

WINNERS DO NOT FALTER AT FAULTY POLITICAL MOMENTS

The Ethiopian National Congress (ENC) fears that the chances of establishing democratic order in our country in the near future will be missed if the problems within Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) are not resolved soon. Though a civic organization that normally does not comment on internal matters of political parties, we are concerned about recent public statements and media reports of ill feelings within the CUD. The hurtful ramifications of fractious politics of any popular political organization will be felt nationally.

The current events around the CUD leaders contradict their overwhelming victories in Ethiopia. Observers are confused by the negative comments the leaders are making about one another. Their supporters too are pulling them in different directions. Sadly, their squabbles, seemingly centred on the rights of executive office holders, have been caused by misunderstandings among the executive members who had little communication between them during their imprisonment. Unfortunately, this has been exacerbated by the questions raised about directives that they gave for their members and supporters, leaders' imprudence at airing internal differences in public, and the unhelpful, albeit perhaps 'normal', role of the media in highlighting differences. The failure of competing factions of CUD supporters in North America to settle the differences has not been helpful either.

It is high time that CUD leaders and supporters pay attention to the public voice of reason regarding resolving these matters. Ensuring an effective leadership in Ethiopia requires this. The country is being pulled and pushed in different directions by a host of ethnic, regional and international interests; the ruling party is still refusing to open up the political space for a level playing field, and it has been stifling meaningful opposition and dissent. The leaders need to pause and reflect that they are in a very sensitive moment of history that could define the destiny of our people. The fateful May 2005 elections have left the nation with a sense of disarray and lack of direction. The leaders need to bring it back on track. We also call on the media and blog owners to stop exacerbating the situation by reporting in a manner that perpetuates hostility.

It is time for all concerned, especially a popular opposition party, to work hard to build up national consensus to shape the future political directions of Ethiopia. CUD should realize that falling out over manageable internal administration and politics is bound to disillusion members and supporters. The public expects popular opposition parties to remain united, overcome controversies, and deliver firm leadership. No one has the stomach for yet another round of in-fighting, in yet another Ethiopian political movement. To allow division within the party by failing to compromise over internal differences is in nobody's interest. Apart from causing public withdrawal from political engagement nationally, such behaviour presages the dangerous postponement of the date for realizing democracy in our country.

This is the time for realizing the dreams of our people. This is the time for beefing up one's organizational, material, human and financial capabilities. In fact, CUD should reach out to all concerned Ethiopian organizations and build up the ingredients for national reconciliation. It should do this to all, including the EPRDF, and invite participation in charting consensus on the future of Ethiopia.

The ENC urges all concerned, leaders, members or supporters inside and outside CUD to:

- Immediately cease directly or indirectly airing the differences within CUD.
- Set up an independent and ad-hoc committee that can mediate and recommend binding solutions to both sides within two to four weeks.
- Discourage any transgression of reconciliatory moves, at least until reports of an ad-hoc committee is made public.

Ethiopian National Congress