

## WASHINGTON UPDATE, August 25, 2009

This past Sunday, August 23<sup>rd</sup> Kinijit/The All Ethiopia Unity Party (KAEUP) held a 'Town Hall Meeting' in Washington, DC. It was well attended by members of the Ethiopian and Ethiopian-American community. The meeting was brought to order by Ato Melaku Tefera who is well known to all as a distinguished educator. He introduced Ato Teferi Cherinet, head of the North American KAEUP chapters.

Ato Teferi discussed the continuing organizing work and the strengthening of the KAEUP chapters throughout North America. He asked all the attendees to join the membership of the KAEUP chapters to help their fellow Ethiopians in building a strong organization supporting Democracy and Development in Ethiopia.

The next speaker was Doctor Taye Wolde-semiat, chairman, Kinijit Advisory Board who spoke on several topics. One was about the issue of the flag of Ethiopia being tagged by the regime with their own logo. Many Ethiopians died under the real flag fighting for their country and this 'tag' is an insult to their memory. Ato Elias, vice chair of North America chapters spoke about a planned demonstration against the regimes mutilation of the national flag. He will provide all details soon.

Dr. Taye Wolde-semiat brought up the appeal for those with specialized knowledge about important development issues like agriculture, education, transportation, commerce, and technology to come forward with contributions to KAEUP policy and position papers. He stated that the KAEUP will work with any and all opposition parties who sincerely are

working to improve the situation in all of Ethiopia and based on Ethiopia sovereignty and integrity.

Wzrt. Nigest of AEUP member present to the audience her usual beautiful poem.

Mesfin Mekonen spoke next to this very enthusiastic audience and addressed the issues of relations with the government of the USA. Contacts have been maintained with the State Department, the White House, and The Congress – particularly the relevant committees of the House and Senate. Our friend Congressman Donald Payne (D-NJ), chairman of the House subcommittee on African Affairs recently gave interview to AllAfrica.com supporting the position of KAEUP for policy change in Ethiopia.

Thanks to friends like Congressman Payne and the Subcommittee's ranking member, Chris Smith (D-NJ), progress is being made on passing legislation by the Congress in support of Human Rights in Ethiopia and we should have more information when the session resumes in the Fall.

In the meantime we have had additional contact at The National Press Club with the State Department's Johnnie Carson, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, speaking about the problems of human rights in Ethiopia. We are scheduled to meet again more formally soon.

Mesfin Mekonen also spoke at length about the threat of famine in Ethiopia. Six million people in Ethiopia go hungry every day and are in a perilous survival situation. Many NGO's have offered assistance on this but the regime seems more concerned with its own political survival than that of its own people. Ethiopians here in the Diaspora should speak up about this to everyone including the media and elected officials.

*Please go to this url:*

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1915544,00.html>

for TIME magazines feature on this important issue.

The fourth speaker at the town hall meeting was Ato Abayeneh Berhanu, vice-chair of AEUP. He spoke about AEUP project work in Ethiopia. He mentioned that the AEUP now has sixty-three (63) offices open throughout all areas of Ethiopia. He added that the AEUP organized all categories of Ethiopians regardless of age, ethnicity, religion or locality. “All Ethiopians are welcome to join the AEUP and its work”; he said.

He then went on to stress the seven points of the AEUP’s position for elections in Ethiopia. He noted that the AEUP is the only functioning party in all of Ethiopia in opposition to the Meles regime. He asked for continuing support for the AEUP from the Diaspora – financially and morally.

When we ended there was a buzz in the room as the audience realized that they were making progress for democracy in Ethiopia. We will have many more such successful meetings!

Mesfin Mekonen, KAEUP International Foreign Relations