

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear AEPAC donors, supporters and stakeholders,

Despite a multitude of challenges, Ethiopia successfully and peacefully concluded its first free and fair national election on June 21, 2021. The EU missed an opportunity to witness a historic election and some in the US were skeptical of a free and safe election even before the election started and they were proven wrong. The Africa Union, NDI, IRI and several thousands of local observers participated and made statements that this was a well-executed and followed the standards of democratic elections.

We are proud of the immense efforts of the Government and National Electoral Board to ensure citizens can have their say. We hope the international community will stand with the people of Ethiopia and recognize the construction of a genuine representative democracy, something that has eluded Ethiopia for many decades.

“Whatever the outcome, it is our sincere belief the moment will be an opportunity to renew efforts to bring stability to the country and demand a more constructive approach from the United States, EU, UK and others. It is in everyone’s interest for Ethiopia to succeed”

Best Wishes,



Mesfin Tegen, AEPAC Chairman



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AEPAC UPDATE

AEPAC has stepped up its activity to ensure Ethiopian-American citizens have their voices heard.

The Ethiopian diaspora around the world is increasingly frustrated with the approach of the international community. Given the importance of Ethiopia as a strategic ally, and the unilaterally declared ceasefire, we hope for a more constructive approach to address the humanitarian issues and ensure continuous stability. Moreover, now more than ever there needs to be intense scrutiny on the TPLF.

AEPAC is appealing to all peace-loving members of the US Administration and US Congress to express their solidarity with Ethiopia in order for the country to overcome this challenging time and fight for peace, prosperity and stability in the Horn of Africa. It is AEPAC's responsibility to advocate for US-Ethiopia relations and urge constructive solutions that will strengthen this pivotal friendship rather than threaten it.

As an organization that has been created to advocate for the advancement of strong relations between the peoples of the United States and Ethiopia, AEPAC has a responsibility to express its opinion about the implications of the proposed House Resolution 445 on Ethiopia, the imposed visa restrictions and the general negative rhetoric from decision makers.

AEPAC is finally presenting another side to the biased and slanted information which has been shared here-to-fore. We are excited about the possibilities of more positive discussions on Ethiopia in Congress and building champions for US - Ethiopian relations.

Over the past three weeks we have seen a noticeable change in the media narrative. While it is still challenging and there is an obvious bias, it is improving, and we are confident this will continue with consistent outreach. The outcome of the election result in particular will pose a real opportunity to reset the narrative and move the US and European press in a more constructive direction.

Furthermore, we have undertaken an aggressive public affairs approach lobbying Members of Congress at a rate of almost 10 offices a week.

NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS

AEPAC, Partners and Mercury Held Discussions with Congress Members

AEPAC, its partners and with the support of the strategy firm it hired is now pushing an alternative side to the biased and slanted information which has been shared here-to-fore. We are excited about the possibilities of more positive discussion on Ethiopia in Congress and building champions for U.S.-Ethiopian relations.

Out of request for meetings to all 22 members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the 51 members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, AEPAC, its partners and Mercury held 34 successful meetings in two weeks.

In addition to arranging meetings, Mercury has also crafted one pagers on the election, humanitarian efforts, human rights issues along with drafting changes to H.Res. 445.



Media Work

Working with Mercury we have built a media distribution list of over 150 journalists from around 80 outlets. This includes the State Department press pool and leading East Africa correspondents. We engaged directly and introduced AEPAC to all tier-one outlets. In terms of press material, we have issued 8 press releases, 8 statements and successfully placed an op-ed in Today News Africa, EU Observer and shortly one with Euronews. We have also written letters to the editors of the Washington Post and the Daily Telegraph calling for more balanced reporting.

Online we have now set up a [Facebook](#) and [Twitter channel](#).

Mercury has created [an introductory video](#) with the aim of effectively setting out AEPAC's mission. The video has been viewed 1000+ times across social media and received over 100 likes, comments, and shares.

Altogether we have posted 18 pieces of content in the past month and reached over 100,000 users. This included a retweet from Congresswomen Tenney.



Calls on Capitol Hill for Sanctions Unhelpful

The calls on Capitol Hill for sanctions over the devastating Tigray conflict are increasing daily. Ethiopia is continually recognized as one of America's most effective allies on the African continent, not just for security cooperation but also in the areas of health care, education, and food security.

Pre-pandemic, the country boasted one of the fastest growing economies in the world, experiencing average growth of 9.4% a year from 2010/11 to 2019/20, and it is a strong export market for U.S. goods. In the United States, the one million strong Ethiopian Diaspora serve as a bridge between the two countries and is the second largest African immigrant group after Nigeria and expatriate Ethiopian Americans are community and business leaders who play an important role in influencing political reforms in Ethiopia.

AEPAC is hoping to present a balanced view and to dispel some of the rumors, lies and misreporting in the hope that Congress will protect common interests at a time when Ethiopia's enemies are launching relentless attacks. This is a moment in history when Ethiopia needs the support of its strong foreign allies, so the government can tackle its responsibilities and reunify the nation.

The 6th National Election of Ethiopia:

On Monday, Ethiopia held its freest election in the country's history. It was the first general election since 2015 and the first-time multi-parties have stood since 2005.

In total 20 parties had candidates, with encouraging scenes of rallies, street campaigning and TV debates in which opposition parties were allowed to engage for the first time ever. Holding an election in Ethiopia is an immense task with a multitude of challenges to overcome. For example, there are more than 80 language groups in the country – and all participated in this election. Praise should go to the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), led by former judge Birtukan Midekssa. Midekssa was once a vocal opposition leader who made real progress in the 2005 election but was subsequently jailed in the crack-down that followed. When she was finally freed, she moved to the United States and returned with a detailed knowledge of the U.S. electoral process, something she has attempted to instil into this election.

She has led the country through an arduous two-year process of consultation, across all opposition parties, via an inclusive forum where all competitive political parties have debated and decided on the rules of the electoral competition.

Despite the intense hard work, it proved too difficult to hold the election in a number of areas, owing to logistical and security challenges. Out of 547 constituencies, 102 had their vote postponed – the majority of which will head to the polls in September, while 38 in Tigray have been postponed indefinitely

The Ethiopian elections are an imperfect step in the right direction (Birtukan Midekssa)

For the first time in the fifteen years since the failed 2005 elections, we have once again our opportunity to positively impact our course as a diverse state and to institutionalize accountability. We cannot miss this moment again.

The election on June 21 gives new life to an old hope. But getting to this point has not been easy. Widespread protest in 2018 ushered in the promise of a transition towards a more democratic system, but the global pandemic forced a postponement of the elections scheduled for August 2020. The National Elections Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), which I chair, is the institution solely in charge of administering all elections in the country—but it has needed extensive institutional reforms, which we have been implementing while preparing for the largest election in Ethiopian history.

Read more:

<https://nationalinterest.org/feature/ethiopia%E2%80%99s-elections-new-life-old-hope-188229>

AU Election Observation Mission Head Praises Election Process in Ethiopia

The Head the African Union Election Observation Mission (AUEOM), Olusegun Obasanjo said that Ethiopia has been conducting a far better election than the previous ones, despite some challenges in some constituencies... the electoral executive bodies of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia have been giving a swift response and solving challenges effectively.

[Read more:](#)

<https://ethiopianstoday.com/blog/2021/06/22/au-election-observation-mission-head-praises-election-process-in-ethiopia/>

HRes 445's Implications on US-Ethiopia Relations and American-Ethiopian Concerns

We are in no doubt that HRes 445 was drafted with the well-meaning intention of addressing the current crisis in Ethiopia. Based on our preliminary assessment, HRes 445 contains many positive and productive concepts. However, it also has some serious flaws which could have grave implications for US interests in Ethiopia and in the Horn of Africa. We are hoping to bring these to the attention of the honorable members of this Committee and

It would be regrettable if HRes 445 and other punitive actions lead to the destabilization of Ethiopia.

The United States and Ethiopia share more than a century of strong diplomatic relations. Ethiopia is the second most populous country in Africa and plays a key role in advancing security and stability across sub-Saharan Africa.

Because of the unbalanced narrative playing out in local and international media, we appeal to the House Foreign Affairs Committee to consult with independent and fair-minded people about the complex problems Ethiopia currently faces, specifically on allegations of human rights violations. US congress and the Administration can help by engaging Ethiopia through dialogue and negotiations.

Undermining Ethiopia's role in the region offers no geopolitical benefit for either nation and could risk the country's long-held independence. Ethiopia is a strong deterrence to extremist elements emanating from North Africa and the Middle East and there is no logical regional replacement for these co-operative efforts if Ethiopia is destabilized.

AEPAC has submitted changes to the language to H.Res. 445 with the Legislative Counsel's office of the House State, Foreign Operations (SFOPs) Subcommittee. This the office that writes both amendments and bills

Humanitarian Unilateral Ceasefire Declared by the Ethiopian Government

The Ethiopian Government has listened to reason and the request by the United States Government and wider international community and unilaterally declared a ceasefire in Tigray on 28 June 2021.

At the Security Council on Ethiopia, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs stated that the ceasefire announcement is an opportunity that all parties to the conflict, including the Tigray People's Liberation Front, must seize and build upon, urging the Tigray Defense Force to endorse the ceasefire immediately and completely. A ceasefire observed by all parties would not only facilitate the provision of humanitarian aid, but also be a starting point for political efforts to chart a way out of the crisis.

She added, there must also be accountability for grievous human rights violations, urging the parties to assist the ongoing joint investigation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission.

The Kenyan UN Representative stated that dialogue is strength, and that the Council must allow Africa the space to resolve its challenges.

SELECTED LINKS

[Four Ethiopian soldiers convicted of crimes against civilians in Tigray // Reuters](#)

[U.N. rights chief agrees to Ethiopia request for joint Tigray inquiry // Reuters](#)

[As G7 leaders gather, Canada should not “blindly follow” U.S. lead on Africa // Policy Options](#)

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Follow

To keep up to date with AEPAC's work, please follow us on Twitter and Facebook for regular updates.

Share

Want to help push the voice of American-Ethiopians to the audiences who matter? Then please share these Tweets so that AEPAC's message is seen by more people across social media:

['We are AEPAC'](#)

[Statement on the Ceasefire in Tigray](#)

[Today News Africa Article by AEPAC Chairman, Mesfin Tegenu](#)

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