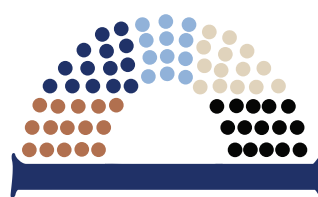




ETHIOPIAN PARLIAMENTARY DIGEST



ENDERASIE

ENDERASIE IS A PARLIAMENTARY MONTHLY
DIGEST ISSUED BY BRIDGE RESEARCH AND
INNOVATION.



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BRIDGE Profile

Bridge Research and Innovation for Democratic Governance and Enhanced Peace (BRIDGE) is an independent, non-profit think tank based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Registered under the FDRE Civil Society Organization Proclamation No. 1113/2019, which specializes in parliamentary affairs, peace, and development in the IGAD region.



Mission

To advance democratic governance and enhance peace through evidence-based research and innovative policy analysis.



Vision

To be a leading research hub and trusted source of analysis on parliamentary affairs, peace, governance, and development in the IGAD region.



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- Rigor: Delivering high-quality, evidence-driven research.
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- Trust: Upholding credibility through transparent and reliable analysis



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It aims to strengthen legislative institutions in federal and local parliaments in Ethiopia and the IGAD region by:

- Conducting evidence-based research.
- Providing capacity-building support to enhance the performance of parliamentarians.
- Monitoring parliamentary activities to ensure accountability and effectiveness.



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The Ethiopian House of Peoples' Representatives, in accordance with Proclamation No. 263/1994 on the Amendment of recess and Working schedules, has stipulated that its recess shall be from February 1 to 30 and from July 1 to the last Monday of September. However, the House did not enter into recess and instead carried out various constitutional responsibilities during the month of July. Among its major activities were enacting laws, hearing reports from executive institution, engaging in parliamentary diplomacy, visiting federal institutions and holding discussions with elected representatives. In addition, the House of Representatives held its annual conference to enhance the discharge of its constitutional duties. This fifth edition of Bridge, which includes the representatives' activities of July, presents the Ethiopian Elections, Political Party Registration, and Electoral Ethics Proclamation approved during the month, along with a concise brief overview of Bridge.

Regular Meeting of the House Held in the Month

July 9

2nd Emergency Meeting

Agendas

- Approving the draft proclamation to amend the Ethiopian Election, Political Party Registration, and Election Ethics Proclamation;
- Approving the draft proclamation to amend the Federal Income Tax Proclamation;
- Approving the draft proclamation on Startups;

¹The 6th House of People's Representatives held its 1st extraordinary session of its 4th year of operation on February 11, 2017, and on that day, it heard the 3-year performance report of the Ethiopian National Consultative Commission.

Legislative Activities of the House

During the month of July, the House of Representatives passed three laws. However, no new draft proclamations were referred to the standing committees during this period. The House also held briefings on each of the three proclamations it enacted this month.



Chairman of the Standing
Committee on Democracy Affairs, Honorable Mr. Ewnete Alene

Laws Ratified

In its second emergency session held on July 10, the House of Representatives passed an amendment to **the Ethiopian Elections, Political Parties Registration, and Electoral Ethics Proclamation**. Hon. Ewnetu Alene, Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Democracy Affairs, who presented the report and recommendations to the House, explained that the amendment introduces provisions designed to address gaps identified in the existing Proclamation No. 1162/2011. The objective, he noted, is to ensure a balanced framework governing the rights and obligations of stakeholders in political parties, elections, and electoral ethics.

The Chairperson further explained that the amendment will enable the adoption of a modern system that saves both time and financial resources by drawing on international experiences and integrating technology to reduce uncertainty and mistrust. The revised proclamation is expected to address both past and emerging challenges, expand the political space, and foster a fair and credible electoral process. It also aims to enhance the participation of women, persons with disabilities, and youth in elections, while ensuring effective mechanisms for resolving electoral grievances.

Several questions were raised by members of the House regarding the amendment bill; among them, why the grievance committee at the polling station level was removed. In response, the Speaker explained that rather than establishing committees at each polling station, grievance committees could be organized at the regional level to address complaints centrally. Continuing his explanation, the Speaker stated that since the contribution rate of party members was reduced from 30 to 20 percent, the National Election Board is no longer required to provide financial support to political parties. He further noted that competing parties would now be allowed to implement their own internal rules and guidelines.

Regarding the establishment of new regions, the Speaker added that the requirement for a national party to have organizational representation in at least four regions has now been increased to six regions. The House of Representatives approved this amendment as Proclamation No. 1394/2017 by a majority vote, with two votes against and four abstentions. (ON this amended Proclamation and the related institutional reform of the Ethiopian Electoral Board see the brief Bridge Survey on page 20).

The second Proclamation approved by the House on the same day was a draft to amend the existing **Income Tax Proclamation**. Hon. Desalegn Wedaje, Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Planning, Budget, and Finance, presented the bill, explaining that since the Income Tax Proclamation had been in effect for many years, it was necessary to modernize the tax collection system to reflect the increasing complexity of business activities. The Chairperson further explained that the amendment introduces provisions to establish a modern tax base compatible with the digital economy and to address practices that enable tax evasion. Additionally, the amendment seeks to expand the tax base, improve government revenue collection, and promote tax fairness, thereby contributing to a more stable and equitable economy through a simplified tax system.

Some representatives expressed concern that the amendment did not adequately consider the living conditions of government employees, urging the House to review it further. Responding to these concerns, the Standing Committee Chairperson stated that, extensive consultations had been held with various stakeholders and that the amendment was the result of a long and comprehensive preparation process.

Supporting this position, the State Minister of Finance, Dr. Eyob Tekalign told the House that the amendment was based on extensive discussions and the experiences of other countries, describing it as both necessary and timely. He added that, alongside the income tax reform, a housing study was being conducted to improve the living conditions of government employees. The House of Representatives passed the income tax reform bill by a majority vote, with five votes against and twelve abstentions.

The third bill approved by the House on July 10 was the **Startup Proclamation**, designed to create significant employment opportunities for young people. Hon. Dr. Negeri Lencho, Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development, Employment, and Technology Affairs, presented the bill, explaining that globally, innovation and technology driven startups play a key role in fostering economic growth and industrial development. The Speaker emphasized that startups can accelerate Ethiopia's economic growth by harnessing the country's potential and enhancing its global competitiveness. Furthermore, the bill establishes a grant program, a loan guarantee framework, and a "fund of funds" structure aimed at sustainably addressing the financing challenges and investment risks faced by startups and startup ecosystem developers. According to the House, the members unanimously approved the bill.



Explanatory forums



Chairperson of the National Election Board of Ethiopia, Ms. Melatwork Hailu

The Ethiopian House of Representatives held two explanatory forums in July concerning the three proclamations it passed during the month. The first forum focused on the draft proclamation to amend the **Ethiopian Elections, Political Parties Registration, and Electoral Ethics Proclamation**, which had been enacted and implemented a few years earlier.

The initial discussion, held on July 2, was an extensive session involving the House of Peoples' Representatives' Standing Committee on Democracy Affairs, the House's Legal Department, and the leadership of the National Election Board. The Standing Committee commended the Election Board for its efforts to address existing gaps and maintain the strengths demonstrated during the 6th round of national elections; particularly the provision requiring political parties to collect 30 percent of their members' contributions to "enable them to become self-sufficient," according to the House's report. The Standing Committee, noting that Ethiopia practices democracy, emphasized that rather than abolishing or punishing political parties, the focus should be on reforming, educating and expanding their participation to enhance the political space and strengthen their positive contributions.


It was also stated that the new requirement for national parties to have members residing in at least seven regions will help foster a truly national character among political parties. The Chairman of the Standing Committee, Hon. Ewnetu Alene, remarked that the amendment proclamation; drafted by the Election Board based on both its own experience and international best practices is highly commendable.

Two days after this discussion, the Standing Committee on Democracy Affairs organized a public discussion forum with stakeholders and civil society representatives regarding the same proclamation. At the forum, Chairman Ewnetu Alene, emphasized that the draft proclamation should be supported because it focuses on holding parties accountable for their mistakes and shortcomings, rather than abolishing them altogether. Participants in the discussion raised various questions and suggestions regarding the draft proclamation, highlighting several areas for improvement. Among the points raised were: although the introduction of digital elections marks progress for the country, concerns remain about the system's security; the requirement for political parties to collect at least 30 percent of members' contributions as a condition for receiving government support during elections was described as excessive and should be reduced to 5 percent; and the provision making a national ID mandatory for candidates was criticized as a violation of voters' rights and should therefore be revised. Melatwork Hailu, Chairperson of the National Election Board of Ethiopia, who was present at the event, responded that the provision requiring 30 percent member contributions is designed to measure members' commitment to their parties and to help build stronger political organizations. Melatwork clarified that the process is not an electronic election per se, but rather a system where parties and candidates register themselves using technology, with attention to inclusion for visually and hearing impaired citizens. The Chairperson further explained that the mandatory digital ID requirement applies to candidates, not voters.

Addressing the participation of youth, she highlighted that the age requirements; 18 years to register as a voter and 21 years to stand as a candidate, will now be calculated based on the date of voting, not registration. She also noted that the amendment draft introduces a new provision ensuring that government employees will continue to receive their salaries while contesting elections, which was not previously allowed.

The second explanatory forum of the Ethiopian House of Peoples' Representatives focused on **the Income Tax Amendment Proclamation**, which was approved later that month. Regarding this draft, aimed at reducing the living and tax burden on citizens; the Standing Committee on Planning, Budget, and Finance Affairs, along with the House's Legal Division, held a plenary session with officials from the Ministry of Finance to address various questions. The Minister of Finance, Dr. Eyob Tekalgn, explained that the amendment takes into account the economic pressures faced by citizens, particularly those engaged in small businesses. The main objectives of the amendment, he said, are to reduce the tax burden on low-income groups, broaden the tax base, and establish a simplified tax payment system for small businesses. Dr. Eyob added that the reform is consistent with the government's policy of encouraging investment while curbing tax evasion and fraud. The new draft also includes a provision prohibiting taxpayers from conducting cash transactions exceeding 30,000 birr.

The Standing Committee on Planning, Budget, and Finance Affairs also organized an official discussion forum on the draft tax reform proclamation. The Committee's Chairperson, Hon. Desalegn Wedaje, remarked that the amendment will strengthen the government's tax collection capacity and help address key development needs identified by citizens. He emphasized that public feedback regarding tax increases or decreases should be considered with balance and fairness.



Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, Hon. Dr. Abraham Alemayehu, added that it is crucial to ensure that enacted laws protect both citizens' and the government's interests. He explained that the amendment aims to address structural weaknesses in the tax system and respond to the economic pressures faced by low and middle income groups. During the forum, participants raised various questions and recommendations for improvement. The main issues discussed included the need to reduce the top income tax rate of 35 percent in light of inflation and high living costs, and the suggestion to raise the tax-free income threshold from 2,000 birr to a higher level. According to information from the House, senior Ministry of Finance official Fikadu Horeta and other ministry representatives attended the forum and provided clarifications and responses to these questions.

The House of Representatives held its third briefing session in July on the **Startup Proclamation**. The House's Standing Committee on Human Resources Development, Employment, and Technology Affairs held a session with senior officials from the Ministry of Innovation and Technology to discuss the draft proclamation, which is expected to create significant employment opportunities for Ethiopian youth. Chairperson of the Standing Committee, Hon. Dr. Negeri Lencho, stated that with nearly 70 percent of Ethiopia's population being young, the draft proclamation is designed to help this demographic harness their talents and creativity to build wealth by connecting them with both national and international investors and organizations with substantial financial capacity. Minister of Innovation and Technology, Dr. Bekele Mola, emphasized that identifying new sources of income is essential to enhance the country's economic potential and create more job opportunities for young people.

He added that the proclamation introduces a streamlined system to provide targeted support to startups, continue efforts to strengthen the startup ecosystem, and establish a grant program, a loan guarantee framework, and a fund-of-funds structure, according to information provided by the House.

At another public forum organized around the draft proclamation, Dr. Negeri Lencho stated that key issues were raised during the discussion. The forum addressed the purpose, scope, powers, and functions of the proposed law, as well as detailed considerations regarding the establishment of a Grand Fund and a Guarantee Fund for startups, along with related obligations and restrictions. Institutions represented at the forum included the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the National Bank of Ethiopia, and independent researchers studying the startup sector. Participants raised several points and recommendations, including that the proclamation should prioritize sectors requiring significant improvement, such as agriculture; that certain tax-related provisions should be reconsidered; and that the incentive process should be reviewed, as it appeared somewhat inconsistent with the broader investment incentive framework.

Oversight and Monitoring of Executive Institutions

One of the core functions of the House of People's Representatives of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is the oversight of executive institutions. In this regard, during the month covered by this publication, the only executive institution that reported to the House was the Ministry of Agriculture. Additionally, the relevant standing committee conducted an institutional visit as part of its oversight mandate.



Honorable Dr. Girma Amente, Minister of Agriculture

Institutional Reports

In July, the Standing Committee on Agricultural Affairs of the House of Representatives reviewed **the Ministry of Agriculture's report** on the monitoring and oversight of the supply and distribution of agricultural inputs during the 2017/18 harvest season.

During the discussion, it was stated that the status of soil fertilizer, quality seeds, and chemical supply and distribution, as well as the implementation of mechanized agricultural work to increase production and productivity, were presented and discussed in depth. The Chairman of the Standing Committee, Honorable Solomon Ale, explained that the main objectives of the monitoring groups are to ensure that agricultural inputs reach farmers and are utilized effectively, to promote best practices in the process, and to enhance production and productivity by enabling the Ministry of Agriculture and senior management to promptly resolve issues that remain unaddressed at lower levels.

In addition, the Chairman noted that since the autumn season is a crucial period for high agricultural production in many regions of the country, the Standing Committee, in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture, established eight monitoring groups across eleven regions to oversee the supply and distribution of agricultural inputs. He stated that the supply and distribution of inputs were generally in good condition, though some localized shortages required further adjustments. Solomon added that the government had allocated more than 84 billion birr to strengthen the sector, but the rising price of soil fertilizer had created challenges for farmers, limiting their ability to use fertilizers and increase productivity. Nevertheless, he emphasized that the overall distribution of agricultural inputs had been effective. The Minister of Agriculture, Honorable Dr. Girma Amente, on her part, highlighted that DAP fertilizer was given priority and noted significant improvements in supply and distribution compared to previous years.

He explained that while the procurement of urea fertilizer had been delayed, with three ships already in hand and five additional ships en route to the Port of Djibouti; steps were being taken to stabilize supply. Dr. Girma also mentioned that, according to the Ministry, all regions had improved their capacity to identify input needs, measure demand, and enhance their technical knowledge.

Institutional and Field Visits

In this month, the House of People's Representatives, through the relevant Standing Committee, conducted one institutional visit.

Institutional Visit

The only institutional visit made by the House of People's Representatives during the month was to **Addis Ababa Autonomous University**. The Standing Committee on Human Resource Development, Employment, and Technology Affairs, which visited the university on July 15, emphasized that the university should serve as a leader in research and innovation and as a model for other universities preparing to transition to autonomous status. The Standing Committee provided summary feedback on the university's performance and the activities undertaken since it became autonomous. The Deputy Chairman of the Standing Committee, Honorable Dr. Bethlehem Lakwe, stated that the government is focused on establishing institutions that accelerate national development and that the transition of Addis Ababa University to autonomy is part of this broader effort. She stressed that universities should not only produce educated professionals but also generate research and solutions that address the country's and society's challenges.

The Committee noted that the university has been granted administrative, research, financial, and academic independence through proclamations and policies that support its autonomous status. The President of Addis Ababa University, Dr. Samuel Kifle, and his colleagues, however, reported that the university is facing budget constraints affecting its core research and development activities. They appealed to the Standing Committee to engage with the relevant authorities to help find a sustainable solution.



Constituency Representatives' forums

The month of July, covered in the fifth edition of Bridge, was characterized by the organization of voter consultation forums by constituency representatives. During this period, several forums were held, providing an opportunity for members of parliament to engage directly with their constituents and address those electoral units concerns.



During a discussion with the representatives of the Harari Regional State in the House of People's Representatives of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Honorable Dr. Fethi Mahdi and Ms. Samira Yusuf, in the region, with the community groups of Sofi Woreda;

The first major activity of the month involved a discussion with community representatives from districts in the **Harari Region**. The Deputy Chairman of the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs of the House, Honorable Dr. Fethi Mahdi, who participated in the forum, stated that efforts had been made to ensure that the issues raised by the community over the past six months were brought to the attention of and addressed at the federal level. Dr. Fethi specifically mentioned that work is underway to resolve the region's persistent drinking water shortage and that the road connecting East Hararge to Kombolcha is being rehabilitated. He added that they will continue to follow up to ensure the completion and operationalization of the project. Another member of the House, Honorable Samira Yusuf, noted that constituency representatives have been conducting periodic assessments every six months to listen to and respond to community concerns. She affirmed that they are working closely with local communities in line with federal government proclamations, ensuring that citizens' voices are heard and integrated into national development priorities, according to information provided by the Council. It was reported that community representatives from the woredas also presented various opinions and questions to the members of the standing committee. In response, the Deputy Chairman of the Standing Committee explained that the concerns raised by the community are being addressed not only at the regional level but also monitored to ensure that those requiring federal intervention receive timely attention and solutions.



Honorable Dr. Mahtame Haile, visiting a flour factory in Dessie City;

The second constituency engagement of the month was undertaken by Honorable Dr. Mahtame Haile, who visited **Dessie City in the Amhara Region**. During the visit, it was reported that there is a shortage in the production of high-quality enriched flour. The main reason cited for this issue is that the mandatory flour enrichment process; crucial for preventing neurological health problems related to nerve cell formation, is not being properly implemented by flour factories operating in the city. Dr. Mahtema, together with representatives from the city's Health Department, Food and Drug Control Department, the Ethiopian Food and Drug Control Authority Kombolcha Branch, and the Ethiopian Conformity Assessment Organization Northeastern Branch, discussed the issue, according to the information obtained from the House. During the joint discussion, it was emphasized that factories should collaborate to produce high-quality enriched flour, raise community awareness about purchasing and using enriched flour and oils, and play an active role in preventing neurological damage by properly controlling flour and oil products.



Parliamentary Diplomacy

Ethiopian parliamentarians participated in no fewer than five parliamentary diplomacy events in July/August. According to information we gathered from the House, the delegations engaged in various parliamentary oriented conferences ranging from Nairobi to Geneva and from South Africa to Addis Ababa.



The 5th Ordinary Session of the Pan African Parliament was attended by the Deputy Speaker of the House, Her Excellency Loomi Bedo, the Assistant to the Government of the House of People's Representatives, Her Excellency Mesete Haile, His Excellency Dr. Ashebir Woldegorgis, and His Excellency Dr. Aweke Amzaye.

The first parliamentary diplomacy event of the month was attended by female parliamentarians and experts from the Ministry of Agriculture at a forum in Kenya. The delegation participated in a five-day joint consultation forum on “**Gender, Land, and Climate**” among IGAD member states in Nairobi, sharing Ethiopia’s experiences with their counterparts from other member states.

The second parliamentary diplomacy event involved Ethiopian parliamentarians attending the **5th Ordinary Session of the 6th Pan-African Parliament** in Midrand, South Africa. At the conference, the Deputy Speaker of the House, Honorable Lomi Bedo, led the Pan-African Group of the House. The conference covered topics such as democracy and good governance in Africa, peace and security on the continent, human rights management, the African Court of Human Rights, measures to mitigate climate change, and other related issues. Lomi, reviewing a paper presented at the conference on artificial intelligence, highlighted that Ethiopia has undertaken significant initiatives, including training five million coders in AI. The Deputy Speaker emphasized that, as artificial intelligence is now a global reality, Africa must invest in this field to avoid falling behind, noting Ethiopia’s substantial contribution to the sector’s development.

The Ethiopian delegation attended a conference centered on the theme “Justice for Africa and People of African Descent through Reparations,” in line with the African Union’s decision to declare 2025 the “Year of Reparations.”, is another diplomatic activity of the representatives’ during the covered month. The conference called for formal recognition of the historical injustices inflicted on Africa and people of African descent through the slave trade, colonialism, and racial discrimination, and emphasized the need for legal accountability, reconciliation, restoration of order and security predating the slave trade and colonialism, and a transition to sustainable growth and prosperity grounded in inclusive and strong social cohesion. At the conference, Honorable Dr. Aweke Amzaye, addressing conflict prevention and early warning peer review, refuted claims made by an author suggesting that disputes between Ethiopia and Egypt over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam could lead to conflict.

Dr. Aweke clarified that Ethiopia and Egypt do not share a border, and therefore, there is no border conflict; the dam itself cannot be a source of conflict. He highlighted that the potential source of dispute lies in outdated colonial agreements between Britain, Egypt, and Sudan that grant Egypt full rights to Nile waters while excluding Ethiopia. Dr. Aweke noted that these agreements are relics of colonial times, and that both the African Union and the Pan-African Parliament should make concerted efforts to abolish them completely. Climate change in Africa was another key topic at the conference. Honorable Meseret Haile, Deputy Government whip in the House, explained Ethiopia’s initiatives to combat climate change, emphasizing the country’s commitment under the theme “Ethiopia is planting for the world.” She highlighted that climate change is a threat not only to Africa but to the entire globe, and stressed that Ethiopia is achieving results in building a climate-resilient green economy through strong leadership, societal participation, and committed governance.

At the end of the month, **Ethiopia and Italy** agreed to enhance cooperation across various fields during a Parliamentary Diplomacy Meeting of the Italian Chamber of Deputies. The delegation, led by Honorable Lia Quartepele Procopia, Vice President of the Italian Parliament, met with senior leaders of the House of Peoples’ Representatives of Ethiopia and Italy to discuss bilateral cooperation. Hon. Dr. Tesfaye Beljige highlighted the long-standing and strong relationship between Italy and Ethiopia, praising Italy’s role as a key development partner and its active participation in infrastructure development. Dr. Tesfaye emphasized Ethiopia’s commitment to achieving lasting peace domestically and across the Horn of Africa, noting ongoing efforts through the National Consultative Commission and transitional justice mechanisms to resolve conflicts in certain regions, with promising results. He further stressed that, given Ethiopia’s rapidly growing population and expanding economy, international partners; including Italy should support the resolution of the maritime border issue through negotiations and international law, according to information obtained from the House.



The delegation led by the Vice President of the Italian Parliament, Honorable Lea Quartepete Procopia, is in discussions with the Government Whip in the House Honorable Tesfaye Beljige, and other senior leaders of the House of People's Representatives.

Hon. Lia Quartepete Procopia, Vice President of the Italian Parliament, affirmed her country's commitment to deepening comprehensive cooperation with Ethiopia, enhancing infrastructure projects, and collaborating on various initiatives. Regarding Ethiopia's request for access to a seaport, she stated that Italy would contribute to ensuring a peaceful resolution of tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Additionally, an international parliamentary conference attended by Speaker of the House Hon. Tagesse Chafo was held in July. **The sixth Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)** convened a wide-ranging discussion under the theme "Parliamentary Cooperation and Multilateralism in a World in Crisis for Peace, Justice, and Prosperity for All." On the sidelines of the conference, the Speaker met with Katarina Barley, Vice President of the European Parliament, to discuss cooperation between Ethiopia and the European Union. The discussions highlighted the long-standing parliamentary relations between Ethiopia and the EU and explored ways to strengthen future collaboration, covering key areas such as infrastructure, sustainable agriculture, health, education, energy supply, and digital transformation.



The Speaker of the House of Peoples' Representatives, Honorable Ato Tagesse Chafo, attended the Sixth Conference of Speakers of Parliament of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) held in Geneva, Switzerland from July 23 to 26, 2017.

Parliamentary diplomacy undertaken by the Ethiopian House of Representatives through the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs was also notable event of July. On July 28, the Deputy Chairman of the Standing Committee, Hon. Dr. Fethi Mahdi, participated in the Parliamentarians' Forum, held as part of the **Third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries in Turkmenistan**. According to the House of Representatives, Dr. Fethi presented a paper titled "Establishing and Strengthening a Trade System That Benefits Landlocked Developing Countries" during a pre-conference panel discussion. In his presentation, Dr. Fethi highlighted key challenges, including high logistics costs, inefficient and unreliable port services, inadequate infrastructure, maritime security threats, and limited participation in global value chains. He noted that Ethiopia is in the final stages of accession to the World Trade Organization and emphasized the necessity of finding alternative seaports to participate in the global trading system fairly and inclusively. Dr. Fethi further explained that Ethiopia's lack of seaport access for over three decades has caused multiple, complex challenges and has significantly hindered the country's path toward inclusive growth and prosperity.

Internal Evaluation of the representatives

In addition to fulfilling their constitutional duties as outlined above, members of the House of Peoples' Representatives spent July reviewing the plans and activities of their women's caucus, providing training to its members, and making partial preparations for the coming year. Bridge briefly reviewed the stages of these activities as follows.

Parliamentary Women's Caucus 2017 Budget Implementation Report



Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Honorable Loomi, delivering the opening speech at the Women's Caucus Conference in Do.

Deputy speaker of the House, Hon. Lomi Bedo, delivered an opening speech at a forum attended by the caucus executive and members, focusing on the 2017 budget implementation report, next year's leadership plan, and capacity-building training for caucus members on various topics, according to information from the House. The Deputy Speaker noted that, women's decision making and participation have been increasing both nationally and within the House, emphasizing that the caucus should play a more effective role to benefit women in social and economic issues. She further highlighted that the House Women's Caucus has undertaken numerous activities during the fiscal year in fulfilling its mission and stressed that the Elected Women's Caucus should continue to be strengthened, expanding its experience and expertise to meet its national responsibilities.

Regarding the information from the House, it was reported that the Women's Caucus held a summary discussion on the 2017 budget plan and the next year's leadership plan. Deputy Speaker Lomi Bedo, present at the summary forum, emphasized that the caucus should focus on empowering women across all sectors. In connection with this, Honorable Meseret Haile, Deputy Government whip in the House, recalled that senior House leaders have contributed significantly to strengthening the caucus. She further noted that pressure and violence against children and women should be addressed sustainably and that the Women's Caucus, together with members of the House of Representatives, should coordinate with regional councils and other lower level bodies when engaging with their constituencies. The Deputy Chairperson of the Parliamentary Women's Caucus, Hon. Alemitu Abebe, reported that the capacity building training for female members of parliament has yielded encouraging results and indicated that such training will continue to be strengthened. Members of the caucus also emphasized that violence against children, women, and people with disabilities should be jointly prevented.



The House Women's Caucus' 2017 Budget Planning and Implementation Report And Summary Discussion of Next Year's Budget Plan;

Training for Women's Caucus

The Ethiopian House of Representatives ended its month by providing training to its women's caucuses too. According to information from the HoPR, the trainings focused on the topics “Transitioning from Conflict to Peace” and “Leadership Transformation and Improved Communication,” and extensive discussions were held. Speaking on the matter, Deputy Speaker Lomi Bedo emphasized that, the knowledge and skills acquired through the training should be put into practice, as they play a significant role in both institutional and national development. At the same forum, Honorable Meseret Haile, Deputy Government whip in the House, noted that when undertaking delegation work, the women representatives should apply the knowledge and skills gained to educate and engage their communities on traditional conflict resolution methods and promote their implementation. The members described the training as educational and empowering for their future work and stated their commitment to contributing to peace by applying indigenous conflict resolution methods in all areas. They emphasized the critical role of women in maintaining national peace, noting that children, women, and the elderly are often the most affected by conflict, and stressed the importance of cooperation and participation from all citizens.

Office of the House of Peoples' Representatives 2017 Budget Plan Implementation



Mr. Kereyu Banata, Deputy Secretary General of the Administration Sector and Representative of the Secretary General of the House of Peoples' Representatives Secretariat.



Dr. Nigussie Meshesha, Deputy Secretary General of the Professional Support Sector of the House of Peoples' Representatives Secretariat.

Another key event involved the forum where the Office of the House of Peoples' Representatives reviewed the 2017 Budget Plan Implementation Report and the 2018 Budget Plan with its staff. Deputy Secretary General of the Secretariat for Administration, Mr. Keryu Banata, stated that the Secretariat has provided numerous effective administrative and professional services, including the expected staff improvements during the 2017 budget year. He added that the Secretariat is preparing to achieve even better performance in the next budget year. Deputy Secretary General of the Secretariat for Professional Affairs, Dr. Neguse Meshesha, recalled the significant role of the staff and management in ensuring the success of activities carried out during the budget year. He further explained that efforts are underway to strengthen the Secretariat's work through research and studies, as well as to launch a full-fledged parliamentary television channel to make the activities of Parliament more accessible to the public, according to information provided by the Parliament.



The July Conference

The most notable event held by Ethiopian Parliamentarians in the next last month of the year was the Fifth Annual Parliamentary Studies and Research Conference, conducted under the theme: “Strengthening Parliamentary Practices for Inclusive Governance, Indigenous Knowledge, and Sustainable Development!” Organized by the House of Representatives, the conference took place at the Adwa Memorial Museum over two days, on July 3 and 4. This edition of Bridge summarizes the main points of the parliamentary-focused research papers presented at the conference.



Partial view of the presenters.

At the forum, various research papers focusing on strengthening parliamentary functions, the rule of law, inclusive governance, and state-building were presented, and extensive discussions were held on improving the implementation of parliamentary democracy in Ethiopia. According to the information available, 167 research papers were submitted for competition at this year’s conference, of which twelve were selected.

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Honorable Tadesse Chafo, who attended the opening of the fifth conference, noted that research is the foundation for national development and progress. He emphasized that research plays a crucial role in achieving desired institutional and national changes.

The Speaker added that the House of People’s Representatives, as a legislative body, should base its laws, decisions, and implementation on research and studies, highlighting the significant role of research in legislative functions.

On July 3, a paper presented by the Deputy Government whip in the House, Honorable Meseret Haile, and Honorable Dr. Abraham Alemayehu, highlighted the need for additional efforts to improve public representation performance. The study examined the achievements and challenges of public representation during the 6th round of the House of People’s Representatives and aimed to indicate directions for the future. In conclusion, the study noted that the achievements of public representation during this period included the consistent execution of public representation work over four consecutive years, the establishment of strong ties between parliament members and their constituents, and the timely communication of public inquiries to executive bodies, among other outcomes confirmed by the research.

The second research paper, presented by Dr. Bewenetu Hailu, focused on “How to Connect the Indigenous Knowledge That Has Bound Ethiopia for Centuries with Modern Democratic Practices.” Dr. Bewenetu emphasized that indigenous knowledge represents a unique aspect of Ethiopian identity, developed independently of Western systems and cultivated over centuries. This knowledge has contributed to the country’s stability, and the researcher argued that institutionalizing these practices within parliament could yield significant benefits. Although indigenous knowledge is referenced in various national reform roadmaps, the study noted that further efforts are required to strengthen and institutionalize its application.



Partial view of the assembly.

Another research paper was presented in the conference, which recommended the House of Representatives continuing efforts to enhance the effectiveness of local economic implementation. The paper, presented by researcher Daniel Beyera, emphasized that for the successful implementation of the Macro economic reforms, the House should examine institutional capacity gaps, establish accountability mechanisms, and focus on improving quality.

Additionally, a research paper on lawmaking, law enforcement, and public participation was presented through the Deputy Chairperson of the National Election Board, Tesfaye Neway. In his paper, the researcher drew on the experiences of various countries and recommended that the HoPR work in consultation with the regions and prioritize robust pre-investigation processes.

Finally, Deputy Speaker Lomi Bedo, who attended the closing ceremony, stated that the research papers presented would be put into practice to address the people’s problems. The Speaker added that the recommendations derived from research and studies would be applied to solve evolving national challenges, and will be implemented, as she quoted.

Appointment

The last event of the House of Representatives for the month was an appointment. The House appointed Ato Andenet Adenew as the Deputy Secretary General of the House of Representatives of the Government.



Mr. Andenet Adenew

Bridge Observational Insights Regarding Proclamation

No. 1394/2017

The Ethiopian House of Representatives, in its 2nd emergency meeting held on July 10, 2017, reviewed and approved by a majority vote the draft proclamation to amend the existing Ethiopian Elections, Political Parties Registration, and Electoral Conduct Proclamation No. 1162/2011. According to information provided by the House, the need for the amendment arose to fill legal gaps identified following the sixth national elections held in 2013 and 2014.

The law, originally approved in October 2012 and amended after the administration of Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed came to power, comprises nine sections and 177 articles. It introduces extensive changes concerning elections as well as the registration and activities of political parties, amending 26 provisions of the original proclamation. The National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEB) issued a press release highlighting that these amendments followed extensive discussions and consultations with relevant stakeholders. The Board's Chief Executive Officer, Melatwerk Hailu, noted that there are more than 50,000 polling stations nationwide and that the amendments determine the number of polling station heads according to this figure. The polling station heads are now authorized to issue quick and clear decisions on complaints received during elections, and election law implementation will be carried out by qualified executives in all constituencies.

The Speaker of the House, Honorable Tegese Chafo, explained that the Board needed to amend the previous bill to better fulfill its mandate and functions and to correct legal loopholes in the administrative activities of political parties. The Chairman of the House's Standing Committee on Democracy Affairs, Honorable Ewnetu Alene, added that the amendment addresses gaps in the existing bill and ensures a balance between the rights and obligations of stakeholders in the administration of political parties, elections, and election ethics.

Key Provisions of the Proclamation

The Amendment Proclamation, intended to ensure a more transparent process for the upcoming 2018 federal elections, amends twenty-six provisions. The main provisions includes.

- ① For a party to be considered a national party, it must have members who constitute no more than 40 percent of the regular residents of the region in which it operates and must have participants in at least 50 percent of the country's regions.
- ② The election of members of the House of Federation, previously conducted only in regional councils, is now held by direct popular vote combined with regional elections.
- ③ Political parties found in violation of due process may be suspended for up to five years before being deregistered, during which they are prohibited from participating in political activities, elections, or benefiting from government support.
- ④ Government offices are prohibited from deducting political party membership contributions directly from employees' salaries, and candidates may not personally accept gifts or assistance from any person; but if such support received by the candidate, he/she should re-channeled the gifts or assistance to his/her party and reported to the Election Board within 48 hours.

- If a general election cannot be held simultaneously in all areas due to security issues, epidemics, or natural disasters, the Election Board, in consultation with the House of People's Representatives, may hold elections at different times.
- If postponed elections are not held within six months after registration, candidate and voter registration must be conducted anew. The term of office for winners of extended elections is determined by the remaining term of the council they join.
- The proclamation revises the eligibility criteria for both voters and candidates. Citizens who reach the age of 18 by Election Day now have the right to vote, while individuals who turn 21 on or before Election Day are eligible to stand as candidates.
- A notable progressive element of the proclamation is the mandatory gender quota, which requires political parties, fronts, and coalitions to ensure that at least 20 percent of their nominated candidates are women.
- The amendment is particularly strong in advancing the participation of women and persons with disabilities. Recognizing that the high signature requirements in previous laws created systemic obstacles; compounded by social and economic challenges, the new proclamation significantly reduces these requirements. For instance, the number of signatures required for candidates seeking membership in the House of People's Representatives has been reduced from 3,000 to 1,500, with similar reductions applied to other electoral levels. This reform provides tangible incentives for more inclusive political participation.
- Since election administration is a demanding and time-intensive process, participation by qualified professionals was previously limited due to a lack of incentives. The new proclamation addresses this gap by providing paid leave for government employees engaged in election work, thereby fostering a context in which skilled and independent professionals are motivated to contribute to the electoral process.
- Another notable strength is the inclusion of provisions promoting the use of technology and identification systems. This innovation enhances efficiency and transparency while also ensuring inclusivity by enabling visually and hearing-impaired citizens to fully exercise their voting rights; an important step toward a more equitable electoral framework.
- The new proclamation also transforms the method of electing members of the House of Federation. Whereas members were previously selected only by regional councils, they will now be elected directly by the people alongside regional elections. This reform enhances Ethiopia's federal system by shifting from a purely representative model toward greater direct public participation. It also strengthens the constitutional legitimacy and accountability of the Federation Council, addressing long-standing criticisms of its indirect election process.

Strengths of the Proclamation

- In recent years, several new regions have been formed and joined the Ethiopian federation. In this regard, one of the key strengths of the amended proclamation is the requirement that any political party wishing to operate at the national level and participate in federal elections must have registered members in at least six regions. This provision promotes broader national representation in political organization.
- The amendment introduces an unprecedented provision ensuring that government employees continue to receive their salaries while contesting elections. This is a progressive and encouraging measure, as it lowers the economic barriers for civil servants seeking to participate in electoral politics and contributes to a more inclusive democratic process.

- Finally, the new proclamation makes a landmark provision ensuring the political participation of internally displaced persons (IDPs); a group previously excluded from the electoral process. By allowing displaced citizens to cast their votes in the 2018 elections, provided they possess valid identification from their constituencies of origin, the proclamation affirms their constitutional rights and represents a major step toward inclusive democracy amid ongoing displacement challenges.

Bridge's Recommendations

These broad electoral reforms are expected to positively shape Ethiopia's future political landscape. However, their success depends on effective implementation, institutional coordination, and political commitment. To this end, Bridge proposes the following key policy recommendations:

- Strengthen the Institutional Independence and Capacity of the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE):- The NEBE plays a central role in translating the new reforms into credible electoral practice. Its independence should be assessed not only in terms of legal legitimacy but also through budgetary autonomy, institutional capacity, and operational freedom. Bridge recommends that; the federal government ensure sufficient and predictable funding for the NEBE to avoid financial dependency that could compromise impartiality and it should be equipped with adequate human, technical, and logistical capacity, including support for the introduction of a digital electoral management system. For this end, Partner institutions should contribute to capacity-building programs that enhance the professionalism of electoral staff.
- Enhance Electoral Credibility: - Electoral credibility cannot rest on the NEBE alone. It requires an ecosystem of democratic institutions and actors who collectively uphold integrity and transparency. Bridge therefore recommends;
 - Conducting comprehensive civic and voter education campaigns in collaboration with political parties, media, civil society organizations, and the judiciary;
 - Promoting impartial observation and monitoring of elections by domestic and international observers and;
 - Creating a formal intergovernmental coordination framework between the federal and regional governments to ensure shared responsibility for implementing credible and lawful elections.
- The logistical and political challenges witnessed during the sixth national elections should serve as a foundation for improvement. Bridge recommends that the NEBE and government institutions to conduct a detailed post-election review identifying logistical bottlenecks, administrative gaps, and political risks. Apart from that, translating lessons learned into institutional reforms, legal adjustments, and operational protocols before the seventh general election, particularly ensuring that no constituencies or regions are left out of the electoral process due to insecurity, logistical incapacity, or political exclusion, we urged.
- Address Gaps in the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities:-While the reduction of required signatures for female candidates with disabilities from 2,000 to 1,500 is a progressive step, the proclamation fails to specify similar provisions for male candidates with disabilities. Bridge recommends that; the NEBE issue clear guidelines and operational strategies to address this gap before the next election cycle.
- Foster a conducive Electoral and Political Environment:-A fair election depends fundamentally on a safe, inclusive, and competitive political climate. Bridge calls for:-
 - Ensuring that all political parties and candidates can campaign and organize freely without intimidation or administrative restrictions;
 - Establishing effective conflict-resolution and early-warning mechanisms to address electoral disputes peacefully;
 - Guaranteeing the security and freedom of voters, candidates, and observers and;
 - Strengthening civic space and public dialogue, which are essential for democratic resilience and trust in the electoral process.

Conclusion

Proclamation No. 1394/2017 represents a critical step in modernizing Ethiopia's electoral framework and making it more inclusive. By enhancing public participation, increasing the accountability of political parties, and strengthening democratic institutions, the reforms provide a foundation for fair and credible elections. The seventh general election serves as the first major test of these reforms, and their effective implementation is expected to improve Ethiopia's political process.

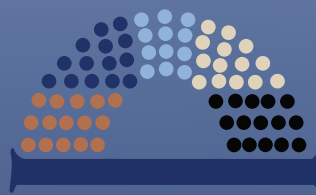
The National Election Board, in accordance with its Establishment Proclamation and the House of Representatives' oversight, bears the responsibility of ensuring that the elections are conducted efficiently, fairly, and securely. By addressing the gaps in citizen and political party participation, these reforms have the potential to make a lasting contribution to the consolidation of democracy in Ethiopia. Bridge emphasizes that sustained commitment from all electoral actors is essential to fully realize the potential of these reforms and strengthen the democratic foundations of the country.



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