

## **Resolution of the Ethiopian Civil Society Network for Elections**

### **On the Recent Directive Issued by the**

### **National Electoral Board of Ethiopia**

**CONVINCED** that monitoring the upcoming May 2005 elections in an impartial and coordinated manner would contribute to the development democratic process in the country;

**CONSIDERING** that, Civil Societies have created a joint forum/Network and have finalized the preparation for conducting a long term election monitoring;

**REALIZING** that, the "Directive for the Accreditation of Domestic Observers" issued by the National Electoral Board on April 5 2005, highly impedes the intended election monitoring activity of the Network;

**UNDERSTANDING** that, the directive narrows and limits our citizenship and constitutional rights as well as the "right of every civil society organization to monitor elections, as granted by the Revised Electoral Law (Proclamation 438/2005);

**NOW THEREFORE**, we, the members of the Ethiopian Civil Societies Network for Elections, having convened in a General Assembly Meeting and deliberated upon the matter, have unanimously resolved as follows:

#### **The Facts and Demands**

1. Art 38(1) of the constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia guarantees every Ethiopian national with out any distinction based on color, race, nation, nationality, sex, language, political or other opinion or other status, the right to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
2. This right has also clearly been stipulated in international conventions ratified by Ethiopia particularly in Article 25(a) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
3. In relation to the right of monitoring and observing elections, a right which necessarily forms an integral part of the right to participate directly in the conduct of public affairs, the Electoral law of Ethiopia "Proclamation to make the Electoral law of Ethiopia conform with the Constitution of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (Amendment) proclamation (Proc. No.438/2005); under Article 23 clearly stipulates, without making any form of distinction that: "various form of public organizations" may monitor the elections through their representatives.
4. On the contrary, Article 4(a) of the "Directive for the Accreditation of Domestic Observers" issued by the National Electoral Board on April 5, 2005, clearly states that the activity of election monitoring is solely reserved to those domestic organizations capable of submitting documents, indicating that election monitoring is one of their objectives when it was registered and issued a license by the government.

5. By restricting the right to monitor elections solely to those civil society organizations meeting the aforementioned criterion, this Directive blatantly betrays not only the F.D.R.E Constitution and all the International Conventions ratified by Ethiopia but also the spirit of Article 23 of the revised Electoral Law which has adopted a broad definition of eligible domestic observers by enabling "peoples and various forms of Public Organizations through representatives" to monitor the electoral process.
6. In addition, it is to be recalled that in the wake of the promulgation of the revised Electoral Law, the Network, deciding to monitor the voter and candidate registration process, had requested and obtained from the National Electoral Board the required credentials for all the monitors mobilized by member organizations, most of which clearly did not meet the criterion imposed by the "Directive for the Accreditation of Domestic Observers". By doing so, the national Electoral Board has taken upon itself to deny a right it had previously granted member organizations of the Network.
7. Furthermore, we cannot stress our astonishment enough upon realizing that the directive issued by the National Electoral Board creates a significant difference in requirements to be met to get accreditation between international observers and domestic observers. The accreditation Procedure for International Observers does not place any sort of criteria as to the objectives of the foreign institutions that have asked credentials for their monitors while Ethiopian civil society organizations must produce evidentiary support that election observation was considered as part of their objectives the day they registered to obtain a license from the government. Accordingly, we have found the recent actions of the National Electoral Board as amounting to alienation of citizens from the affairs of their own country, while granting superior rights to foreign citizens.
8. Therefore, having noted that the Directive on the Accreditation Procedures of Domestic Observers issued by the National Electoral Board on April 1, 2005, disregards the right given to citizens under the F.D.R.E. Constitution, International Instruments ratified by Ethiopia as well as the revised Electoral Law of Ethiopia (Proclamation 438/2005) and further underscoring that the Directive bestows superior rights to foreign citizens while alienating citizens from the affairs of their own country, we request Article 4 (a) of the Directive be repealed and a new Directive enabling all Ethiopian civil society organizations to monitor elections be issued in its place.

April 9, 2005, Ethiopia Hotel, Addis Ababa