



## **NES COMMENTARY: No. 43**

### **Title: Congratulations to Eritrea and Ethiopia Uniting as One People with One Shared Destiny**

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#### **Inspiration**

*“This is my plea to the new generation of African leaders and African peoples: work for unity with firm conviction that without unity there is no future for Africa...I reject the glorification of the nation-state, which we have inherited from colonialism, and the artificial nations we are trying to forge from that inheritance. We are all Africans trying to be Ghanaians or Tanzanians. Fortunately for Africa we have not been completely successful...Unity will not make us rich, but it can make it difficult for Africa and the African peoples to be disregarded and humiliated. And it will therefore increase the effectiveness of the decisions we make and try to implement for our development. My generation led Africa to political freedom. The current generation of leaders and peoples of Africa must pick up the flickering torch of African freedom, refuel it with their enthusiasm and determination, and carry it forward.” - Julius Nyerere, First president of Tanzania*

“The glory which awaits Africa cannot come about until Africa is united. If we fail to unite, then a great nation will go to sleep forever.”  
(Kwame Nkrumah)

**“We can assure you we will face the future together. We will work as one...from now on do not say Eritrean and Ethiopian people; say there is one people: we are one people”** Isiays Afeworki

Isiays has given an interview in a glossy magazine in three languages about his undying and unchanging commitment to a ‘one Ethiopia— andit or hanti Ethiopia’!!! He declared in the front cover: **“It’s our persistent stance to strive for a united Ethiopia.”** (August 23, 2007)

### **1. Moving from the Failed 1991-1993 Transition to the 2018-2020 Successful Transition for Unity**

The transition from the 1991 to 1993 of Eritrea from being part of Ethiopia to become a separate state did not produce peace and stability in the region for the last 27 years. In fact, what came was the totally an un-necessary war in Badame on the border between Eritrea and the province of Tigray from 1998-2000 that made both sides to lose over 100,000 people. What also came from the last 18 years is what is called a “No War, No Peace” state that closed Eritrea off from Ethiopia. Fathers and mothers, and children and family had no right to see each other. It was truly evil to the people on both sides what the ruling elites imposed on both Eritrea and Ethiopia. Both were losers, no one gained at all. It was a lose-lose outcome and never a win-win one at all. They all should the moral sense to acknowledge the cruel injustice they imposed on this very God fearing and justice loving people with the longest historical memory and civilisation in Africa and the rest of the world. Eritrea too is part and parcel of the originator of this long history, civilisation and memory associated

with Ethiopia's name. Everything is moved but memory. The name Eritrea came much later and its origin is undeniably and purely Ethiopian. As Mwalimu Julius **Nyerere** said "Tanzania is a colonial mistake", most of the states in Africa and all those affected by the colonial world were created during the partition of the scramble for Africa including our own North East Africa region. I think let us not call it Horn of Africa as it is not appropriate to describe Africa as a phone described with such terms as Franco phone, Anglo phone, Luso phone. Africa is philia (love!) and not a phone!

All the ruling elites on both sides should be honest and admit the mistakes they made to create war (1998-2000) followed the unending "no war and no peace" from 2000- 2018. The apology from the elite must be honest, transparent, true and open to the people and the public; and I am sure the forgiving people will accept their apologies from the ruling elites as long as they do them with moral intelligence applying fully honesty, sincerity, humility, integrity and decency. Dr. Abiy has demonstrated how to apologise for the wrong the Government of Ethiopia has done publicly and forthrightly. There is a great lesson to learn from both the Eritrea and Ethiopia sides as all those that suffered deserve genuine and sincere heart felt apologies from the ruling elites that were involved in doing this gross injustice and damage to the people and to Eritrea, Ethiopia, the region, Africa and humanity as a whole.

There was also no clarity what constituted the transition from the 1991-1993 TPLF and EPLF discussion and decision. It has never been transparent and open. It was closed and a mystery to nearly all of us. The people who were never involved suffered a lot. The elite that made the war did not suffer as much as the people who died and were forced to be separated from their families. Is what has gone wrong what was agreed as the transition or the failure to manage what was agreed expeditiously and truly between 1991-1993 or failure to implement it properly until the 1998-2000 war broke out? We need now a new transition driven by the vision of love, reconciliation, forgiveness, respect and trustful collaboration always and ever. No going back to war to split families ever again. Never! There is a need

for a total paradigm shift to enter the dawn or era of eternal peace, stability and building all the needed to promote the wellbeing of the people and nature with consistency, resolve, commitment and dedication.

## **2. The Need for an Open and Transparent “2018-2020 Transition”**

Now there is a real need to craft a new sustainable transition that draws a very profound lesson after seriously monitoring and evaluating the 1991-2018 tragic mistakes that cost our people immensely. We need from now on starting from 2018 to the future ever coursing through the eternal river of time to realise no division but unity, being always and ever one people with a shared one destiny to contribute not only for the wellbeing of our own one people and nature but also to the people in our beloved Africa and humanity globally. I recommend two years from 2018-2020 to undertake systematic effort to create the real unity of the people and if agreed it is my recommendation that it would be much better to create one union Government joining and combining Eritrea with Ethiopia. We should mobilise all the stake holders from public, private, civil society and universities to a variety of other sources to build genuine real unity with trust and confidence. The people on both sides should be given the opportunity and they should make the decision and what they decide should be strictly adhered to as long as they make the choices without any interferences based on honest, open and transparent exchange of knowledge to decide on what would best promote their enduring and sustainable unity and togetherness.

I call upon the leaders and the people to join together and use at least two years from 2018 to 2020 to create the transparent and open transition to regenerate the real unity that the people can become fully and truly comfortable with. **We have a number of choices. The first is to create a united one Government; the second is to establish a federation; the third is confederation and the fourth is to keep the two separate states.** As there are a number of choices and it will be

good to create a road map trajectory to select the most appropriate governance, institutional structure, leadership and systems that shape the one people and one destiny to be propelled not by selfish interests, egoism and by instrumentally calculating one's own gains at the expense of others based on choices by pricing everything and valuing nothing; but as Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali repeatedly states by preferring to move along the pathway of love, reconciliation, forgiveness, respect, pride and self-worth. Let the 2018-2020 transition become a game-changer and great success to forge and build lasting unity by rectifying the failure of the 1991-1993 transition that brought the calamity of war and family separation.

### **3. Appeal to the Leadership in Eritrea and Ethiopia**

What I appeal to Dr. Abiy and Ato Isays is to do all they can to create the 'One People, one shared Destiny' where Eritrea is "Ethiopia and Ethiopia is Eritrea" by uniting us all as Ethiopians and Africans and use the transition to radiate the re-generation of an enduring Pan-African spirit for Africa to come out entirely from the colonially planted divisions that have been the source of so many wars across Africa. Let both of them as the current leaders work with full trust, love and moral and emotional intelligence to create not only the enduring, sustainable and innovative unity between the people, but also let all work very hard with joy to make what both leaders are facilitating and guiding to become a role model for bringing African solutions to African problems. Let the resolution of the conflict with the 2018-2020 transition efforts provide a new vibrant and dynamic brand and model for the rest of Africa to learn to move away from division and to bring about ever-lasting African Unity.

On June 16, 2018, I was in the USA and gave a lecture to our 50 years' re-union in Dwhite Morrow High School in Engle Wood New Jersey where I declared the USA has the whole world in it and having gone through civil wars and many problems, the American people have established enduring unity. The whole world is in the USA and all know how to live together regardless of the numerous problems that are not yet fully settled such as racism, inequality, unemployment

and even poverty. I said the USA should forget everything and should rather prioritise this model of USA or American success for being able to make all live together despite the huge diversity all hailing from the whole world living in America. Let America stand for humanity first where all care for one another rather than for weapons, money by worrying about military and all other material and other distracting interests. My beloved host family and former elementary school mates liked this message or advice let America go for valuing and prioritising humanity and rather than going mainly for commerce and valuing more things than humanity!

We in Africa should learn to accelerate our unity and we have delayed it for too long and we have been fighting to protect borders cynically drawn by the enemies of Africa. This is the time to change. Eritrea and Ethiopia have divided themselves in 1991-1993. Now in 2018-2020 let them teach all Africa by not being distracted by defending borders others drew cynically to impose their divide and rule over the entire Africa and not just to them. Now there is the opportunity to re-transition the transition by correcting the flaws of the 1991-1993 failure. If the two leaders can create a united one people, they can send a powerful message to the whole of Africa. They both should be supported to share the Nobel Prize as Mandela and De Klerk won it also after 1994 South African reconciliation. If love, forgiveness and reconciliation bring Eritrea and Ethiopia to unite as one people with one destiny, those who facilitated this transition from war to permanent peace and from separation to unity can deserve a Nobel peace prize.

#### **4. Can Standing for United Ethiopia include Eritrea to be Ethiopia too!**

We heard that Ato Isyas Afeworki was open for confederation or federation in 1991, though we have not had any tangible proof or evidence for it. It will be good if we can hear from him what his position was in 1991. We heard that those who opposed his openness to federation/confederation were some of them from TPLF leadership

group. I hope the real truth backed by evidence can come out finally now. What has been consistent was that Ato Isays has always advocated in his statements one united Ethiopia. Now it is time for both his words of unity and action to move from any miss-match to a match by teaming up together with the new vision of love, reconciliation and forgiveness expressed consistently with great humility by Dr. Abiy. Over the last twenty years it was easy to recognise and appreciate Ato Isaya's Ethiopian unity words but in terms of action, what was often seen was the Eritrean Government giving support to some of the ethnic based fronts fighting the TPLF-led regime in Ethiopia. Now there should be consistency. It will be good to know between 1991 to 1993 why the transition decision to split Eritrea from Ethiopia was taken. Why was it not possible, given TPLF and EPLF were allies at the time, that they failed to make some arrangements to form a unity of Eritrea and Ethiopia in some form or variety! This is sincerely a real puzzle that needs clarification as it is important the truth is told forthrightly and honestly as it is the only way the necessary trust can be made and built.

## **5. My Own Take on the 1991-1993 Transition**

In 1991 on May 27. when the decision was made to form a transitional Government with TPLF and a provisional Government in Eritrea, I was the chairman of the Ethiopian Community in Britain and we organised a big protest challenging the decision that the mediators wrote on a hotel notes for TPLF to take over Ethiopia. We protested the next day on May 28, 1991 in the American embassy challenging the USA support to divide Ethiopia ethnically and make also Eritrea to secede. I remember the BBC Bush House interviewing me about the development and I explained to them that this settlement will create war and division and the transition will not lead to a lasting peace. I was interviewed also by Martin Plaut from the BBC in 1992; I repeated by giving a number of reasons why there will be war. In 1993 there was a meeting in Oxford University, I repeated by giving more reasons why the necessary condition for peaceful transition does not exist and we cannot go for a long term economic collaboration then when the politics is leading us into a war that I said is likely to

erupt any time in the next few years. How I wish I were wrong, but what I predicted happened and took place.

I remember giving another BBC interview on the Badme war and the decision by the TPLF leaders to expel those with Eritrean origin from Ethiopia. I opposed that Eritrean origin citizens' expulsion that broke families apart. I still am very sad and angry that it ever happened and so many sisters and brothers were expelled just because their families originated in the Ethiopia of Eritrea. Families that have Eritrean husbands and wives have to be separated because of this evil and cruel policy to expel Eritreans from Ethiopia. That was truly evil and when the BBC asked me I said why not Ato Meles not be expelled then as I am told his origin is more from Eritrea than Ethiopia. I have also heard the Ato Isayas is more from Ethiopia than Eritrea, why not also bring him to his homeland to Ethiopia rather than keep him in Eritrea. My own daughter and son's grandfather is Eritrean too. My children always love to see Eritrea as the umbilical cord of their grandfather is in Eritrea. Now if the transition is properly done within the 2018-2020 period, I know my children cannot hesitate to go very soon. I would love also to support both research and post graduate training in Asmara University and all universities too if it is possible to be invited to do it. I will be more than happy to serve our one people as I believe sincerely as they always are our sisters and brothers truly.

## **6. Concluding Remarks**

What we need is a genuine transition to build the long-cherished reunion of Eritrea and Ethiopia. This will make the dream of all of us to come true finally. I recommend not a federation, not a confederation, not a two separate state but one union Government to make the one people and one destiny to be fully realised. Above all else, for the great vision expressed by Ato Isiays to come true (NB: Please see the quote as an inspiration here in the opening page of this commentary) to be realised, we need to vote and select/choose the union government and not the two states or federation or confederation.



That is my open vote in advance in case the transition is made by permitting the people to do the choice amongst the four options. **“We can assure you we will face the future together. We will work as one...from now on do not say Eritrean and Ethiopian people; say there is one people: we are one people” Only a union Government will translate into reality the vision expressed in this quote by Ato Isiays!! If Ato Isiays implements and translates into practice what is quoted above, I have no words to express to say he can only be a true Ethiopian brother to me and all of us from all of Africa.**

The best legacy of all those who made the mistake over the last 27 years they can leave behind is to realise and go for one union Government. If they do this, we should all forgive them and move on onwards and forwards appreciating their coming back to reality, in spite of making big mistakes in the first place in 1991-1993. The reward is with the current transition (2018-2020), they have come back to provide Ethiopia and Eritrea an enduring great legacy agreeing that all must live together as one people with shared future and destiny without fail always and ever. I appeal to all those who are in politics to come together and share to create one union Government and make the way Eritrea and Ethiopia can resolve their precarious predicament to provide a brand for resolving conflicts to the rest of Africa and the rest of the world. Where there was hate, may love replace it, where there was conflict, may reconciliation beat it, where there was bitterness, let forgiveness prevail to remove it. As Dr. Abiy keeps reminding us, let us be added as Ethiopians and Africans; let us not be subtracted; let us be multiplied also and not be divided. Let us be included without any one excluded. Let us go for a united, prosperous wellbeing anchored, green, smart, inventive, innovative, creative, entrepreneurial, talented and loving and God fearing one people moving along the path of a life-journey full of curiosity, sense of wonder, intelligence, education, wisdom, knowledge and happiness. Let us remove divisive vice and go for unity virtue. Let everyone join and celebrate and congratulate the current great Eritrea and Ethiopia permanent transition to forging and building an everlasting historic come back for their re-union to be one, one and one!

**“Ethiopia has a unique distinction in the universe for empowering those that were disempowered, for humanising those that were dehumanised, spiritualising those that were denied their right to worship God and inspiring and strengthening those oppressed to resist oppression”.**

## **Mammo Muchie**

“We do not need borders between Eritrea and Ethiopia because it is not easy to demarcate them and get it right short of relying on colonial maps that divide families. In Africa the borders are artificial and mostly irrational. Drawing them and imposing them excludes and divides families.” Mammo Muchie

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