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المجلس الوطني الإرتري للتغيير الديمقراطي
رئاسة المجلس

Eritrean National Council for Democratic Change

Presidency of the Council

Action-based Political Road–map for the Journey from Dictatorship to Democracy in Eritrea

To bring about democratic change, restore peace and establish the rule of law in our nation, we have to be guided by a performance-based and goal-driven road-map. It should be drawn up with clearly defined phases, target dates and benchmarks, to enable us to progress during the pre-transitional and transitional periods in the fields of politics, social issues, security, economy, humanitarian assistance and institution- building.

The primary aim of this political Road-Map is not only to clarify the different stages of activity and the timetable for the leadership of the opposition as a whole, but to illustrate the wide range of innovations that are being developed to motivate the people and encourage public participation in our struggle for democratic change.

In our political journey guided by this Road-map, we have to go through five (5) different phases of varying duration, before reaching our final destination.

Pre-transitional period

Phase I – The Formation of Eritrean Democratic Alliance (EDA) in 1999

Phase II – The Eritrean National Conference for Democratic Change (ENCDC) 2010

Phase III – The Eritrean National Congress for Democratic Change (ENCDC) 2011

Phase IV – The Downfall of the Dictator

Transitional Period

Phase V – Transitional Period. Time span: from the downfall of the dictator to the formation of a democratically elected government.

Phase I – The formation of the Eritrean Democratic Alliance (EDA) and its achievements towards the democratic change

Early in 1999, in the time of the *Eritrean National Association* (ENA), the predecessor of the *Eritrean Democratic Alliance* (EDA), ideas began to develop about convening a National Conference that would encompass the widest possible spectrum of the Eritrean opposition. Its primary aim was to extend the popular base of opposition to the regime beyond the confines of the EDA and its constituent organisations. In recent years, this idea was frequently discussed by elements of the leadership and senior cadres of the opposition, at various EDA events and functions, at other relevant events, with a view to turning it into reality as soon as possible. Though no-one questioned its national significance in the eyes of the opposition, it took a long time to materialise for various reasons, including the difficulty some organisations had in believing in the proposal. The idea of convening the conference was finally taken seriously only in May 2008 during the EDA unity congress.

The concept of a national conference for democratic change eventually took shape at the first major meeting in Addis Ababa, from the end of July to mid-August 2010, with the participation of 330 Eritreans of various political persuasions, civil society organisations, spiritual leaders, prominent individuals etc. from all corners of the world. In the face of overwhelming odds, credit goes to the EDA and its constituent organisations for finally convening the conference, second only in the history of our struggle to the 1947 conference of *Biet Ghiorghis*, which our revered forefathers attended. One prelude to this was resolution no. 4 of the EDA unity congress, of 5 - 11 May 2008, at which civil society organisations participated, with observer status,. Recognising the urgent need to bring together the power and resources of all political elements opposed to the regime, as the only means

of bringing about its downfall and introducing democratic change in our country on its demise, the congress passed this resolution which instructed the Central Council (CC) of the EDA to lay the groundwork and provide a conducive atmosphere for a successful conference to be convened.

In the days following the conclusion of the unity congress, the CC of the EDA held its 1st Session from 12 to 24 May 2008, and passed a resolution instructing the Executive Committee (EC) to organise a workshop for all opposition organisations, parties and civil society groups, with the objective of formulating the principal national goals to be discussed at the congress. At its meeting of 4 - 8 July 2009, the EC finished organising the imminent workshop, and forwarded its proposals for the chief issues to be discussed at the conference, namely: (1) National Unity, (2) Mode of Struggle, (3) Roadmap to the Transitional Period.

Soon afterwards, the CC at its 2nd Session of 15 - 21 July 2009 adopted the suggestions and recommendations of the workshop presented by the EC. Taking August 2009 as a convenient reference point, it not only resolved that the conference should take place within a year, but gave the EC the responsibility of establishing the Preparatory Committee, and at the same time reminded the EC that participation from outside should be less than from the EDA and its constituent organisations. All organisations are known to have agreed and accepted the decision of the EC.

Following the decision of the CC, the EC soon delegated to a temporary committee from within its ranks the task of sorting out which civil society organisations might join the preparatory committee. The committee duly selected 8 civil society groups which it believed should be eligible to send one representative each. The preparatory committee for the national conference was finally established with 21 members, 13 from EDA member organisations and 8 from civil society groups. The National Conference For Democratic Change duly took place in Addis Ababa from July 31st to August 9th 2010.

Phase II – The Eritrean National Conference for Democratic Change (ENCDC) and its achievements towards democratic change.

The conference, which aimed to liberate our people and our nation, was held in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, from July 31st to August 9th 2010. It had over 330 participants, and reflected the diversity of the Eritrean people.

The participants' declaration stated:

“We the forces for democratic change in Eritrea, struggling for peace, democracy, human rights, good governance and stability, have conducted a conference for democratic change from July 31st to August 9th 2010 in the Ethiopian Capital Addis Ababa.”

Historically, the Eritrean people have resolved their internal and external conflicts through dialogue and conferences. This conference built on the experiences of past generations of Eritreans.

After the opening day of the conference, the participants were divided into 5 workshop groups and discussed the documents presented on national unity, the democratic process, the transitional period and the national charter and the road map. After constructive discussion, the groups made the following decisions, among others.

The conference decided that a national congress should be convened within a year. A Commission of 53 members, six of whom are women, was assigned this task. In addition, the Commission was given the tasks of mobilisation, planning the media strategy, finance and fund raising, and drafting a national charter, interim constitution, and political road-map towards democracy, after collecting material and opinions from the public and experts.

The conference and the current situation in Eritrea

The conference was conducted at a time when Eritrea is in chaos, oppressed by unprecedented crimes against humanity under a brutal dictator. Eritrea is falling into the abyss; our people are detained in dungeons, iron containers and underground cells. At both international and regional level, Eritrea is considered as a country that produces one of the highest numbers of refugees.

Over 330 people participated in the conference; they included representatives of 10 members of the Eritrean Democratic Alliance, 14 non-EDA political organizations, civil society organizations from Sudan, Ethiopia, Middle East, Europe, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, religious leaders, elders, women and young people, refugees, veterans, Eritrean media, and academia, as well as individuals and human rights activists.

The objective of the Conference For Democratic Change was to liberate the people and the nation from the brutality of the dictatorship, and to build mutual trust and national unity, so that all Eritreans can live together in peace and stability.

The conference not only discussed the conflict within the opposition, openly and constructively, but recognized the injustices that had taken place and reached a common understanding and mutual respect. These were the main achievements of the event. The conference debated national unity and the contested issues of religion, ethnicity and language with openness and mutual respect, and reached a bold agreement and understanding.

Participants discussed the divide-and-rule policies of the dictator and the crimes against our religion, culture and languages which threaten to destroy the historical and social fabric of the Eritrean people; and built up mutual confidence and a shared perception of the situation.

Finally, the participants paid tribute to the Martyr Tesfahuney, who died following a car accident on his way to the conference; they sent condolences to his beloved family.

The conference for democratic change was conducted in a positive atmosphere. Issues discussed at the workshops focussed on:

1. Assessment of the political struggle against the dictatorship by the EDA leadership
2. National Unity
3. Democratic transition: modes and methods
4. Charter
5. Transitional period: From the fall of the dictatorship to constitutional government

After finalising the documents presented and recording the workshop discussions, the drafting committee for the conference statements presented resolutions and recommendations to be ratified. The participants met in a plenary session at the end of the workshops and endorsed the resolutions and recommendations unanimously.

Phase III – The Eritrean National Congress for democratic Change (ENCDC)

We believe this is the most difficult of the five phases, because it is at this congress that we have to come up with a grand strategy to destroy the dictatorship and design a provisional government and institutions. These are crucial instruments for the transition from dictatorship to democracy. With this in mind, it is of great importance to assess the real situation of the Eritrean people under the brutal dictatorship.

Issayas as a dictator has always depended on a leadership strategy based on fear, as a ruthless but effective way of gaining and holding onto power. That is why he always relies on threats, intimidation, scapegoating, and uses lies and propaganda to dehumanize his opponents, distorting reality by describing the victim as perpetrator. He brands anyone who questions the lies on which his propaganda is based as traitors or agents of the CIA. According to Issayas, lying is informing the people, attack is self-defence, human rights violations are maintaining order, vicious acts are obeying the law or doing one's duty, murder is law enforcement.

As is well understood anywhere in the world, the ordinary people don't want war; in Eritrea it is Issayas alone who determines policy and it is always simple for him to drag the people along with him. All he has to do is declare that the country is under attack or about to be invaded by "a primitive and cowardly foreign enemy". Those who oppose his lies are denounced as lacking patriotism, and as subversive elements exposing the country to danger. They are condemned to prison or else they disappear by night, etc...etc... Today, Eritrea has become a giant prison, and everyone is looking for any possible means of escape, at any price. People are compelled to vote against the dictator with their feet, and to endure a humiliating life in refugee camps in the neighbouring countries.

The only antidote for our people, who are poisoned by fear and hatred of and by the PFDJ, is the eradication of the dictator and his criminal institutions. The evil strategy and tactics of the tyrant and his henchmen are no longer a secret for our people; he has already lost internal and international legitimacy as a government. The matter should not stop there. As an alternative to the dictatorship, we must show our political maturity in understanding the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law,

which must be achieved speedily and without compromise; and be ready to transfer power to its true owners, the Eritrean People.

We take democracy to be the alternative to dictatorship. Democracy by definition is government by the people, in which supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents, under a free and fair electoral system. Democracy can be judged in practice by whether citizens have equal access to justice, economic opportunity, public services and participation in the democratic process. In a true democracy the government serves and obeys the people, not vice-versa. For democracy to work as defined, the role of the people is indispensable. Individuals have to participate in public life; they have to know their obligations and rights and become informed about public issues; they must observe carefully how their political leaders and representatives use their power, and express their own opinions and interests. Direct democracy provides opportunities for citizens to participate directly in important public decisions that may have a significant impact on their quality of life; e.g. through public referenda on all major decisions, policy changes, and questions of national importance. Citizens' participation must be peaceful, respect the law (democracy never leads to chaos) and be tolerant of the different views of others; citizens must be capable of making open, intelligent decisions and separating truth from falsehood. Voting wisely in elections is another important civic duty of all citizens. A vital form of participation comes also through active membership in independent, non-government organizations, ie in civil society.

Decisions to be made in the third phase, which is the Eritrean National Congress for Democratic Change are:

- a) The adoption of the Charter
- b) The adoption of the Road-Map
- c) The adoption of the interim or Transitional Constitution
- d) The adoption of the grand strategy for the Overthrow of the Dictator.
- e) The adoption of the policies and the creation of essential institutions.
- f) The establishment of the leadership, ie The Eritrean National Council for Democratic Change”.

Phase IV – The Downfall of the Dictator

We need to examine the range of possibilities for change, whether from within the regime or by the Eritrean Resistance Forces; to evaluate of the pros and cons of each possibility; and from there to maximize our prospects

of success. One of the most important prerequisites for the downfall of the dictator is for the opposition to consolidate the following essential powers.

- a. Political Power** - Mobilization of the people wherever they may be, and the mobilization of all the mechanisms of change at the EDA's disposal. The creation of all this into a single united front, in order both to enhance the effectiveness and raise the morale of the various sectors of our people at home and abroad, and at the same time to increase moral and material support for the struggle for democratic change in our country. To organize seminars, demonstrations and festivals for Eritreans abroad.
- b. Military Power** – To reorganize the military wing of the opposition and decide on a single, specific military strategy; revitalizing urban-guerilla warfare.
- c. Diplomatic Activities**- To push for intensification of the existing UN-imposed embargo on the regime. To organize intensive diplomatic activities, including visits to regional and international organizations by the leadership of the opposition and members of the commissions.
- d. Financial Power** – To mobilize our people to provide generous and sustained financial support to the opposition. To investigate the possibility of international financial support from governments, parties, NGO's and private enterprise.
- e. Organizational** – To introduce and organize underground activities inside the country: The new leadership to be elected by the congress (ENCD) should select a small contact committee to work with those who seek to overthrow the regime from within and outside its institutions, and in coordination with them create an effective plan of action for the implementation of democratic change in Eritrea.

Phase V – Transitional Period

As explained above, the transitional period is the time between the overthrow of the dictator and the creation of a permanent system of legal, democratically elected, government. During this transitional period two elected authorities are to be established: the interim government and the

transitional government. The interim government is intended only as an immediate replacement for the overthrown dictator. Its authority will be for a limited period, from 6 months to 1 year, and it will be replaced by the transitional government. During the transitional period, many legal provisions have to be made.

TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TRANSITIONAL AUTHORITIES

A. Interim Government:

1. Establishment of the required security and stability apparatus, dismissal of high-ranking military and security leaders of the former regime, while preserving and restructuring security, military and police institutions. The dissolution of anti-democratic institutions and dismantling of the security apparatus of the PFDJ.
2. Release of political prisoners, journalists, advocates of specific religious beliefs and prisoners of conscience; the abolition of all unjust laws and regulations which fetter public freedom; the closure of all prisons that fail to meet or violate international standards.
3. Annulment of exclusion policies established by the regime, including the constitution and the unimplemented laws and regulations pertaining to elections and political parties.
4. Termination of all agreements and conventions made by the regime, wherever such dealings violate the interests of the people or undermine the sovereignty of the nation.
5. Termination of all activities of the ruling party and travel ban on the leaders of the party, at least until the end of the period of interim government.
6. The defence of the nation's sovereignty and protection of its wealth against misuse and corruption

7. Arrangement of a broadly attended National Conference with the specific remit of :

- putting in place a transitional National Charter and Constitution
- forming a Transitional National Assembly

B- Transitional National Assembly

The tasks of the National Assembly will be to:

1. Define the structure of the political system for the Transitional Period (Parliamentary, Presidential or a combination of the two).
2. Designate a President or Prime Minister in accordance with the defined political structure.
3. Ensure that the President or Prime Minister introduces the Transitional Government he has formed to the National Assembly for endorsement.
4. Establish a constitutional commission, to prepare the draft constitution.
5. Legislate: approve the draft laws provided by the Transitional Government, including laws on political parties and elections.
6. Supervise the functioning of the Transitional Government.
7. Endorse the annual budget for the Transitional Government.
8. Draft a permanent constitution, to be endorsed by referendum

C- Transitional Government: following the interim government, runs affairs of state and remains in power until the formation of a democratically elected government.

1. The period of the Transitional Government: Two Years
2. The Form of Transitional Government: A government of national unity including political groups, organizations and national public figures.
3. The tasks of Transitional Government will include:

A: POLITICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL TASKS

1. Preservation and protection of the overall rights and public freedoms of all Eritreans. To recognize the right of all citizens to free speech, their right to organize and freedom of movement

2. Commitment to International Conventions and United Nations Resolutions and the International Declaration on Human Rights.
3. The drafting of laws pertaining to the management of every area of life in the State of Eritrea, including laws and regulations on 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 reversal of negative assumptions about Eritrea's relations within the region and internationally, through diplomatic relations based on mutual respect and bilateral interests, reflecting the eagerness of the Eritrean people to live in peace with 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 a national constitution based on the transitional constitution.
7. The formation of specialised bodies to tackle the issues of Constitution, elections, population census, land allocation, repatriation of refugees, reconciliation and rectification of past injustices.
8. After a new a constitution has been adopted, the Transitional Government must abide by its provisions, and conduct a free election with full participation of all political parties and organizations by secret ballot. After the national parliamentary election the Transitional Government shall hand over power to the duly elected party or coalition of parties that gains a majority.

B: MILITARY AND SECURITY TASKS

1. Suspension of Military Service for a period of three years and the voluntary demobilisation of conscripts, without damaging normal military, security and police functions.
2. Reduction of the size of the Eritrean Defence Forces and restructuring to reflect a balance of participation between all communities within our people. Similarly restructuring the police and security institutions.
3. Restructuring of the budgets for military and security institutions without hindering their normal functioning and their legitimate role as stated in the transitional constitution.
4. Barring military and security institutions from interfering in political affairs.

5. Instructing military and security institutions to protect the nation, the constitution and public freedoms, and to contribute to national development.
6. The Transitional Government is not committed to any military or security agreements signed by the Regime which are found to be in conflict with the interests of the Eritrean people and/or likely to diminish the sovereignty of the nation.

C: ECONOMIC TASKS

- 1- To nationalize the Regime's financial and economic institutions for the benefit of the state and the public treasury.
- 2- The Transitional Government is not committed to repaying any military or security debts contracted during the current Eritrean Regime.
- 3- To guarantee freedom of national and foreign investment, with priority given to national investment. Foreign investors will be expected to employ primarily local staff
- 4- The Transitional Government will approach friendly and fraternal nations for assistance, financial aid, donations and long-term loans and will invite relevant United Nations Agencies and domestic and regional organizations to assist the Transitional Government in facilitating the development and stability of Eritrea.
- 5- To use all natural wealth and resources towards developing the national economy, national production, and national revenue and to secure self-sufficiency. A pragmatic, achievable, goal-oriented free market economy should be established and should recognize and protect the right of citizens to own private property.
- 6- To make all possible efforts to repatriate Eritrean refugees, to enable them take their deserved place in the endeavour of national development, which will require hard work and determination.

END

Approved at the Eritrean National Conference for Democratic Change
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