

- a- Put in place a transitional National Chart and Constitution.
- b- Formation of a Transitional National Assembly.

B- The tasks of Transitional National Assembly.

- 1- Defines the structure of the political system for the Transition Period (Parliamentary, Presidential or a blend of the two).
- 2- Assigns a president or a prime Minister in accordance with the political system's structure.
- 3- The president or the Prime Minister would introduce the Transition Government he has formed, to the National Assembly to endorse it.
- 4- Legislate laws; approve the draft laws provided by the Transitional Government including the laws regarding political parties and elections.
- 5- Supervises the functioning of the Transition Government.
- 6- Endorses the annual budget for the Transitional Government.
- 7- Drafts a permanent constitution following the peoples' referendum to endorse it.

C- Transitional Government: runs the affairs of the state subsequent to the interim government and remains so until the formation of the Democratically Elected Government.

- 1- period of the Transitional Government: Two Years
- 2- The Form of Transitional Government: a coalition of all civic and political forces and national public figures.
- 3- The tasks of Transitional Government:

First: Political and constitutional tasks.

- 1- Preservation and protection of the overall rights and public freedoms for all Eritreans, individuals and groups, under the canopy of the united peoples and territories of Eritrea.
- 2- Commitment to the International Conventions and the United Nations' Resolutions and the International Declaration on Human Rights.
- 3- The Drafting of rules pertaining the management of all walks of life in the State of Eritrea, including laws and regulations relevant to the Political Parties and the elections, to be ratified by the Transitional National Assembly.
- 4- The Improvement of the image of the country (Eritrea) in the international arena, and the attrition of all negative assumptions on the relations of Eritrea in the regional and international atmosphere,

through diplomatic relations based on mutual respect and bilateral interests in an approach that would reflect the eagerness of the Eritrean people to live in peace alongside all regional and international communities.

- 5- To seek out strategic bilateral and collective relations with all neighbouring countries towards achieving the interests and stability of the peoples of the region.
- 6- The drafting of national constitution in lamp of the transitional constitution.
- 7- The formation of specialised federations to tackle the issues of Constitution, elections, population census, land allotment, repatriation of refugees, reconciliation and rectification of past injustices.
- 8- Supervision of the democratic elections in all stages and then handover power to the democratically elected government.

Second: Military and Security tasks:

- 1- Obstruction of the Military Service for a period of three years and the demobilisation of the conscripts upon ones-own will, in a process that wouldn't mess-up the regular functioning of the military, security and police institutions.
- 2- Reduction of the number of the Eritrean Defence Forces and reshuffling of its structure to bear a resemblance to the criteria of balanced participation of the entire components of our people, And by the same token reshuffling the structures of the police and security institutions.
- 3- Reduction of budgets allotted to military and security apparatuses in a mode that doesn't hinder its regular functioning and its legitimate role that to be stated on the transitional constitution.
- 4- Repel of the military and security institutions from interfering in political affairs.
- 5- Instructing the military and security institutions towards protecting the constitution and public freedoms, and contribution in the national development.
- 6- The Transitional Government is uncommitted to any military or security agreements signed by the Regime if found in contrast to the interests of the Eritrean people and/or that would diminish the sovereignty of the nation.

Third: Economic tasks.

- 1- To nationalize the Regime's financial and economical institutions for the benefit of the state and the public treasury.
- 2- The Transitional Government is uncommitted to refunding military and security debts obtained in the era of the current Eritrean Regime.
- 3- Guarantee the freedom of national and foreign investments with priority being given to national investments, foreign investors should essentially carry out the employment of locals in their respective businesses.
- 4- The Transitional Government would approach friendly and brotherly countries to secure assistance, financial aids, donations and long-term loans, in addition, the Transitional Government would invite relevant United Nations' Agencies and all domestic and regional organizations to exert assistance to the Transitional Government in order to facilitate the required foundations for the development and stability of Eritrea.
- 5- Enlargement of all natural wealth and resources towards developing the national economy, national production, national revenue and to secure self-fulfilment.
- 6- Exert efforts to repatriate the Eritrean Refugees, in order to enable them take their deserved part in the national development endeavours that would require massive vigour and a hard work.

Fourth: Civil Service and Administrative Tasks.

- 1- Rationalization of the state administrative apparatuses according to the fundamentals to realise justice and equal participation of the components of the Eritrean people.
- 2- The adoption of the Arabic language and the Tigrigna language equivalently in the administrative levels, besides the rectification of the current imbalances in this respect through continuous education and encouragement.
- 3- Adoption of decentralized administration to the Eritrean provinces.
- 4- Rehabilitation of the local administrations to administer their public affairs, in a modus operandi that doesn't pose challenges to the role of the State Institutions.

Fifth: Tasks Corresponding to the Liberties and Public Freedoms.

- 1- Guarantees Freedom of political activities and all kinds of freedoms including freedoms of assembly, press, religion and movement.
- 2- Re-structure of the law courts in every level to assure justice for all.
- 3- Encourages of coexistence, tolerance, recognition of shared rights, towards making them the culture of the society.
- 4- Guarantees of equitable distribution of power and wealth to the components of the Eritrean People.
- 5- Permits the establishment of associational sectors in accordance with the law.

Sixth: Tasks Corresponding to Services and Public Utilities.

A-education

- 1- Embrace an educational policy that would reflect the will and the aspirations of the society.
- 2- Encouraging of the technical and academic education in line with the requirements of the economy and the national development.
- 3- Realization of the Arabic and Tigrigna languages by making them languages of instructions in the Eritrean educational institutions
- 4- Establishment of literacy classes especially in the rural areas.
- 5- Schooling would be obligatory up to 10th grade.
- 6- Equal educational opportunities for the components of the Eritrean people, backed by the construction of educational units and institutions throughout the country, encouraging the local communities to dispatch their children for schooling.
- 7- Upgrade the qualifications of teachers through regular continues training.
- 8- Dormitory and catering should be allotted in the secondary and university levels, particularly to students from the rural areas, Affirmative Action in terms of admission in the secondary and university levels as well as scholarships abroad.
- 9- Free-of-charge education in all educational levels.

B-Healthcare and Infrastructure

- 1- Provide healthcare services for all citizens, construction of healthcare centers (clinics) and hospitals throughout the country.

2- Encouragement of preventive-healthcare, maternity and infancy health and prevention of transmissible diseases.

3- Advancement of transportation, public infrastructure and communication technology besides expanding all these services to make the whole nation beneficiary.

Seventh Tasks corresponding to Land ownership

The entire perception of land ownership and land allotment in Eritrea need to be thoroughly studied, especially after the deformity befallen the concept of land-ownership under the State-ownership-of-land which the regime has been implementing, namely the policy of settlements and displacements. The Transitional Government should study thoroughly the concept of land ownership within the State of Eritrea, in order to make the public and private sectors beneficiaries of Land, the local administrations could be of great help in this regard, in addition to the previous experiences in this field in both the colonial and revolution's era

In reference to the above guidelines, the Transitional Government would have to take the following measures.

- 1-Formulate a temporary commandments pertaining land ownership.
- 2- Establishment of a specialized association and a special court to deal with disputes on land ownerships.
- 3- Return the Internally Displaced Persons to their respective original habitats.
- 4- To prepare proper locations in the Eritrean provinces in association with the UNHCR and likewise organizations to repatriate the Eritrean Refugees to their respective regions.

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