

Washington Update

June 30, 2009

Effort to get legislation introduced in the U.S. Congress supporting human rights, democracy and economic development in Ethiopia is moving forward. We expect to be able to report on some successes in the near future.

The Obama administration is developing new policies toward Africa, led by Jonnie Carson, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. In a June 26 interview with Voice of America, Carson said the U.S. will press the Meles regime to respect human rights and democratic freedoms. Speaking in the language of diplomacy, Carson said: "We will want to talk to the Ethiopian government about opening political space, strengthening institutions, having greater involvement of civil society and more respect for the rights of individual in the economic and political sphere."

In a June 23 speech at the National Press Club in Washington, Carson made some general remarks about Africa policy: He pledged to pursue a broad but focused agenda to protect U.S. interests in seeking peace, good governance and economic growth on a continent that is the origin of over thirteen percent of Americans, supplies fifteen percent of U.S. oil and most of its natural gas and has a vast potential as a trading partner. He identified four areas of policy attention: a) strengthening democratic institutions; b) preventing conflict; c) fostering economic growth; and d) partnering with Africa to combat global threats. In addition, he pledged to speak out against corruption, to support Africans who are fighting corruption, and to support free and independent media, including electronic media using new technologies.

American and international support for human rights and democracy in Ethiopia is part of a wider agenda. Anything that advances the peaceful struggle for human rights in countries that suffer from totalitarian oppression ultimately helps Ethiopia -- dictators need each other, and are afraid when they see people throwing off their shackles, even if they are on the other side of the world. On Tuesday, June 23, I met Reza Pahlavi, the former Crown Prince of Iran, at a press conference at the National Press Club. I told him that his countrymen are very brave to challenge people the brutal regime in Teheran, and that Ethiopians have been inspired by the way they have taken to the streets to press their demands for democracy. Reza Pahlavi expressed a strong solidarity between the peoples of Iran and Ethiopia and the hope and expectation that people in both countries will soon overcome dictatorship.

Radio program: [Kinijit AEUP Radio](#)

This week program after news is with AEUP President, Engr Hailu Shawel. Interview provides AEUP outlook on AEUP Support America upcoming meeting in Chicago and formation of AEUP America support executive as well as role of AEUP Vice President Ato Abayneh Birhanu and KAIAB chairman Dr Taye W/Semayat. The discussion also provides clarification on other relevant issues.

Mesfin Mekonen, Kinijit AEUP International Foreign Relations