



2010-10-29

The National Congress

The National Conference (NC) is praised for the fact that 330 Eritreans met to ponder over the intricate problems facing their people and nation. By this decisive breakthrough, the Eritrean people were able to take the first step towards their political empowerment: the second step is envisioned to be the National Congress to be held at the end of 2011. In this respect, the path of the NC is a departure from previous Eritrean congresses and conferences.

1. Diaspora Eritreans fought against an intensive spoiler movement to block the convocation of the NC. Political organizations, civil societies, and refugee organizations demonstrated remarkable **political will** by attending the conference for democratic change
2. Once assembled, the delegates practiced dialogue with a sense of fraternity. The papers presented at the workshops were **criticized and improved**. The improved versions of the documents were, in their turn, discussed and **approved by all the delegates**
3. The NC resolved that a **Commission** composed out of political organizations and the public at large be established with the task of convoking a National Congress within the brackets of a year

Political will

That the Asmara regime would do its utmost to derail the National Conference was taken as given by the opposition forces; what shocked the overwhelming majority in the Diaspora, and silent opponents inside the country, was the campaign launched by a sector of the opposition against the NC. Despite the bad chemistry fomented by the spoiler campaign, the delegates resolved that the seats allocated to the absentee members of the EDA be reserved for them. Strangely, a renewed campaign has been launched against the National Congress; this round, the massive support enjoyed by the National Congress has made the efforts of the spoilers futile: Unfortunately for the spoilers, there is no preparatory committee to blame; in the

end, the detractors of the National Congress will eventually come into the open and show their true colors.

When three hundred and three score Eritreans meet they create miracles; they proved that in August last. The Eritrean people have now seized the tools of democratic empowerment in their hands: actual and potential detractors are advised to discern the present political phase correctly; unless, the new political development released by the August Conference is decoded correctly, fateful errors might be committed by those who ought to know better.

The Documents of the National Conference

The participants of the conference discussed prepared documents in five workshops; issues of national and religious inequality were discussed courageously and maturely. Eritreans demonstrated that they are able and willing to live together in harmony. That is what occurs when the people are empowered: they debate issues fully aware that all outstanding problems may not be solved at one go; nevertheless, they are conscious of the fact that by keeping good will constant, it is possible to deal with knotty variables. On the basis of goodwill and collective wisdom, the documents improved at the workshops were presented as guidelines for the consideration of the National Congress.

Establishment of a Commission

The delegates approved the guidelines that had the following aims: the convocation of a National Congress and the establishment of a Commission. The role of the Commission was specified to be the preparation of the National Congress and the pursuit of the struggle against the Asmara regime. The workshops recommended that the commission be composed of political organizations and the public. The Commission was defined as an independent entity solely responsible to the coming National Congress. It was also recommended that the commission, the EDA, and civil society organizations pool their energy for the purpose of making the National Congress a resounding success. The documents studied and improved at the workshops were passed as resolutions by the National Conference. The number of representatives of the EDA (including the EPDP), the non-EDA political

organizations, and the public turned out to be fifty-three. In this configuration, the EDA represents 40% of the Commission.

The next step was holding the meeting of the Commission for the National Congress. At this meeting, a leadership composed of seven members was elected to the Executive Committee; these were the Chairman, his Deputy, the Executive Secretary, and Chairmen of the four committees. These constitute the leadership of the Commission: at this meeting, the guidelines of the Commission were formulated and the tasks of the committees defined. The tasks of the four committees were outlined as follows: The Organizational Committee was charged with the duty of mobilizing Eritreans for the victory of the National Congress, by establishing effective machinery for the participation of a large number of delegates. The Political Committee was assigned to prepare key documents for the consideration of the National Congress: the main documents to be prepared are the Draft Constitution, the Road Map, the National Charter, and the Fundamental Structure for the upcoming organization.

On the practical side, the Media Committee was assigned to cover the entire spectrum of information and communication. The task of the Financial Committee is linked to the support that Eritrean communities in the Diaspora can give to the **Congress**. This is not money to be raised for political organizations: but constitutes a solidarity fund geared for the success of the National Congress. The Eritrean people are expected to contribute towards their own empowerment. The accusation that the Commission is dependent upon regional powers, while declining to contribute small sums to the most important political event after the independence of Eritrea, does not hold water any longer. As it can be discerned, the strategy of the Commission is to rely on the Eritrean people for the victory of the National Congress: the spearhead of the campaign in the effort to mobilize Eritreans for the **Congress** are those three hundred and thirty delegates who made the National Conference a success.

Tasks of the Commission

At this stage the most important homework of the Commission is to publicize two important points. The first is to instill the message that the National Congress is pivotal for the survival of our nation. The second point is to clarify that this congress

is not being prepared by the EDA, but by a commission empowered by the National Conference. This means that the **Congress** belongs to the people, and that only the people can ensure its success. It is now up to the people to organize congress committees and mobilize the Diaspora communities so that a massive congress movement emerges. The Commission can, in this context, play the role of facilitator; this is especially true for the Financial and Information Committees. These two committees are empowered to take the necessary steps to raise Eritrean funds for an Eritrean National Congress. Holding “congress dinners”; making an honor list of well-to-do Eritreans, soliciting the support of Eritrean artists to organize cultural evenings, and other tried fund-raising methods, need to be activated. Formal methods of raising funds are left in the able hands of the leadership of the Commission.

Eritrean National Commission for Democratic Change (ENCDC)