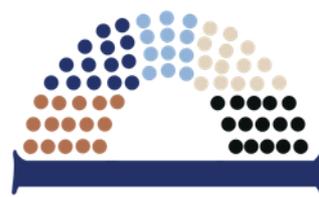


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Monthly Digest**



ENDERASIE

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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.



Core Values

- ▮ Rigor: Delivering high-quality, evidence-driven research.
- ▮ Innovation: Pioneering creative and adaptive solutions for governance and peace challenges.
- ▮ Trust: Upholding credibility through transparent and reliable analysis



Objectives

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 MONTHLY ACTIVITIES OF THE MEMBERS OF HOUSE OF PEOPLE'S REPRESENTATIVES (HoPR) IN FEBRUARY/MARCH

The members of HoPR carried out their traditional constitutional duties during the month of Yekatit. Their regular meetings this month consisted of only one emergency session. Beyond that, as it is the month of Yekatit, it is known to be a period, in addition to the constituency work conducted from July to the end of September, where they perform their representational duties from Yekatit 1 to Yekatit 30. In this regard, during this month of Yekatit, many representatives were sent to their respective electoral districts to discuss issues raised by citizens, ranging from good governance to the current status of sea outlets, and from infrastructure to security and peace matters. This 13th edition of Bridge, Volume 2, has been compiled by organizing these issues by category and including the monthly Bridge analytical overview.

REGULAR SESSIONS OF THE HOUSE CONDUCTED DURING THE MONTH

The 6th House of Peoples' Representatives of FDRE in its 5th Year of Tenure

Session	Date	Agenda
1 st Emergency Meeting	Yekatit 11	Discussion on the current performance report of the National Dialogue Commission.

1. THE HOUSE'S LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES

The members of HoPR did not approve any laws or refer any new draft proclamations during the month of Yekatit. Nevertheless, they conducted explanatory forums regarding three specific proclamations.

EXPLANATORY FORUMS

The primary explanatory forum held in Yekatit pertained to the **Federal Sports Development and Administration Draft Proclamation**. The Standing Committee on Health, Social Development, Culture, and Sports Affairs of the House of Peoples' Representatives held an explanatory session with the Ministry of Culture and Sports regarding this draft proclamation. The Ministry reportedly provided clarifications on the necessity of amending the proclamation, as well as on points requiring further explanation and ideas proposed for inclusion within the draft.

The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, Honorable Ms. Werkesemu Mamo, noted that sports enhance social interaction by fostering love, peace, tolerance, and brotherhood among people. She reported that the Standing Committee scrutinized the draft proclamation to ensure that sports are governed by law and order.

For her part, the Minister of Culture and Sports, Shewit Shanka, stated that since sports is a major industry involving significant investment and resources, it must be led by law through the

establishment of a clear system. The Minister added that the draft proclamation was informed by a study involving sector experts and drew from the experiences of various countries, which will help resolve systemic corruption and good governance issues observed in the sector.

It was reported that this same Standing Committee held discussions with accountable institutions in addition to the Ministry regarding the draft proclamation; furthermore, a forum was organized in Bishoftu for representatives to deliberate on the draft. Honorable Ms. Meseret Haile, deputy Government whip in the House of Peoples' Representatives, attended the forum and stated that amending the proclamation was necessary to address observed problems in the sports sector and to manage it in a scientific and modern manner.

Information obtained from the House indicates that the Standing Committee held discussions on the draft with the aforementioned Ministry, as well as with Speakers of Regional Councils, regional Social Affairs Standing Committees, and sports sector officials.

The Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, Honorable Dr. Tadele Burka, emphasized that, for the proclamation to be beyond reproach and enduring, regional Speakers and heads of sports bureaus should contribute to its development by gathering diverse perspectives on the draft proclamation.



One of the explanatory forums conducted regarding the Federal Sports Development and Administration Draft Proclamation.

The second explanatory forum held during the month focused on the draft proclamation proposed to amend **the Cooperatives Proclamation**, and it was noted that the forum was led by the Standing Committee on Agriculture Affairs of the House of Peoples' Representatives. High-level officials, including the Chairperson of the Standing Committee, Honorable Solomon Lale, members of the committee, the state minister for Inputs and Investment Sector at the Ministry of Agriculture, Dr. Sofia Kassa, and the Commissioner of the Ethiopian Cooperative Commission, were in attendance.

The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, Solomon Lale, stated that cooperatives should be profit-driven, growth-oriented, and capable of transforming the national economy. The report cited the Chairperson noting that the previous proclamation had remained in place for 10 years without accompanying regulations; he emphasized that a proclamation cannot truly function without regulations, and the new amendment would bridge this gap while offering multifaceted benefits.

During the forum, State Minister of Agriculture Sofia Kassa highlighted that the new amendment proclamation holds great significance in the

economic and social sectors, creating opportunities for Ethiopia to benefit from the field. Similarly, the Commissioner of the Ethiopian Cooperative Commission, Getnet Tadesse, explained the draft's importance, stating that this amendment allows for the identification of goals and the creation of a common understanding within the sector.

The Commissioner added that the new proclamation would establish a clear organizational structure enabling cooperatives to be effective and operate with defined roles. Honorable Ms. Meseret Haile, deputy Government Whip in the House of Peoples' Representatives, noted that the cooperative sector is one of the areas included in the government's ongoing reform works. She stated that to further strengthen these reforms, it is necessary to ensure that cooperatives are supported by a robust legal framework.



One of the explanatory forums held regarding the Draft Proclamation to Amend the Cooperatives Proclamation in part.

The third explanatory forum held in the month of Yekatit pertained to **the Ethiopian Aviation Security Draft Proclamation**. The Standing Committee on Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs of the House of Peoples' Representatives conducted a discussion forum with relevant stakeholders. During the discussion, stakeholders raised comments and questions requiring clarification, and officials from

the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) reportedly provided explanations.

In his remarks, the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Urban Infrastructure and Transport Affairs, Honorable Professor Mohammed Abdo, stated that since the draft proclamation has significant value in elevating the standards of Ethiopian Airlines within the aviation security sector, efforts should be made to rectify ambiguous terms so it can be approved and implemented. Similarly, the Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs, Honorable Dr. Fetih Mehdi, noted that the proclamation, through its quality and efficiency, would further strengthen aviation security and enable Ethiopian Airlines to remain a leader by meeting international aviation security standards.



A partial view of the explanatory forum regarding the Aviation Security Draft Proclamation;

For his part, the Deputy Director General of the National Intelligence and Security Service, Sisay Tola, reportedly explained that as the nature and execution methods of illegal acts targeting the air transport system have grown and become more complex over time, it became necessary to amend the previous Aviation Security Proclamation No.

432/2005 to effectively prevent aviation security threats.

2. OVERSIGHT OF EXECUTIVE INSTITUTIONS

During the sixth month of the year covered in this edition, the representatives of Ethiopia MPs summoned the heads of five federal institutions to their assembly to hear their mid-year performance reports for the current budget year. They raised observations and questions and listened to the subsequent clarifications.

INSTITUTIONAL REPORTS

In the month of Yekatit, the Mps called various federal institutions to the House to present their institutional reports. Among those scheduled to report this month, **the Ministry of Agriculture** was the first in terms of timing. The Ministry presented its midyear performance report for the current budget year to the Standing Committee on Agriculture Affairs of the House of Peoples' Representatives.

The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, Honorable Solomon Lale, stated that through efforts made to break free from the multifaceted problems previously facing Ethiopian agriculture and to increase production and productivity, impressive successes have been recorded in all fields. The Chairperson noted that the work initiated by farmers and pastoralists serves as an indicator that the ongoing agricultural transformation plan can be achieved. He emphasized the need to work with a sense of urgency to register superior results in the

agricultural sector and to realize Ethiopia's prosperity.

The Minister of Agriculture, His Excellency Addisu Arega, mentioned that focus is being given to ensuring the success of Ethiopia's agricultural transformation plan. He stated that in all sectors, performance exceeded targets during the first six months of the 2018 budget year. The Minister, explaining that efforts are focused on ensuring sustainable production and productivity, indicated that a 15-year program has been established and is being implemented to combat soil acidity.

For her part, the State Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Sofia Kassa, stated that the supply of soil fertilizer for this budget year is better than the previous year in terms of both volume and distribution. The report shows she further explained that focused work is being done to ensure it reaches the farmer on time.



As the Minister of Agriculture, Addisu Arega, presents the mid-year report of the budget year;

The second entities to present their midyear performance reports for the budget year were **Ethiopian Electric Utility (EEU) and Ethiopian Electric Power (EEP)**; it was noted that the Standing Committee on Public Enterprises Affairs heard the institutions' reports. The Chairperson of the

Standing Committee, Honorable Melese Mena, stated that to realize a prosperous Ethiopia, the service delivery processes of institutions must be modernized to provide convenient and efficient service to the public.

The Chairperson further noted that following the reforms, public enterprises have emerged from their complex problems and are becoming profitable. Information obtained from the House indicates the Chairperson added that it is necessary to work vigorously to provide appropriate service to society by strengthening the coordination between the two institutions.

For his part, the Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, Honorable Dr. Engineer Sileshi Kore, indicated that to make electric service accessible in rural parts of Ethiopia, a better budget should be allocated to these institutions by the House in the future. The Chief Executive Officer of Ethiopian Electric Utility, Engineer Getu Geremew, explained that during the MPs' constituency work in 2017 E.C., the institution was able to provide answers to thirty-one percent of the questions raised by the public and forwarded to the utility by the MPs.

The Chief Executive Officer of Ethiopian Electric Power, Engineer Ashebir Balcha, for his turn, was cited in the report mentioning that 67.3 million dollars was earned from energy sales to neighboring countries over the past six months.



As the Standing Committee on Public Enterprises Affairs evaluates the midyear reports of Ethiopian Electric Utility and Ethiopian Electric Power;

The presentation by the Ethiopian Liability and Asset Management Corporation regarding its six-month performance plan for the 2018 budget year to the Standing Committee on Public Enterprises Affairs was the third institutional oversight activity of the month by the MPs. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, Honorable Melese Mena, urged that the corporation's operations and organization should be quickly strengthened and that national assets must be managed properly in a way that benefits citizens.

The Chairperson added that following the national economic reforms, as private ownership and investment demand are increasing over time, work on legalization matters should be strengthened. The Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, Honorable Dr. Engineer Sileshi Kore, also noted that the efforts made in connection with the major economic reforms to make most development enterprises effective and profitable are encouraging, and suggested that the corporation should bring about change in a short time by adopting the experiences of other countries.

The Chairperson of the Corporation's Board and State Minister of Finance, Semereta Sewasew, stated that many works have been carried out to repair long-standing national economic fractures. The state minister added that the management of privatizing development enterprises has not been executed as intended; stating that a fundamental strategic decision is required, she noted that the decision would reach the Standing Committee in a short period.

The Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation, Muluaem Getahun, recalled that the Liability and Asset Management Corporation has only been established for a short time by the Council of Ministers to manage government debt and assets, but explained that the feedback provided by the Standing Committee would be implemented vigorously.



As the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Enterprises Affairs, Honorable Melese Mena, during the evaluation of the report;

The fourth entity designated to present its report in the month of Yekatit was **Ethiopian Airlines**, and the person who presented the institution's six-month performance was the Chief Executive Officer, Mesfin Tasew. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Enterprises Affairs in the House of

Peoples' Representatives, Honorable Melese Mena, urged that as the institution plays a major role in generating foreign exchange for our country, the work being done to maintain this result must continue to be strengthened.

The Chairperson added that it is encouraging to see the airline implementing a steady system to maintain its heights and provide solutions to problems arising in an ever-changing world by expanding domestic and international flight destinations, as well as increasing flight frequencies on existing routes. Honorable Melese further indicated that although the performance of Ethiopian Airlines in the first six months of the current budget year is superior, special attention must be given to monitoring and completing 28 projects, including the construction of the Bishoftu International Airport started by the airline, according to the set schedule, cost, and quality standards.

The Chief Executive Officer of Ethiopian Airlines, Mesfin Tasew, for his part, noted that the airline performed various activities in the completed six months to maintain its standards. Among these, he pointed out that they imported and put 7 additional aircraft into operation over the past six months; furthermore, beyond repairing domestic airports, work is being done to increase domestic flight destinations from 23 to 27 in the current budget year by adding 4 more destinations.

The CEO added that great attention is being given to the construction of the international airport being started in Bishoftu, with preparatory work

being finalized, and explained that construction work will begin soon according to the set schedule.



As the Chief Executive Officer of Ethiopian Airlines, Mesfin Tasew, presents his report;

In its 1st Emergency Meeting of the 5th year of tenure held during this month, the House of Peoples' Representatives reviewed the four-year report of the **National Dialogue Commission**. It was noted that the Commissioner of the Commission, Professor Mesfin Araya, presented a performance report showing the activities carried out and the current status of the Commission since its establishment in Yekatit 2014.

During this session, MPs reportedly engaged in extensive discussions regarding the report. They raised questions focusing on the inclusivity of the dialogue process; specifically, regarding the participation of all segments of society, including the Tigray Region; accessibility in conflict zones, whether the time allocated for agendas was sufficient, as well as the Commission's strengths and weaknesses. The Chief Commissioner, Professor Mesfin Araya, presented details on the agenda collection and participant identification activities conducted both domestically and abroad over the past four years.

The Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Democratic Affairs, Honorable Ewnetu Alene, was reported to have mentioned that the Commission has performed works over the past years that lay a crucial foundation for the next steps of the dialogue process. For his part, the Government Chief Whip in the House of Peoples' Representatives, Honorable Dr. Tesfaye Beljige, stated that the National Dialogue Commission plays a significant role in repairing long-standing fractures within the process of state-building. The Chief Whip added that by bringing previously closed questions to the table, the government has performed a historic task in opening a major chapter for the country by creating this institution and facilitating a forum for Ethiopians to consult on their problems and resolve recurring conflicts.

Dr. Tesfaye noted that the Commission has accomplished much by conducting dialogues involving all citizens, not just elites, with thousands participating in the process. He highlighted that national dialogue processes and forums were held in the Tigray Region just like in other regions. It was stated that representatives of civil society, religious leaders, political parties operating in the region, and the Interim Administration participated in the consultation process.

The Speaker of the House of Peoples' Representatives, Honorable Tagesse Chafo, noted that the national dialogue has moved into a crucial phase, emphasizing that the Commission's activities thus far have laid a strong foundation for national consensus. The Speaker mentioned that while some might think work was not done in the Tigray Region, that is not the case; the House report cited

him stating that 22 discussion forums were held in the region where key issues were identified. The Speaker added, "The issue of the Tigray Region is our collective concern," and stated that the work of receiving agendas and identifying participants will continue with careful reinforcement.

In his detailed report, Chief Commissioner Professor Mesfin Araya explained that agendas have been collected in 93% of the districts (Woredas) and more than 126,000 participants have been identified over the past four years. He specifically noted that an armed group in the Amhara Region disarming, returning to a peaceful path, and submitting its agendas was a major success for the process.



As the Chief Commissioner of the National Dialogue Commission, Professor Mesfin Araya, during his report;

Since the Commission's previously extended one-year term was set to expire on Yekatit 14, 2018 a resolution was proposed to grant an additional 8-month period starting from Yekatit 15 to complete the remaining tasks. The proposal was unanimously approved as Resolution No. 8/2026 (8/2018 E.C.). (For a comprehensive Bridge analytical insight regarding the institutional status of the Dialogue

Commission, Ethiopia's consultation process, and related topics, see page 25.

INSTITUTIONAL AND FIELD VISITS

The information gathered by Enderassie indicates that while members of the House of Peoples' Representatives of the FDRE did not conduct any institutional visits during the month, they did carry out certain field observations.

FIELD VISITS

The Members of HoPR performed specific field visits during the month of Yekatit covered in this edition. In terms of timing, the first field observation was conducted in **Oromia**, where the **Standing Committee on Trade and Tourism Affairs** of the House traveled. During the observation, the Standing Committee mentioned that tourism is of great importance for national economic growth, job creation, and building the country's image. It was noted that focus should be placed on tourism infrastructure to create favorable conditions for both domestic and foreign visitors by promoting the tourist attractions within the region.

The attractions visited by the Standing Committee in the region reportedly included the **Jimma Abba Jifar Palace**, as well as the **Dangewaji** and **Sor Waterfalls** located in the **Buno Bedele** and **Illu Ababor** zones.



As members of the Standing Committee on Trade and Tourism Affairs during their field observation in Oromia;

Information from the House indicates that in the same month, a field visit was also conducted in the **East Gurage Zone** of the Central Ethiopia Region. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Legal and Justice Affairs and representative of the Sodo constituency, **Honorable Ms. Etsegenet Mengistu**, traveled to **Butajira** city within the zone. She stated that by working in coordination with relevant government institutions, results have been achieved regarding the development and good governance questions raised during previous discussions with the electorate.

Honorable Etsegenet mentioned that the **Kela-Tulu-Bole asphalt road** is a major example of this; although the road had been a source of significant public grievance due to delays, efforts were made to resolve the challenges, allowing it to be completed and opened for service in a short time.

Another PM and the delegate for the Meskan Number One constituency, **Honorable Mrs. Worknesh Jemal**, for her part, stated that the development and good governance activities being carried out in Butajira city are ensuring the benefit of the community and should therefore continue to be strengthened.

The Speaker of the East Gurage Zone Council, **Mr. Endalkachew Getachew**, for his turn, noted that the development projects being implemented in Butajira city and the zone in general are encouraging. The report cited him saying that all stakeholders must play their part for even greater results and success.



Partial view of the field observation conducted in the East Gurage Zone;



3. CONSTITUENCY WORK

As mentioned in our introduction, since this month is a period for performing constituency duties, MPs have extensively carried out this task, which is one of their primary constitutional responsibilities. In this regard, no fewer than sixty MPs, including the Deputy Speaker of the House, **Honorable Ms. Lomi Bedo**, traveled to their respective electoral districts to deliberate with their constituents on national and local issues for an extended period.

Information gathered by **Enderasie** from the House indicates that constituency forums were conducted by sending **11** MPs to Central Ethiopia, **3** to Sidama, **19** to Oromia, **1** to Somali, **6** to Amhara, **5** to Addis Ababa, **11** to South Ethiopia, **1** to South West Ethiopia, and **1** to the Afar region.

WHAT ISSUES DID THE VOTERS OF CENTRAL ETHIOPIA SAY CONCERNED THEM?

During the month of Yekatit, a significant number of voter-representative forums were held in the federation's newest region, **Central Ethiopia**, where MPs carried out their constitutional responsibility for constituency work.

Honorable Ms. Mulunesh Lamore, who first arrived at the **Konteb O3 constituency** in the **Hadiya Zone** of the region, reportedly held discussions with MPs of the Central Ethiopia regional people, as well as district leadership and MPs drawn from various segments of society. During the forum, **Honorable Mrs. Mulunesh** noted that responses had been

provided to the development and good governance questions raised during the election period. Among the addressed issues, she cited examples ranging from fertilizer supply to veterinary services, road maintenance to urban infrastructure, and job creation to corridor development.

Another MP, **Honorable Ms. Nebiyat Tilahun**, who traveled to the **Sike O2 constituency** in the **Shone City Administration** of the **Hadiya Zone**, stated in her report regarding the constituency work that great efforts were made in cooperation and coordination with stakeholders at all levels to resolve development and good governance questions raised by voters at various times. She noted that work aimed at ensuring the community's benefit has brought results and that there are questions that have received responses.

Honorable Ms. Sadia Temam, who traveled to the **Gedebano Gutazer Wolene District** in the **Gurage Zone** of the same region, listened to numerous comments and questions from her constituents. The participants reportedly mentioned that the Prosperity government has performed multifaceted activities over the past years to answer the public's development and good governance questions, thereby benefiting the people, and they expressed that they have been beneficiaries of the reforms in their area.

Furthermore, the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Legal and Justice Affairs, **Honorable Ms. Etsegenet Mengistu**, went to the **Sodo constituency** in the **East Gurage Zone**. It was noted that she learned from her constituents that numerous projects aimed at solving public

development and good governance problems have been completed or are currently underway in the area.

According to information obtained from the House, the Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Health, Social Development, Culture, and Sports Affairs, **Honorable Dr. Tadele Buraka**, who visited the **Tembaro constituency** in Central Ethiopia, pointed out that several developments with significant economic and social value are being implemented in the electoral district.



Among the voter-representative forums held in the Central Ethiopia Region;

Honorable Dr. Nejat Girma conducted a voter-representative forum with community representatives drawn from the **Wera District** and **Muda-Dinokosa District** within the same **Central Ethiopia Region**. Participants at the forum reportedly stated that since the reform government took office, many infrastructure and good governance questions are being resolved in a better way.

Honorable Nejat Girma, for her part, mentioned that the government has designed and is implementing long and short-term policies and strategies to alleviate the public's problems. She explained to the participants that while it has been

challenging to provide responses commensurate with the public's high demands due to multifaceted national problems, the government is working to solve issues at every level to the best of its ability. Information from the House also indicates that this same representative traveled to **Wera Dijo District** in the **Halaba Zone** to discuss development and good governance with her constituents, emphasizing that the reform government is fulfilling its promises and focusing on resolving infrastructure and good governance issues.

Honorable Ms. Menete Mundino, another MP present at the same forum, noted that strong efforts are being made by MPs to find solutions for the infrastructure and good governance issues raised by the public. She reportedly stated that in-depth discussions will be held with relevant government bodies to ensure that the questions raised by voters are resolved step by step.

The Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Plan, Budget, and Finance Affairs in the House of Peoples' Representatives, **Honorable Dr. Abraham Alemayehu**, was also among the MPs who traveled to this region during the month. Leading voter-representative discussions in the **Sike O1 and O2 constituencies** of **East Badawacho District** in the **Hadiya Zone**, he noted that the questions raised by the community would be submitted to the structures at every level and followed up. He also reportedly delivered a message urging the community to play its part in ensuring that the **seventh national election** is peaceful, free, fair, and democratic.

Similarly, in the **Dalocha constituency**, a representation forum was held through **Honorable Abeba Sadik**, focusing on development and good governance. The MP mentioned that positive responses had been given to questions previously raised by the community. She emphasized that going forward, improvements should be made in project performance, compensation should be paid to displaced farmers who have not received it for road and irrigation projects, and special attention should be given to kebeles facing severe water shortages.

It was also noted that **Honorable Dr. Beza Teshome** discussed with various segments of society in the **Angacha City Administration**. The forum was reportedly an extensive platform regarding the economic and social development works carried out by the government since the sixth round of elections, as well as the current status of the questions raised by the public during the **2017** winter constituency work.

WHAT HEARD FROM SIDAMA?

During this month's constitutional constituency work, the **Sidama Region** was another destination where several electoral districts hosted voter-representative discussions. In the **Duba constituency** of the **Central Sidama Zone**, specifically in the **Dale District** Waicho and Dagara kebele clusters and **Boabedegelo kebele**, a voter-representative forum was held in the presence of **Honorable Solomon Lale** and **Honorable Ms. Meseret Mamo**.

Participants, including community elders, religious leaders, youth, women, and civil servants, reportedly stated that numerous tasks have been accomplished across government structures; from the federal level downwards; since the sixth round of elections.

Additionally, **Honorable Ms. Alemitu Abebe**, who traveled to the **Dara constituency** in the **South Sidama Zone**, provided responses and clarifications to questions raised by the community. According to information from the House, she stated that issues identified for future attention would be submitted to the relevant structures at every level and that she would closely monitor their implementation.



Honorable Solomon Lale and Honorable Mrs. Meseret Mamo, during the voter-representative forum;

AND FROM OROMIA...

In the constituency work conducted in the Oromia region, **Honorable Feyid Sherab**, who traveled to the **Sekoru constituency** of the **Jimma Zone**, explained the government's efforts to ensure Ethiopia secures a sea outlet and noted that the public is increasingly benefiting from results achieved across various economic sectors.

Also, in the **Jimma Zone** for this same purpose, **Honorable Mr. Moga Ababulgu** engaged the community in discussions centered on agendas such as working to ensure the **7th national election** is peaceful, democratic, and participatory.

Another MP who traveled to this zone, **Honorable Dr. Nurazaman Jibril**, reportedly noted that while there are completed tasks and answered public questions from the past five years, infrastructure such as roads, electricity access, the cost of living, and education will be the focus of future work.

Information from the House indicates that **Honorable Shumi Ayano**, who arrived at the **Olenchiti constituency** in the **Boset District** of the **East Shewa Zone**, stated that the forum he led included various segments of society and focused on development, peace and security, service delivery, and job creation for the youth.

The Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Urban, Infrastructure, and Transport Affairs, **Honorable Prof. Mohammed Abdo**, reportedly discussed with community members in the districts under the **Dalo Mana polling station** in the **Bale Zone**. The MP explained in detail to the participants the success of the major national economic reforms in stabilizing the economy and generating foreign exchange.

Information from the House also points out that a voter-representative discussion was held in **Yirba Muda** and surrounding areas of the **Anasora District** in the **Guji Zone**. This forum was led by **Honorable Dube Jilo**, who noted that the public must participate actively in the **7th national election** by

fulfilling the necessary processes and registering, and emphasized the importance of turning out in mass to cast their votes on election day.

In the forum held in **Shala District** of the **West Arsi Zone**, voters reportedly raised grievances with the attending federal and regional MPs regarding the security situation, development, project performance, good governance problems, service delivery gaps, and unemployment.

Honorable Mrs. Asha Yahya, who led the voters' forum in **Tulo District** of the **West Hararghe Zone**, stated that discussions were held regarding social, economic, good governance, and security issues over the past four years, as well as preparations for the **7th round national election**.

The Deputy Speaker of the House, **Honorable Mrs. Lomi Bedo**, reportedly conducted discussions in **Dugda District** and **Meki City** of the **East Shewa Zone**. She expressed her happiness that the local community has moved past previous security concerns and has begun presenting development requests.

The Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Urban, Infrastructure, and Transport Affairs, **Honorable Dr. Eshetu Temesgen**, arrived in the same zone for this constitutional duty and, together with members of the **Caffee Oromia**, discussed peace, development, and good governance with local residents.

Honorable Chala Lemi, who consulted with voters in **Bote City** within the same zone, noted that every question raised by the public receives proper attention and will be answered by the government.

Meanwhile, **Honorable Dr. Fekadu Mengistu**, who reached the **South West Shewa Zone**, reportedly stated that the development works carried out at the district and national levels are promising and improving.



One of the voter-representative forums held in Oromia during the month of Yekatit;

Moving across to Arsi, in the **Shashemene Number 2 constituency** of the West Arsi Zone, a voter-representative discussion forum was held under the leadership of **Honorable Prof. Kasim Kimo**. It was reported that consultations were conducted with relevant bodies to identify which of the development and good governance questions raised during the summer constituency period had been planned for and addressed.

Honorable Ms. Zeinaba Nura, who also traveled there, noted that the high cost of living, modernizing agriculture, Green Legacy initiatives, service delivery satisfaction, the performance of justice bodies at every level, and the sea outlet question were the primary agendas of the participants.

In the West Shewa Zone, **Honorable Dr. Alemu Gonfa** discussed issues with his constituents from **Dano District** and the **Seyo City Administration**. Meanwhile, **Honorable Ms. Neima Osman**, who

conducted a visit in the same zone, reportedly received questions from voters ranging from electricity and clean drinking water to education quality, health insurance service delivery, and various good governance concerns.

It was further noted that **Honorable Mrs. Jamaynesh W/Michael** consulted with her constituents in **Negele Arsi City**, West Arsi Zone.

In **Adama City**, one of Oromia's major urban centers, a voter-representative forum for the **Adama 2 constituency** was led by **Honorable Ms. Kumele Gedisa**. In the same city's **Adama 1 constituency**, **Honorable Dr. Teshome Abdo** also conducted a similar discussion forum.

Turning toward **Mojo City**, information from the House shows that a voter-representative discussion took place there in the month of Yekatit as well. **Honorable Ms. Addis Alemayehu Kumbi**, who visited the city, stated that infrastructure questions repeatedly raised by residents over the past five years have been addressed through the coordination of federal government institutions and the city administration.

THE SOMALI REGION FORUM

In this first round of the year's constituency activities, it was reported that the eastern region of Ethiopia also hosted one voter-representative forum. In this sole platform, residents of **Awbare District** reportedly deliberated on issues of peace, development, and good governance with their representative, **Honorable Kemal Hashi**.



A partial view of the Somali region voter-representative forum;

facing many international and national challenges during this election term, it has performed tasks that advance the journey toward prosperity.

Similarly, **Honorable Mrs. Kidist Arraya** reportedly traveled to **Lalibela City** and held discussions with her constituents. Information from the House also noted that **Honorable Tesfahun Semegn**, who visited **Central Gondar**, received infrastructure questions from participants concerning road accessibility, electricity service and supply, and clean drinking water.



One of the voter-representative forums held in the Amhara Region;

TO THE AMHARA REGION...

During this first round of constituency work in the month of Yekatit, the **Amhara Region** was another destination for the MPs. In the **Tenta constituency** of the **South Wollo Zone**, federal and regional council members held discussions with their constituents regarding peace and infrastructure issues. **Honorable Habtemariam Mekonnen** attended the forum and emphasized that the entire community should stand guard for peace alongside the government and contribute their part to ensure the **7th national election** is free, peaceful, and fair.

Nearby, in the **Dessie Zuria District Number 1 constituency**, **Honorable Rahmet Awel** reportedly stated that the government is registering significant developments nationally, benefiting the people at various levels.

In the **Enemay District** of the **Bichena constituency**, it was reported that voters informed **Honorable Aschale Alamre** that the current peace challenges in the region are being cited as a cause for a significant surge in the prices of goods.

Honorable Abate Arega, who reached the **Legambo District constituency** in the South Wollo Zone, explained to his voters that despite the government

AND WHAT DID ADDIS ABABA HAVE TO SAY?

Addis Ababa, the seat of the federation, was also among the cities visited during the constituency work conducted this February.

In a face-to-face voter-representative discussion forum held in **Akaki Kality Sub-City**, **Honorable Dr. Endalkachew Lelisa** reportedly stated that although there are tasks yet to be completed, the government has achieved more than planned over the past five years.

Similarly, **Honorable Dr. Bethlehem Lakew**, who attended the consultation forum in **Gullele Sub-City**, noted that the coordinated effort between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches is cited as a key factor in the sub-city's rapid development.

Honorable Ms. Mulu Yirega, who visited **Lideta Sub-City**, stated that many of the problems raised during previous voter-representative discussions over the past years have been resolved over time, resulting in tangible change.

Moving to **Nifas Silk Lafto Sub-City**, **Honorable Ambassador Dina Mufti** led the forum and reminded participants that significant focus is being given to national peace-building efforts. He reportedly emphasized that the role of all segments of society is vital in bringing the peace-building mission to fruition.

Information from the House shows that the State Minister of Peace, **Honorable Dr. Keyredin Tezera**, visited **Kolfe Keranio Sub-City**. He explained that it has been possible to resolve good governance issues that were previously promised to the public and that focus on the basic needs of the people.



Among the voter-representative forums held in Addis Ababa sub-cities;

WHAT DID THE VOTERS OF SOUTH ETHIOPIA RAISE WITH THEIR MPS?

In the **Gedeo Zone** of the South Ethiopia Region, **Honorable Dr. Engineer Sileshi Kore** was among the first to hold discussions with constituents in the **Michle Cluster** of the **Dilla Zuria District**. He reportedly stated that, based on the questions raised by the community, follow-ups would be conducted to ensure that relevant government bodies provide responses step by step.

Honorable Gizachew Ayele, who also traveled to the same zone, reportedly explained the core activities carried out by the House and the government over the past five and a half years to his constituents.

Meanwhile, the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Government Development Organizations, **Honorable Melesse Mena**, traveled to the **Ofa constituency**. He noted that members of the House of Peoples' Representatives hold discussions every six months with various segments of society regarding the questions raised by the people who elected them.

Honorable Mr. Gashayalew Gela led a voter-representative forum in the **Uba Debre Tsehay District** and **Beto City Administration** of the **Gofa Zone**. The forum focused on the need for the community to work in coordination with security forces to sustainably resolve conflicts related to peace and security.

According to the House report, **Honorable Ms. Tigist Tadele**, who reached the **Laha City Administration** and **Malo Koza District**

Administration in the same zone, stated that she conducted discussions aimed at helping the **7th national election** concludes successfully.



Among the voter-representative forums held in the South Ethiopia Region;

Honorable Agu Deban, who visited the **South Omo Zone**, one of the zones in the **South Ethiopia Region**, reportedly told his constituents in **Dasenech District** that the Federal, Regional, and Zonal administrations are giving special attention to issues related to the **Omo River**. In the **Galila City Administration** of the **Ari Zone**, a voter-representative forum focusing on development and good governance was held under the leadership of **Honorable Dr. Woldeyes Debebe**.

Similarly, a voter-representative discussion was reported in the **Dumerso Cluster** of the **Yirgacheffe District**, led by **Honorable Mrs. Kibnesh Shiferaw**. According to information from the House of Peoples' Representatives, a forum led by **Honorable Ms. Etaferahu Mota** in the **Damot Pulasa District** and **Shanto City Administration** of the **Wolaita Zone** featured a detailed report presented to participants regarding development and good governance promises that have been fulfilled or are currently being addressed.

Honorable Dr. Awoke Amzaye led a voter forum where the public was reminded of their responsibility to ensure the **7th national election** is peaceful, fair, and widely accepted. Furthermore, a voter-representative discussion was held in the **Dilla City Administration**; the local representative, **Honorable Ms. Zeritu Shiferaw**, stated she would play her part by giving due attention to unresolved and ongoing good governance problems so they can be addressed step by step at every level.

WHAT DID THE CITIZENS OF SOUTH WEST ETHIOPIA SAY?

In this second volume of our Enderasie edition, which covers the constituency work of members of the House in the month of February, the **South West Ethiopia Region** was among the regions visited.

In **Deka City** of the **Kafa Zone**, it was reported that the only consultation forum of the month was held regarding issues that could ensure public benefit. The forum was led by **Honorable Ms. Tesfanesh Woldemariam**. During a voter-representative discussion held in the **Ogidakiti Kebele** of the **Bitu District** with community representatives from various kebeles, the constituency representative, **Honorable Mrs. Tesfanesh Woldemariam**, reportedly stated that the government is working with focus to address the community's questions step by step.



The voter forum in South West Ethiopia;

CROSSING OVER TO AFAR...

In the **Afar Region**, it was reported that only one constituency activity was conducted during this month of Yekatit, similar to the Somali Region. This single forum was led by **Honorable Eng. Hasna Hanfare**.



A partial view of the voter forum in the Afar Region;

Information obtained from the House indicates that during the voter-representative discussion held in **Aysaita District**, the MPs emphasized that executive bodies at all levels must work with focus to ensure that the infrastructure and good governance questions raised by the public receive proper responses.

4. PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY

Among the parliamentary diplomacy activities carried out by Ethiopian representatives in the month of February, the primary one concerned the **Parliamentary Intelligence-Security Forum**, which is scheduled to be held in Addis Ababa.

Honorable Tadesse Chafo, Speaker of the House of Peoples' Representatives, reportedly stated that all necessary preparations will be made to conduct a successful forum. During a discussion in his office with **Congressman Robert Pittenger**, Chairman of the Parliamentary Intelligence-Security Forum, the Speaker noted that the forum is making significant contributions to global peace and security. He further emphasized that hosting the forum in Addis Ababa would have a major impact on Ethiopia's security and intelligence institutions.

For his part, the Chairman of the Parliamentary Intelligence-Security Forum pointed out that Ethiopia is a crucial country for global peace and security and stated that the forum would work in collaboration with Ethiopia. Information from the House mentioned that during the discussion, it was noted that the forum is a platform where global MPs deliberate on international cyber security, international trade security, geopolitical challenges, illegal human and mineral trafficking, as well as terrorism and transnational crimes.



Speaker Tadesse Chafo, with the Chairman of the Parliamentary Intelligence-Security Forum;

The second parliamentary diplomacy activity of the month concerned the consultation aimed at establishing a **Parliamentary Friendship Association** between Ethiopia and Canada.

The discussion was reportedly held between the Speaker, **Honorable Tadesse Chafo**, and **Honorable Amina Gerba**, a member of the Canadian Senate. The Speaker noted that the parliamentary friendship association to be established between Ethiopia and Canada would have multifaceted benefits. He explained that he deeply respects the strong people-to-people relationship between Ethiopia and Canada, particularly highlighting the significant contribution of the Ethiopian community living in Canada in strengthening mutual understanding between the two peoples.

For her part, the Canadian Senate member, **Honorable Amina Gerba**, reportedly mentioned Canada's interest in enhancing its multifaceted relationship with Ethiopia.



Honorable Speaker Tadesse Chafo, Honorable Amina Gerba, and her delegation during their discussion;



5. MPS ON THEMSELVES

In the sixth month of the year covered by this edition, information gathered by Enderassie from the House indicates that Ethiopian representatives organized several sessions, including a review of the House's six-month performance report for the budget year and awareness-raising training forums.

In this regard, the primary activity was the evaluation of the **House Secretariat's 2018 first six-month plan execution** and the **2017 service user satisfaction survey report**.

The survey results indicated that user satisfaction levels regarding the service delivery of the House have shown steady improvement over the past three years. **Kereyu Banata**, Representative of the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General of the Administrative Sector at the House Secretariat, noted this progress and emphasized that future studies should expand their scope to ensure continued improvement.

Dr. Nigussie Meshesha, Deputy Secretary General of the Professional Support Sector at the Secretariat, added that to fulfill the institution's responsibilities, plans must be executed effectively by improving service delivery. He stressed that special attention must be given to correcting the gaps identified in the report.

Another internal activity of the month featured **Honorable Tagesse Chafo**, Speaker of the House of Peoples' Representatives', stating that the House will conduct the necessary follow-up and oversight to ensure the National Dialogue Commission's work

becomes a reality. The Speaker made these remarks during a forum attended by House advisors, coordinators, and chairpersons of standing committees regarding the 2018 first six-month performance report. He urged the **Standing Committee on Democratic Affairs** to strengthen its support and monitoring to ensure that the organization of agendas and the dialogue strategies are completed according to the set schedule.

The Deputy Speaker of the House, **Honorable Lomi Bedo**, also noted that the work performed over the past six months has seen numerous positive changes. She remarked that the House Secretariat has performed extensive work and brought about significant progress in fulfilling the House's duties and responsibilities at a higher level.

Dr. Nigussie Meshesha, Deputy Secretary General of the Professional Sector at the House Secretariat, presented the report and noted that regarding legislation over the past six months, **16 proclamations** were presented to the House. Of these, **12 proclamations were approved**, while the remaining **4 proclamations** are currently within the House's legislative process.

Among the PMs-focused activities held this month was a capacity-building training forum organized by the **Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission** under the theme: *"The Exemplary Role of the Legislative Body and its Significance in the Anti-Corruption Struggle."*

At this training forum, Deputy Speaker **Honorable Lomi Bedo** remarked that while institutional and

state level corruption is not present in Ethiopia, there are challenges related to service delivery. To overcome these, she urged officials at all levels to fulfill their responsibilities by fostering a generation that rejects corruption. The Deputy Speaker also emphasized that councils must properly exercise their oversight roles to ensure that institutional heads are serving the public with integrity and honoring their trust.

Additionally, **Honorable Ewnetu Alene**, Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Democratic Affairs, reportedly stated at the forum that every citizen must play their part in the anti-corruption struggle to realize Ethiopia's journey toward prosperity.



6. MPS AND THE 2018 ELECTION

Information from the House indicates that during the month of Yekatit, the House of Peoples' Representatives carried out various activities regarding the upcoming **2018 Election**. One notable event was the discussion held between members of the **Standing Committee on Democratic Affairs** and the leadership of the **Ethiopian Media Authority** concerning their national responsibility to ensure the next election is concluded democratically.

During this forum, Deputy Speaker **Honorable Lomi Bedo** stated that for the **7th national election** to be completed in a democratic manner, the media must operate by respecting the law and upholding professional ethical principles and obligations. Furthermore, she explained that to ensure the election is credible, fair, transparent, and acceptable, the media's primary task should be to report on all processes; starting from the pre-election phase in a manner that involves all stakeholders.

At the forum, **Ms. Haymanot Zeleke**, Director General of the Ethiopian Media Authority, presented the institution's reform activities and future strategic focal points, which were then reviewed by the House members with their subsequent thoughts and comments.



A partial view of the discussion forum;

Another election-related event mentioned was a forum where the Speaker of the House, **Honorable Tadesse Chafo**, delivered a keynote address. Attending the national forum focused on the coordination of judicial and democratic institutions; held under the theme "**The Advancement of Judicial and Democratic Institutions: For a Successful Nation-State Building!**"; the Speaker noted that numerous enabling conditions have been created to ensure the **7th national election** is free, democratic, and supported by technology.



Honorable Speaker Tadesse Chafo, during the discussion;

Honorable Tadesse Chafo stated that the fundamental reform measures taken within the **National Election Board of Ethiopia** have elevated the country's democratic system to a higher level. He further explained that by amending the **Political Parties Registration and Election Ethics Proclamation**, the House has created a conducive

environment for the Board to operate independently and without any interference.

BRIDGE'S OBSERVATIONAL INSIGHT: ON THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE COMMISSION AND RELATED TOPICS

It was heard in mid-February that the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission, which Ethiopians have been viewing with great hope as well as partial skepticism, has been unable to proceed according to its plan due to various overlapping reasons. The House of Peoples' Representatives of Ethiopia, taking this into consideration and finding the Commission's challenges convincing, has extended the institution's term by eight months. The House approved the resolution proposal for the 8-month extension by a unanimous vote. At its 1st emergency meeting of the 5th year term held on February 11, 2018, the House of Peoples' Representatives discussed the Commission's performance report to date and set future directions. This first edition of the Enderassie's second year, following this decision of the MPs, has chosen to provide a broad analysis of the nature of national dialogue, the Commission's challenges, and our institution's recommendations in the following manner.

WHY TOWARDS DIALOGUE?

As many literatures written on the necessity of national dialogue narrate, when listing the conditions that compel nations to conduct national dialogue, they strongly emphasize that it is when the foundation of a country or the legal legitimacy

of a government falls into danger. When such a dangerous situation occurs, the national dialogue is conducted with the primary goal of reshaping the social contract among the government, political actors, and the society. Beyond that, it is mentioned that when a strong friction occurs between pro-change and status quo forces, the elites face tangible pressure to move towards dialogue. In connection with this, broad-based pressures arising from the bottom-up, such as public protests, strikes, or revolutions, also compel governments to come to the dialogue table. Another point that cannot be passed over without mention is that during armed conflict or high political disagreement, nations turn their faces toward dialogue to ease tension and enter into a peaceful transition.

Even though national dialogue has recently gained prominence as a field of social study, in practice, it has been utilized in various countries for many decades. Especially in South Africa, the transitional justice process conducted after Apartheid and the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission have become a great experience for the world in recent times. Beyond South Africa, countries such as Benin, Gabon, Congo, Togo, Mali, and Niger have conducted national conferences at various times to solve economic crises and loss of political acceptance. The dialogues held in Tunisia and Yemen after the Arab Revolution are also cited as additional examples in the literatures written on the subject to lead political transitions.

It is also remembered that the American constitutional drafting process, the transition processes of Portugal and Spain in the 1970s, as

well as the activities carried out in Thailand, Afghanistan, and Nepal were processes that had the form of national dialogue. As seen in the processes from Togo to Yemen, national dialogue is becoming a highly preferred way to resolve national crises and conduct inclusive negotiations. However, it should be noted that the process becomes successful when it can include all sectors of society and when it can reach a clear political agreement.

WHAT LED ETHIOPIA TO NATIONAL DIALOGUE?

It is undeniable that the causes that led Ethiopia to National Dialogue are complex political, economic, and social contradictions accumulated over centuries. When we look at them broadly, we see that they are disputes with long-unresolved roots, ranging from historical wounds to questions of identity. Throughout its history, rather than seeking lasting solutions for its problems, Ethiopia has persisted in using force as a tool. Because power is seized and maintained by force, a culture of victor's justice has prevailed. Particularly, grievances created during the expansion process of Emperor Menelik II, the centralized administration of Emperor Haile Selassie, and the repression of the Derg regime have remained unresolved to this day.

Although the ethnic-based federalism that prevailed since 1991 aimed to redress historical injustices, it gave birth to new ethnic conflicts, power struggles, and resource allocation disputes. This system, which has lasted over three decades, is criticized by some for accentuating differences

rather than creating national unity. Eight years ago, the widespread public protests that erupted particularly in the Oromia and Amhara regions led to the resignation of former Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn and brought the administration of Dr. Abiy Ahmed to power. The devastating Northern war between the Federal Government and the TPLF also resulted in a significant humanitarian crisis. In addition to these, if we say that the armed conflicts observed in the Oromia and Amhara regions, as well as the identity and resource conflicts seen in Benishangul-Gumuz, Somali, the former Southern, and Afar regions, compelled the country to enter into dialogue, it would merely be presenting the concrete reality in brief.

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM: THE GORDIAN KNOT?

Regarding the National Dialogue Commission, about which many are saying much and for which the next eight months are said to be critical, many agree that its heaviest challenge, in view of the agendas collected so far and existing Ethiopian politics, is the national dialogue it may conduct regarding the Constitution. Whether we look at the collected agendas or the regions and areas where agenda collection is expected to take place in the future, it seems that a vast majority of the agendas and the topics raised by future participants as requiring dialogue revolve around one document: the Constitution. If we name this subject the *Gordian Knot** of the Dialogue Commission, we would not be far from the truth.

The political conflicts conducted over the past many decades have caused high damage to Ethiopia. This has resulted in long efforts to bring the highly divided country back into one. The absence of agreement among the various peoples of Ethiopia on fundamental issues has been the basic reason for the instability of the state. Particularly since the 1995 Federal Constitution was ratified, the document has remained a controversial issue. The state structure based on ethnicity and language, as well as the breadth of the right to self-determination given to "Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples," are the primary centers of disagreement. The difference between the supporters and critics of the system has appeared more prominently since the political transition that took place in 2018. The Prosperity Party has also been observed stating that it recognizes the necessity of resolving the constitutional crisis and supports a consensus-based constitutional reform.

The path the government chose to create the necessary agreement is national dialogue, which began three years ago when the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission was established by the House of Peoples' Representatives. Since that time, questions regarding the Constitution are being referred to the dialogue, and calls for reforms appear to have a chance of becoming a reality. Consequently, it is estimated that the national dialogue could be a critical reason for constitutional reform. It is expected that, in the first stage, it will confirm the existence of a need for reform and, if found necessary, collect the specific details of the desired changes. Additionally, the dialogue aims to create agreement among

participants with diverse perspectives. Considering the polarized situation, the country is in, it is necessary to remember that the difficulty of achieving this goal cannot be underestimated.

**The expression Gordian Knot originates from an ancient Greek myth and refers to an extremely complex and not easily solvable problem. As the story goes, Gordius, who was the King of Phrygia, tied his wagon to a wooden pillar with a very complex knot; it was said that the ends of the rope were invisible and no one could untie it. After tightening the knot in that manner, it is written that he spoke a prophecy stating, "Whoever unties this knot shall become the king of Asia." Alexander the Great, who grew up hearing this prophecy, desired to untie the knot with his usual thirst for omnipotence. Alexander, who came to Phrygia in 333 B.C., tried many times to untie the knot but was unsuccessful. Finally, Alexander brought a different solution; as the myth tells it, he drew his sword and, by cutting the knot and splitting it in two, the rope was immediately released. The hermeneutic reading of this story refers to solving a complex problem through a direct and unusually bold action.*

While the necessity of a broad-based national dialogue is widely accepted, and inclusive public participation is key to a successful constitutional reform process, there are many who doubt that the current dialogue can bring about true consensus or provide a solution to the constitutional crisis. In fact, concerns are being raised by various politicians that a reform carried out without sufficient agreement could exacerbate the conflict.

The dialogue aims to create national consensus by bringing political and opinion leaders who have differences on national issues, as well as various sectors of society, into public discussion. The eleven-member National Dialogue Commission is mandated with identifying the causes of these differences, drafting agendas, and facilitating inclusive forums at regional and national levels. The Commission is also responsible for submitting recommendation proposals based on the dialogue's outcomes, as well as supporting and monitoring their implementation.

In addition to its broad duties, the Commission carries many burdens on its shoulders. This is because constitutional reform has great significance; determining the future structure of the Ethiopian state; which could lead the country toward peace or toward further war. The Commission's findings and suggestions are highly likely to be the basis for constitutional changes and subsequent processes. Therefore, let us note that for any resulting reform to be acceptable, public trust in the Commission as an independent mediator is crucial.

In this regard, several opposition political parties have been criticizing the Commission's independence from the government and doubting the sincerity of the process. What is concerning is that several competing parties decided not to participate and withdrew from the dialogue. Although many parties returned later, participation has been declining again during the agenda collection period in the Oromia and Amhara regions. In December, seven opposition parties, including Enat Party, the All Ethiopian Unity Party

(AEUP), and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), expressed in two separate statements that the chance of the national dialogue's success is narrowing. Even so, the Commission is currently making efforts to return non-participating political parties to the dialogue.

A few months ago, in a press conference given by the Commission, it stated that it held discussions with three political parties: the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), AEUP, and Enat Party; however, all parties set preconditions for their return. These include that ongoing conflicts be resolved peacefully and that combatants be included in the national dialogue, as well as that marginalized political parties and imprisoned politicians, journalists, and activists participate in the dialogue. The parties believe that fulfilling these preconditions mainly depends on government bodies. The Commission also stated that it will continue discussions with other parties currently outside the participation.

In view of the *Gordian Knot* of the Constitution mentioned under this sub-topic, various perspectives have been observed during the agenda collection process. For example, among the points raised by participants in Oromia are the incorporation of the capital, Addis Ababa, into Oromia; the protection of the rights of nations to self-determination, including the right to secession; and that the controversial national flag remains unchanged as it is a symbol of ethnic equality. These constitutional provisions faced strong opposition during the forums in the Amhara region. Furthermore, similar differences were observed among the federal regions.

While there is support for ethnic self-determination at the regional level among Oromia, Somali, and the new regions found in the South; in the Amhara region, requests for reform have begun, arguing that the Constitution is excessively focused on ethnicity. If the process continues, all twelve regions will, in some way, have different opinions on the reform. If the amendment provisions set within the Constitution are strictly followed, any region, as an equal member of the federation, has the constitutional capacity to reject reform proposals submitted regarding ethnic self-governance rights. In this regard, reaching an agreement might require each region to give up its right to self-governance to some extent for the sake of national unity; this, in turn, seems impossible at least under the current concrete reality.

Even though there is a real hope that a constitutional reform could be made in some way in the near future, the chance of success in terms of softening conflicts and bringing peace seems distant. In fact, many, including those who support constitutional change, fear that the current path of reform could worsen the chaos; as the risks of suddenly exiting ethnic federalism are frequently heard being raised by several parties.

WHAT WAS SAID?

Before we look at the main reasons the National Dialogue Commission presented this past February when requesting a term extension, citing what was stated by the Commission a year ago will make our topic complete. It is remembered that the House of Peoples' Representatives met on November 10,

2017 to discuss this very issue. At that time, the Commission stated that it required the assistance of the House of Peoples' Representatives to identify agendas and participants in the Tigray region. Speaker of the House, Honorable Tagesse Chafo, on his part stated, "We will work together in a coordinated manner to create enabling conditions. We will also consult with the region." The Chief Commissioner of the Commission, Professor Mesfin Araya, explained the Commission's completed and remaining tasks to the members of the House. "Today, we should have been presenting the report with which we conclude our work and exit," said the Chief Commissioner, mentioning gaps that prevented his institution from doing so. Prof. Mesfin stated that the conditions encountered in various places over the past three years were among these gaps. "Our work began at a time when there were problems in Western Ethiopia," the Chief Commissioner said; "Similarly, problems are encountered in Western Oromia. When we started Amhara, there was no problem; currently, however, enabling conditions and relative peace are required." Professor Mesfin noted that the problems in Western Ethiopia had been resolved and the Commission had fully completed its work in the Benishangul-Gumuz and Gambella regions, and he also mentioned the situation in the Tigray region in that report.

The Chief Commissioner said, "We must obtain a full green light to work in Tigray; however, there are preconditions set on that side; we believe this is the responsibility of the House of Peoples' Representatives." "We have consulted with the President of the Interim Administration of Tigray

region, taking some time,” Prof. Mesfin said; “What we agreed upon in that consultation is that they indeed believe in this national dialogue process, they accept the national dialogue process in principle, and they told us it is appropriate.” The Chief Commissioner added, “They promised us that when conditions are facilitated, we would talk to the cabinet and various sectors of society and that they would connect us.” Mentioning that repeated meetings were held with the President, Prof. Mesfin told the House members, “For obvious reasons, there is no approach where we have fully entered Tigray.” The Chief Commissioner did not detail the reasons he described as “obvious” to the members of the House of Peoples’ Representatives. Although the Commission has not held discussions with the residents of the Tigray region, the Chief Commissioner indicated that discussions were held with civil society organizations and university leaders located in the region.

After Prof. Mesfin presented his report, the MPs presented questions. The questions presented primarily focused on the participation of armed groups, the Commission’s term of office, as well as the identification of participants and agendas in the Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray regions. On that day, in response to a question asking whether they would conclude by moderating, gathering recommendations, and submitting a report within the remaining three months, Prof. Mesfin replied, “When we took our oath on February 14, 2014, and met an hour later in a meeting led by the Speaker, what we promised was to finish our work within three years. Our agenda since the first day has been to work, finalize, and appear before you.”

The Chief Commissioner added, “Regarding time, our readiness is not to ask for this much time to be given to us or for such to be done for us. Our readiness is still to see how far we can reach by working in this remaining time.” Regarding the extension of the Commission’s working time, he explained: “You are the ones who established it; you are the ones who decided on three years. You have the right to say enough after this; you also have the right to say continue. We have nothing to say about that. However, there is a process where we sit down with the Speaker and relevant leaders over time and explain in detail.”

WHY SHOULD IT BE EXTENDED?

With only one week remaining before the one-year extended working term of the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission was set to expire, the MPs gave their consent for it to be extended for the next eight months. It was during an emergency meeting on February 11, 2017 that the House of Peoples’ Representatives had extended the time for one year so that the Commission could complete its work. When the Commission presented its half-year work report to the Standing Committee on Democratic Affairs of the House, it stated that time is needed because the agendas collected so far must be properly deliberated upon and viewed in a stable condition. Regarding the Tigray region, where the Commission’s work has not yet started, it was stated that it must mandatorily participate, and an explanation was given that the people should not be held hostage.

When the Commission presented its six-month work report on Friday, February 6, 2018 to the

Standing Committee on Democratic Affairs within the House of Peoples' Representatives, this topic was the primary point of discussion. Although the institution had planned to complete the agenda collection work and enter into the main dialogue starting from January 2018, it mentioned that it has been difficult to state when the dialogue assembly would begin because work has not started in the Tigray region. Commissioner Zegeye Asfaw was one of the leaders of the institution who raised this extensively. He stated, "Do not rush us, lest we make it fruitless by hurrying." Commissioner Zegeye, who stated that we should not present something flimsy by shortening the time for the results of the dialogue work which the people are awaiting with great hope, mentioned that identifying the collected agendas is itself a major problem and stated that "we have not even entered into it although we have prepared a procedure to identify agendas" as an additional reason for this stance.

The other commissioner, Ambassador Mahmoud Dirir, on his part, urged that the people should not be held hostage, citing the fact that work has not started in the Tigray region. In response to a question asked as to why the Commission does not conduct the agenda collection and subsequent works in a convenient place even if it is outside the region, the Chief Commissioner responded that this would not happen. He also said, "When will the dialogue end? It is not a process that is easily estimated or told." He added by repeating what was said a year ago, asking how they can start in the coming months and stating that they seek the high assistance of the House.

The Commission identified and presented to the House the major problems it faced over the past years and four issues it stated are still testing it. The report distributed to the House indicates that the challenges the Commission stated it faced are primarily related to peace and security. The National Dialogue Commission explained in the report that it encountered fluctuating and demanding challenges during the agenda collection process. Stating that the work is full of many challenging conditions, the Commission said that particularly the impact of conflict is the foremost.

The second challenge the Commission stated it faced are questions raised in connection with independence and neutrality. It was also explained in the report that the distribution of distorted information regarding the independence and neutrality of the Commission is a major challenge. It also pointed out that the non-participation of some political parties in the dialogue process for their own reasons, as stated by the Commission, has been a challenge. The fourth challenge placed by the Commission is the lack of participation of armed groups.

The Commission announced in the report it presented to the House that the absence of enabling conditions to involve those in armed struggle has been a major challenge. Although the Commission expressed its readiness to enable armed groups to participate in the dialogue process, it stated that additional efforts are required from the government and armed groups to bring about concrete results.

WHAT ARE THE CRITICISMS?

The critical points we wish to summarize under this sub-heading, which we believe will be of value both to the House of Peoples' Representatives; which oversees the Commission and to the Commission itself, are briefly raised as follows;

- **Credibility and Neutrality:** - It is observed being raised with suspicion by various competing parties and some analysts that some members of the Commission have links with the ruling Prosperity Party. The process by which the commissioners were selected is also questioned on the grounds that it lacked transparency and did not involve the opposition.
- **Risk of Political Manipulation:** - Accusations are heard that the Prosperity government is using the Commission as a tool to prolong its power and to secure international community support and loans.
- **Attempt to Cover Up Crimes:** - Strong criticism is also raised that the government is trying to use the dialogue as a pretext to cover up alleged war crimes and human rights violations committed in the Amhara, Tigray, and Wollega areas.
- **Lack of Inclusivity:** - There is a grievance that neither the government nor the Commission has made sufficient efforts to bring major political forces and armed groups, who are crucial for a meaningful peace process, into the dialogue.
- **Focus on Technical Issues:** - Voices are also heard stating that the Commission's preoccupation with technical and procedural issues, rather than resolving the fundamental political problems that are the causes of

conflicts, has put the sincerity of resolving the problem into question.

BRIDGE'S RECOMMENDATIONS

The challenges faced by the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission are not unique to Ethiopia. History shows that due to structural weaknesses, mistrust, and elite capture, national dialogues in other countries have repeatedly been driven to failure. In South Sudan's peacebuilding process, the national dialogue that was hoped for was hindered due to the exclusion of elites, historical grievances, and ethnic division. On the other hand, the reconciliation that came after the war in Liberia remained only a negative peace; this became a reason for the delay of disarmament and for mistrust between the government and the opposition for the sake of political gain. Yemen, Chad, and Sri Lanka are also similar examples of failure.

These situations confirm one bitter truth: that even the most promising dialogues fail without inclusive representatives, without institutional independence, and without a neutral implementation system. In view of this, Bridge wishes to present the following points as recommendations. Before we move to the general recommendations, however, let us briefly mention the ideas we believe the House of Peoples' Representatives should have on this topic:

As Bridge understands it, since the House of Peoples' Representatives is the superior body that established the National Dialogue Commission by proclamation, it should have the following crucial

roles for the process to be successful and gain trust;

- **Monitoring and Oversight Role:** - The House must monitor the Commission's performance of its work with neutrality and inclusivity more closely than it has done so far; for the reason that the Commission's periods from here on are extremely critical.
- **Reviewing the Commission's Performance Report:** - We say that both the House and the relevant Standing Committee on Democratic Affairs, when reviewing the reports, the Commission submits periodically, must exert pressure so that gaps in inclusivity observed during the preparation and process phases are corrected.
- **The House of Peoples' Representatives of the FDRE,** as its primary existence is public representation, we say it must strive more than this to ensure without fail that the Commission is free from bias and is transparent to the public.
- It is known that the foremost of the challenges the Commission has repeatedly raised is the difficulty of involving armed forces; in view of this, if the House devises a way to grant legal immunity to the combatants, we believe it would enable the armed groups to participate in the dialogue without fear, and we wish to make a call based on our civic responsibility for this to be considered.

The other focus of our recommendation is the National Dialogue Commission itself, and as contributing a few ideas is our institutional

responsibility, we believe the following points will ease the Commission's remaining tasks if it considers them.

- **Selection Strategy of Participants:** - It is known that the selection strategy the Commission has followed until today is a bottom-up approach. Our institution has observed concerns that this selection strategy ignores the true causes of conflict and actors in various localities. There is a related concern that selecting participants starting from the Woreda level covers up horizontal conflicts and grudges between groups. Since this approach causes major conflict actors to be excluded, we say that if the Commission strives to adjust this institutional approach as much as possible in the remaining eight months, the benefit will be significant.
- **Categorization of Society:** - The way the Commission has categorized participants into nine sectors of society has similarly not escaped criticism. The reason is that it has not taken into account ethnic and religious identity, which are said to be the foundation of Ethiopia's political crisis. Particularly, since Ethiopia's fundamental problem is based on nationalism and identity competition, grouping participants only by profession or living condition ignores this basic problem. Thus, Bridge wishes to present its recommendation stating that if the Commission corrects this institutional distortion, it will have a positive contribution.
- **Institutional Grievances:** - Grievances from institutions are observed being raised; as an

illustration, it is remembered that the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church submitted a grievance stating They have been marginalized. In view of this, it shows the Commission's inability to involve identity groups such as religion and ethnicity as a collective entity; we say this should be considered, as if a condition is created where this is corrected, the public hope in the Commission will be grounded in reality.

- Not Omitting or Diluting Agendas: - Although the Commission has the legal power to organize agendas, it must ensure that agendas submitted by participants and various parties gain acceptance and are not improperly discarded; Bridge wishes to mention that if it performs this using official and public forum, it will raise the institution's credibility, and thus it should be considered.

By presenting the points we have raised above as recommendations in the following short summary table, we wish to conclude this month's Bridge Survey;

Area of Focus	Action to be Taken	Expected Result
Inclusivity	Fully engaging armed groups and excluded competing parties;	Ending the war and establishing broad political acceptance;
Transparency	Disclosing the list of participants, the agenda collection process, and the agendas in detail;	Increasing trust among the public and stakeholders;
Accountability	Reducing the government influence alleged by various parties and working to gain public approval for the existence of a neutral operation;	Making the dialogue results credible and implementable;

The Denotation of “Enderasie” (እንደራሴ)

The term “Enderasie” is a conceptual expression that holds significant weight in Ethiopia’s ancient and modern political discourse and constitutional history. The etymology and denotation of the word, in a general sense, had/have the following meanings:-

The expression is derived from the combination of two words: “Ende” (እንደ) and “Rasse” (ራሴ). “Ende” signifies likeness, stead, or substitute; “Rasse” reflects the self-calling identity or the owner and when denoted, it reflects the authority. In its connotation, it is said to mean “as me” or “being me.” When referencing its title in Ethiopian constitutional history, the term “Enderasie” had different socio-political interpretations across various eras; to wit:-

A. *The Representative of the Emperor (Regent):* During the monarchical era, if the emperor was unable to lead the state for any reason (not coming of age, illness, or other reasons), the person granted full authority to administer the country was called “Bitwoded-Enderasie.”

B. *Regional or Provincial Governor:* Since the Emperor could not be present in every province personally at all times, the representatives who judged and administered in his name were called “Enderasie”; this grants the full representation of the King.

C. *Representation of the People:* Since the advent of the first Ethiopian Constitution, however, the word took on a new denotation. The people began to call the persons they elected to deliberate and make decisions in their stead in the council “People’s Enderasies” (Rep- representatives). The denotation of this gave it the meaning of “one who works as the people,” “image of the people,” or “representative of the people.”

Today, it is used interchangeably with the word “Representative” (as in the beginning of Western parliamentary history). However, the word “Enderasie” holds a political and socio-cultural denotation of gravity that goes beyond representation, carrying the full honor and identity-based association of the body it represents.

The Bridge Denotation

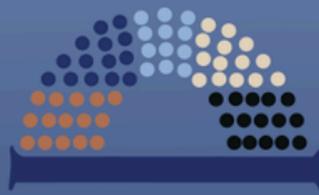
Our institution, Bridge, has utilized this word by denoting it from the past to the present era while maintaining the rules of Amharic grammar. Let us first cite what the noted scholars have established: Desta Tekle Wold defined “Enderasie” as “being me, one who works holding my authority”; Kidane Wold Kifle described it as “standing in the stead, in the substitute”; Tesemma Habte Michael Gitsew, in turn, gave it the definitions of “alternate, representative, plenipotentiary.” Even Mahteme Selassie Wolde Meskel raised that when a person appears not in their own name but in the name of another to perform legal acts, they are called “Enderasie.” As these references show, while the word was initially used only for the representatives of kings, its later application to representatives of the people served to express the supremacy of the people; furthermore, it provides the denotation that the representative appears as the people and is called as the people.

In this context, when we say “Enderasie”: on one hand, we have denoted it in alignment with the constitutional principle of ‘self-determination’ upon which the Ethiopian Federation stands, regarding the word “Ras” (Self). This means we have used a denotative translation to solve the “Rasie” within “Enderasie” through the nations, nationalities and peoples encompassed by the meaning of “Ras” in this principle. Beyond that, just as the elector in the former era was the emperor, in this era of ours, it is the people; therefore, note that when we say “Enderasie,” we use the definition:- one who becomes like the electing people, nation, or nationality. When we align it with the modern electoral system, the individual elector sends the Enderasie to the council to decide on the affairs of their life, saying, ‘speak with my lips, sit on my throne.’ It asserts that if the elected is not as the self to the elector, the elector can strip away their likeness of me (aka the representation).

The expression “Enderasie”:- although Amharic, the national language of the time, was the only working language of the council when the first Ethiopian Council of Enderasies was established; note that the expression is found within the other languages of the nations and nationalities of our country; for example: in Sidama—amaalete mina, in Afaan Oromo—Bakka bu’aa, in Tigrinya—kemay, in Wolaytta—Kal Atiya/Taga ton.

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