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## **Vision Ethiopia Seventh Conference, Addis Ababa, December 2018 Colloquium on post-conflict transition in Ethiopia**

### **First call for papers, August 20, 2018**

Following the special meeting that was held in Washington D.C. on July 27 2018, between H.E. Dr. Abiy Ahmed, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, and Ethiopian academics, professionals and civil society representatives, the Board of Vision Ethiopia is pleased to announce that it plans to hold its seventh conference in Addis Ababa in the December 2018-January 2019 period. We also take this opportunity to apologize to our guests of July 27, 2018 who were either not allowed to enter into the meeting or those who anticipated an extended engagement with the Prime Minister but were not able to do so. It was beyond our control.

Consistent with our mission, the primary aim of the seventh conference (colloquium) is to continue the dialogue on post-conflict transition in Ethiopia. In both theory and evidence, post-conflict transitions are difficult, and the escalation of conflict, communal violence, mob justice and lawlessness observed in certain parts of the country require urgent attention. Solutions and mechanisms are however contextual, for what worked in one country may not be successfully replicated in another country. Therefore, Ethiopian scholars and professionals are reminded to rethink about ***alternative ways and means of transition into successful post-conflict political order***. A practical roadmap is important. For example, we could ponder: What are the possible ways and means of successful and democratic transition for Ethiopia? Election or transitional government or something else? Etc.

One line of argument is that the next election can be a means of transitioning Ethiopia from an authoritarian system to a democratic system. Credible and transparent elections are critical to ensuring the voices of all citizens are heard. When it comes to Ethiopia and the way forward, we all know that there are both intersecting and conflicting forces and interests. The ruling party's record of accomplishment on election is bad and hence it cannot not be considered as a reliable agent of change. On the other hand, there is a popular leader at the helm of the same party. It is also important to recognize that the process is as important as the outcome. History has shown that many transitional elections in Sub Sahara Africa (SSA) have failed to be free and fair, and such failures have exacerbated preexisting conflicts. We believe that careful analysis of the reality on the ground is necessary, and this requires a multidimensional perspective, far beyond having good rules in the statute books and the parading of foreign election observers.

Another line of argument is that a transitional government of national unity should be the interface between the EPRDF led government and the election. Supporters of this view argue that a transitional government will allow all political and civic groups to participate in the process of the change we are witnessing. It allows all sectors of the society to be represented and counted in shaping the future of the society and to fully and unconditionally support all elements of the change in the country from the get-go. On the other hand, given the type of change the new Prime Minister is making, and the instability we are observing, transitional government becomes a debatable proposition. Opponents of a transitional



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government argue that it is impractical and weakens the powers of the reformists as it introduces further instability, factionalism and encourages some region(s) to defy the center.

The colloquium is aimed at assisting the transition from a multidimensional perspective, and the sequencing and prioritization of policy options. It will have themes planned to run in a form of plenary and concurrent (parallel) sessions. In regards to the socio-political side, the colloquium will contextualize the Ethiopian election with the geopolitics of the region; peace & security; internal human displacement; minority rights; rights of people of mixed heritages; territorial disputes and the current form of federation; governance and constitutional reform; separation of powers; truth and reconciliation; independence and reliability of systems and processes; electioneering, alliances/counter alliances; the reintegration of armed groups and exiles into the political system as well as the political behaviors of various actors. The economic and finance aspect of the colloquium will include, *inter alia*, privatization and restructuring; political party owned and controlled companies; national debt; the country's corruption conundrum and relevant methods of reducing it; public interest and finance, accounting & auditing. The colloquium aims at identifying current and potential problems and finding mitigation strategies.

The volume and quality of the papers submitted for presentation will determine the nature of the concurrent sessions. We particularly encourage academics and professionals in Ethiopia to share their research findings and experience. Papers must have theoretical depth and be supported by reliable local empirical evidence or experience, and must have solution orientation. Note that we are not looking for theoretical papers that are discipline specific, which may be presented at normal academic conferences. Instead, we are looking for policy papers, which are well articulated, dispassionate, forward-looking, supported by relevant theory and practice, appropriately sequenced, coherent, and a series of interconnected action points that can be implemented easily. We are looking for papers that are innovative and easy to implement. Authors are advised to avoid using anecdotal evidence, and must dwell more on the future rather than on the past. Case experiences have to be put together in a coherent way so that they can provide useful policy options. Authors must articulate why their proposal should be a priority in the transition period, identify the incremental cost of the new regulation, and indicate how it is going to be financed.

The papers will go through a normal review process with the above rubrics. Papers that fail to clearly address review comments will be excluded from the program. Whether a paper will be presented at the plenary or concurrent session is the sole discretion of Vision Ethiopia. The article may be written in either Amharic or in English but speakers need to consider reaching a wider local and diaspora audience. Presentation time is about 30 minutes. Consistent with Vision Ethiopia's past practice, all proceedings will be transmitted live. Media outlets other than ESAT that wish to transmit the proceedings live, must obtain prior approval. Completed papers not exceeding 5000 words in length along with an abstract and a conclusion must reach **visionethiopia18@gmail.com** on or before October 20, 2018.