

# Newsletter



Ethiopian Embassy in Brussels

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During the celebration of the 9th Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Day, last Saturday in Brussels.

**Dear Reader,**

We are very pleased to send you this 16th edition of our Newsletter, which offers fresh news on Ethiopia, and in the first place a detailed article on the preparation of the fifth general elections.

We wish you very nice Christmas and New Year's time with your family, friends and other people who are close to you.

Sincerely,

**The Ethiopian Embassy in Brussels**

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## Preparations for next year's National Elections on schedule



Ethiopia's fifth National Elections are scheduled to be held on May 24, 2015. Ethiopians who are eligible to vote will be going to the polls to elect representatives for the House of People's Representatives and for the Regional States Councils. In the run-up to the election, the Ethiopian National Electoral Board (NEBE) is undertaking a number of pre-election preparations and activities. Successive briefings by the Board indicates that the NEBE is on schedule in carrying out all the major activities that have to be undertaken before the announcement of the election results which will be made on June 22, 2015. These 30 activities, which are now being carried out, were agreed on with the majority of the political parties operating in the country. The NEBE recently announced that out of the 75 registered political parties, 58 political parties had submitted their election symbols in accordance with the required timetable. Similarly, the dispatch of electoral materials to a total of 547 constituencies and 44,454 election posts is already taking place ahead of voter registration. Registration of candidates started last week (on December 10) and will be taking place between December 10, 2014 and January 6, 2015. Voter registration is being held between January 9 and February 19, 2015.

Similarly, the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) said that 250,000 public observers, which will be dispatched at each polling station during the vote, were elected on the 21st of December across the country. NEBE Public Relations Coordination Directorate Director, Demissew Benti, told WIC that the public observers have the responsibility to supervise and observe the election process. Each polling station will receive five public observers, while each constituency election office will have three mobile public observers, he said. The public observers' election process held yesterday was successful.

In a recent interview with the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation, Professor Merga Beqana, the Chairperson of the NEBE, highlighted the major activities undertaken by the Board over the previous four years since the 2010

national election. The Chairperson pointed out that the Board has undertaken a thorough analysis and evaluation of the weaknesses and strengths shown by the NEBE's performance in the discharge of its constitutional duties when conducting the 2010 elections. It had subsequently undertaken a number of measures to improve its capacity and ensure the primary goal of the elections to broaden and deepen the democratic rights of citizens. Among these activities was the issuance of the laws governing the conduct of the parties, media personnel, election candidates and other related matters. The NEBE has issued a Code Of Conduct for the Mass Media and Journalists on the Manner of Reporting about Elections. It has amended its Directive on the Code of Conduct of Election Officials' Recruitment at Various Levels, its Directive on the Registration of Candidates, the Directive for the Registration of Electors, and the Directive Concerning the Procedure for the Activities of Public Observers and Representatives of Political Parties and Private Candidates. It has also issued the Regulations Concerning the Procedure for Determining the Apportionment of Government Financial Support to Political Parties and the Regulation on Organization and Procedure of Grievance Hearing Committees established by the Board at every level for elections. In addition, to increase the public accessibility to the laws and regulations, the Board is organizing translations into a number of different local languages. It has also signed contracts with a number of different media outlets to conduct voter education and introduce election laws to the general public.

Apart from all this, the NEBE has been conducting capacity building activities along with the restructuring of the organization of regional electoral offices. Following a study it conducted, the NEBE itself has been working on improving its own staffing and increasing its qualified personnel. Professor Merga said, "we are working with a vision of building a strong institution and laying the foundation for an institutional framework that can serve for the coming 30 or 40 years." The NEBE has also conducted

a series of consultative meetings with political parties in a bid to create awareness about the practical application of the electoral laws and regulations. According to Professor Merga, the Board has paid particular attention to raising the level of participation of women. To that end, it has conducted awareness creation training in coordination with women associations in all of the nine regional states and the two city administrations. Similar training has also been given in association with the youth associations.

Another area of emphasis has been on measures related to ensuring the integrity of the electoral process. Professor Merga said the NEBE “is working to make the playing field level to all parties.” It has introduced public funding of political parties to help them play their role in the democratization process, organizing a public funding scheme based on the practical realities, including the financial constraints, faced by all political parties in Ethiopia. Professor Merga says the scheme has three categories of support. The first is the election-time support which was started for the 2010 national election

the criteria are based solely on the number of seats held in the various legislatures. On this basis, the NEBE, for instance, provided 10 million birr in February 2011 to ten of the political parties. The NEBE’s third form of support relates to such services as the rental of conference rooms or town halls and the provision of office equipment.

In addition, the NEBE has introduced specific mechanisms to ensure the impartiality of election officers. Professor Merga said “we have introduced a vetting system of election officers by their immediate election supervisors to check that they are not members of any of the political parties.” Election officers will have to take an oath to discharge their duties without fear or favor and mechanisms have been set up to hold them accountable in cases where they are found in violation of the election code of conduct and election laws. Grievance handling procedures, with a strict timeline, have been put in place to review and respond to any complaints presented by political parties. Professor Merga noted the important role now being played by the Political Parties Joint



when the NEBE allotted 55% of the fund to parties which had seats in the House of People’s Representatives and Regional Councils; 25% was divided among the parties on the basis of the number of candidates they fielded in the 2010 election; 10% of the fund was divided among all parties on the basis of mere participation in the election; and the final 10% was exclusively shared between women candidates in order to encourage participation of women in the election. This formula, Professor Merga says, is unique to Ethiopia: “no other country allots 10% of election funding to women candidates.” This, he said, showed the NEBE’s commitment to encourage women’s participation in public affairs. He noted this support was already having a good impact as the number of women in the Ethiopian Parliament had now reached 28%, a figure that was well above the majority of African countries. Professor Merga added that despite the international practice of making parliamentary seats the major criteria for funding, and criticism from the ruling party “we have not made seats as primary criteria to apportion the fund to make it equitable”. The second form of support provided by the NEBE is to provide some support to finance the day-to-day activities of political parties. Here, however,

Committee established under Proclamation 662/2009 which governs the electoral Code of Conduct as a supplementary mechanism to address grievances.

Apart from what has already been carried out, Ethiopian Government officials have also underlined the readiness of the Federal and Regional Government administrations to make sure that the importance of the election in the eyes of the electorate. In a session held on July 27, Prime Minister Hailemariam specifically noted that strong public participation was vital to ensure that the election should be free, fair and democratic. He called on all opposition parties to abide by the electoral law and the code of conduct which had been passed by the House of Representatives to make sure that the election would be held in peaceful manner. Minister Redwan Hussein, Head of Government Communications Affairs Office with the Rank of a Minister, recently met with 17 Ambassadors from European Union countries. He told the EU Ambassadors that sufficient airtime and newspaper columns would be allocated in such a way as to make sure that each party running in the election would be able to disseminate its ideas and programs freely. He said that, as in the 2010



election, the EPRDF used 80% while the opposition used only 50% of the airtime and column space available in papers, there should be no complaint about shortage of broadcasting time. Minister Redwan noted the possibility of civic associations and public and private media outlets running programs and election debates. This, he said, would allow for additional opportunities for party members to communicate and build up their own constituencies. Mr. Redwan, however, cautioned that any move by any political party to take state power through unconstitutional means would not be tolerated. He said “the government will take action in accordance with the law”. The EU Ambassadors and the NEBE agreed on the importance of capacity building of media personnel as part of the electoral process.

The NEBE’s preparations are all under way to ensure the upcoming national election is free, fair and democratic. At the same time, successful elections will also rest on the commitment of stakeholders to abide by the electoral laws and respect the institutions entrusted with conducting the election by the Constitution. In this regard, the NEBE has shown remarkable progress in encouraging the creation of an institutional framework to encourage increased participation of youth, women and civic society in general and ensure the election will reflect the will of the people.

Sources: MFA Ethiopia, WIC, Ethiopian Embassy in Brussels

## Ethiopia devotes for regional peace, economic integration: PM Hailemariam



Addis Ababa, December 22, 2014 (WIC) – Ethiopia has been undertaking various efforts to bring lastin peace and stability in the region; thereby, to pursue regional economic integration based on mutual benefit, PM Hailemariam Desalegn stated. While briefing journalists at his office today, the Premier said that Ethiopia is exerting efforts to strengthen people to people and government to government relations of countries in the region. According to the Prime minister, a meticulous attention has given to ensure an enduring peace and stability to speed up regional economic integration. The necessary road infrastructure that could help to economically integrate Ethiopia with Djibouti, Sudan, Kenya and South Sudan has already built, he added. Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn also said that the Ethiopia Public Diplomacy recently visited Egypt had discussions with the people of Egypt and public officials. “That visit could

help in strengthening people to people relationships and avoid misunderstandings between the two nations,” he said. The Egyptian President will visit Ethiopia in the coming weeks for further discussion with Ethiopia that is believed to firm the relations of the two countries, Prime Minister Hailemariam added. In ensuring peace and stability in Somalia, Ethiopian defense forces have liberated 65 percent of Somalia from Al-Shebab, according to Hailemariam. He also disclosed that Ethiopia has been offering trainings that enable Somalis secure their country from extremists. In connection to the economic development in the country, Premier Hailemariam Dessalegn said that despite encouraging achievements in agriculture, micro and small enterprises and industrial developments, the Sugar development Projects have delayed from the time scheduled in the GTP. The major setback the country faced in Sugar Development Projects is lack of domestic implementation capacity, the premier emphasized. Besides, the projects need to develop about 25 thousand square hectares of Sugared Cane plantation farm. The first phase of Tndaho Sugar Factory has already begun production while the Kesem Sugar Factory is expected to render its produces in the next four months. “Ethiopian metal Engineering Corporation has now taken the construction of Kuraz I, Beles I and and Beles II Sugar Factories, which relay indicated the experience we have been developing from time to time, the premier added”.

## African nations should be more engaged in Ebola fight: Ethiopia

Hailemariam Desalegn said the response to the epidemic in west Africa should not be “only for the non-Africans”, urging African states to respond to an African Union appeal to send medical staff to affected areas. “We should show that there is a solidarity within the African countries,” he told reporters. “Usually the notion is that whenever this kind of epidemic happens, it is the Western countries and other big countries that have to be involved,” he said. But he added: “We have to break this and show that Africans also are there for Africans. We should try our best to bring African solutions to African problems.”

Last week Ethiopia sent 187 health volunteers to Sierra Leone and Liberia, the largest contingent of medical professionals from any African country since the Ebola

crisis began. Desalegn said a further 1,000 volunteers were ready to go. A number of African states, however, are reluctant to send volunteers, due to either a lack of means or fears they are not equipped to deal with any who return infected with the virus. Ethiopia’s health minister, Kesete Birhan Admasu, said the Ethiopian volunteers returning home would be placed under medical surveillance for three weeks. But he has also called on African nations to accelerate efforts to establish a continental centre along the lines of the United States’ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). “Had we have established this centre last year, Africa might have responded early and could have contained the virus,” he said.

Source : AFP

## Ethiopia celebrates Coffee Day

Addis Ababa, 23 December 2014 (WIC) – The second National Coffee Day was celebrated in Bonga town, Kaffa zone, SNNP Regional State today. During the celebration, some 145 coffee grower farmers and stakeholders represented from various regional states received an award and medal.

In Ethiopia, 1.3 million small farmers are directly dependent on coffee for their livelihoods, while 15 million people utilize coffee indirectly for their income, Agriculture Minister, Tefera Deribew, said on the occasion. Though coffee accounts 10 per cent of the total agricultural GDP, a lot need to be done to increase

productivity and become competitive at the global market, he said. Chief Administrator of SNNP Regional State, Dese Dalke, on his part said following the efforts made to increase productivity, farmers managed to reap 14-30 quintals of coffee per hectare. Dese finally called upon all stakeholders to increase productivity through effectively utilizing the untapped resources of the region and implementing modern farming system. High-ranking federal government officials as well as invited guests attended the event, it was learnt.

### About the Embassy

**Working Hours:** 9:00 – 13:00 & 14:00 – 17:00

**Consular Service:** Monday – Friday 09:00 – 13:00

**Legalization and Power of Attorney:** Monday – Thursday 9:00 – 13:00

#### Address

Ethiopian Embassy  
Avenue de Tervuren, 62  
1040 Etterbeek  
Belgium

+32 2 771 32 94

info@ethiopianembassy.be

[www.ethiopianembassy.be](http://www.ethiopianembassy.be)