

## **Rules of Engagement for Political Parties' Discussions**

**December 2018/January 2019**

## Rules of Engagement for Political Parties' Discussions

### **1. Preamble**

Whereas, conducting discussions with the participation of all parties is essential to creating conditions for peace and stability nationwide;

In order to strengthen cooperation that must exist among parties to ensure that national elections are free and credible through the conduct of necessary political and legal reforms and building democratic institutions;

In order to create a common understanding among political parties by overcoming the mistrust that is observed among them that goes beyond competition;

Believing that it is valuable to enhance discussion among parties to develop ideas to discuss and collectively respond to the problems resulting from the ongoing reform in the country;

Whereas, in order to create conducive conditions for the improvement of political culture in the country, it has become important to broaden the horizon of democracy by enhancing professional and mutually respectful organizational discussions between parties;

Whereas, it has been recognized that opposition parties lack a forum to express their ideas due to the representation in the Federal House of Peoples' Representatives and state councils of only one party, and that a forum is needed that can sustainably host discussions that should exist between parties;

Now, therefore, these Rules of Engagement for Political Parties' Negotiations have been passed. The parties have agreed to be bound by these rules of engagement.

## **2. Objective**

To conduct the democratic discussions that should exist between parties on a sustainable basis and to use peaceful discussions as a means to narrow political differences between them;

To promote basic democratic and human rights, principles of equality and group rights;

To create conditions for the peaceful resolution of differences between parties with a view to allowing peaceful discussions between parties to become fruitful;

To promote trust and cooperation among parties;

To create conditions that strengthen national reconciliation, national consensus and unity;

To tolerate and accommodate different views and values;

To build the capacity of political parties and create the necessary conditions for them to become pillars of democracy

## **3. Guiding principles for discussion**

In order to achieve the objectives set out under section 2 above, political parties participating in discussions must respect the principles listed below:

- Giving primacy to national interest in discussions;
- Tolerance;

- Consultation
- Listening to each other;
- Mutual trust;
- Give-and-take;
- Belief in equality between participants;
- Understanding and respecting others' ideas;
- Reasonableness;
- Truthfulness and politeness;

#### **4. Procedure for discussion**

- a) On the basis of the written agendas that parties submit and will submit in the future to the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), the Supporting Committee of Experts established by the NEBE and the person chairing the discussions will outline, present for discussion and adopt the agendas.
- b) The items on the agenda for discussion will be decided on the first day of the parties' meeting. However, the date, time and location of the discussion as well as the person that will chair the discussions will be announced to the parties seven days before the discussions start via a letter sent by the NEBE.
- c) The discussion could, as appropriate, include exchange of information, an opening speech, questions and answers as well as a closing speech.
- d) The Chairperson will decide the length of time parties attending the

meeting can speak for.

- e) The Chairperson must identify and announce issues on which agreement was not reached, if any.
- f) The Chairperson may propose a compromise to address these issues. Where an agreement is not reached on the proposed compromise, the matter shall be decided on the basis of the compromise proposed by the observers under section 9(c) and 11(d) of this document.
- g) The observers shall propose a compromise only if the parties fail to reach an agreement during the discussion. The compromise proposed by observers must be one that can bring the parties closer and to an agreement. The observers can propose a compromise only if their proposal is accepted by the Chairperson and the Supporting Committee of Experts.
- h) Where an agreement is not reached within the time specified under sub-sections e and f above, the issue that was the subject of discussion will be decided by a majority vote.

## **5. Responsibilities of participants of discussion**

- a) The views participants of the discussion present on the basis of the principles indicated under section 3 above should be presented in a clear, constructive and cordial manner.
- b) All views expressed to participants of the discussion should be related to adopted agenda. Interference in the discussions by way of presenting one's own agenda outside of the agenda adopted by

participants is strictly forbidden.

- c) Views expressed during discussions should not target the personality of other participants.
- d) Participants of discussions should clearly indicate the issues on which they agree with others as well as those on which they disagree with others.
- e) When the Chairperson observes that a participant has violated the requirements indicated in this document, s/he shall indicate this to participants and make a decision to the effect of holding responsible the participant disrupting the discussion.
- f) The participant that was found at fault under section 5(e) above will be counseled or advised by participants to correct his/her mistake.
- g) The meeting will issue a written warning to the participant if s/he does not heed the advice indicated above and the disruption happens repeatedly making it difficult to continue the discussions.

## **6. Chairperson**

- a) The person appointed as a Chairperson should be acceptable to a majority of the parties. His/her impartiality must be ensured.
- b) Negotiating parties will submit to the NEBE names of persons they nominate as chairpersons, in writing.
- c) Those nominees that are accepted by the forum after inputs are gathered on the list of nominated chairpersons will be recorded by the NEBE. These chairpersons will be appointed to different discussion forums as needed.

## **7. Responsibilities and Duties of the Chairperson**

- a) The Chairperson shall announce the agenda of the day; chair or lead the discussion; and ensure that participants properly use the time they are given to speak.
- b) The Chairperson has the responsibility to make sure that discussions focus only on the issues mentioned in the agenda.
- c) It must be ensured that all discussant parties be given the same amount of time to speak.
- d) The Chairperson shall, in consultation with participants of the discussion, take disciplinary measures against a participant who violates these rules of engagement.
- e) The Chairperson shall ensure that the proceedings of the discussion are recorded as appropriate on audio, video and writing.



## **8. Supporting Committee of Experts**

- a) A Supporting Committee of Experts that is inter-disciplinary shall be established to support the work of the NEBE as well as discussions held at different times among political parties.
- b) If differences among parties participating in the discussion broaden, the Supporting Committee of Experts will, through the Chairperson, submit ideas to bridge these differences to the forum.
- c) The Supporting Committee of Experts will, through the Chairperson and on the basis of the guidance of the discussion forum, present discussion points and discussion papers that it prepares to the forum.
- d) The Supporting Committee of Experts will provide professional assistance to the Chairperson on the discussion process.
- f) The Supporting Committee of Experts shall ensure that the proceedings of the discussion are recorded as appropriate on audio, video and writing. It shall provide participating parties with a copy of the recordings if and when the parties so request.
- g) Before the discussion forum opens, the Supporting Committee of Experts shall briefly indicate the discussions that took place before and recap the past proceedings to the forum.
- h) On the basis of guidance from the forum, the Supporting Committee of Experts shall give and distribute a press statement on the status of the discussion process; and organize a press conference, as appropriate.

## **9. Observers**

- a) Well known personalities that are impartial, have skills needed to serve as a bridge past and present generations, and have expertise on the issues under discussion will, when elected by the discussion forum, attend the discussion as observers.
- b) Representatives of the Ethiopian Lawyers' Association, writers' associations, science academy, Ethiopian Women Lawyers' Association, teachers', workers', and employers' associations as well as other civil associations, youth representatives and community representatives that the discussion form chooses to include in the proceedings can serve as observers.
- c) If parties to the discussion are unable to reach an agreement on the agenda discussed, the Chairperson and the Supporting Committee of Experts shall ask the observers to propose a compromise solution.

## **10. Role of the Media**

- a) Before the discussion commences, the assembly shall, as part of the agenda for discussion, decide by a majority vote whether or not the meeting will be open to the media. In addition, the assembly shall decide by a majority vote what information/briefing participants of the discussion are allowed to give to the media.
- b) Press statements indicating the status of the discussion process at different times shall be issued by the Supporting Committee of Experts.
- c) An all-inclusive press conference shall be called when a major difference emerges among participants of the discussion forum or when a major agreement is reached.

## **11. Issues on which agreement is not reached**

- a) The parties participating in the discussion shall as much as possible make decisions on a consensus.
- b) The Chairperson may, when there are issues on which parties participating in discussion did not reach an agreement, present a compromise solution to bring parties to an agreement.
- c) Where the solution proposed by the Chairperson is unable to bring parties to an agreement or where the Chairperson was not able to propose a solution, the Chairperson shall, in consultation with the assembly, form a sub-committee constituted from the participants to develop alternative solutions.
- d) If an agreement is not reached on the basis of the alternatives presented, a forum shall be organized for the parties that did not reach an agreement alone to negotiate with each other. If an agreement is not reached during this negotiation forum, this shall be recorded, and the discussion will move on to another agenda.

## **11. Language for Discussion**

The discussion/negotiation shall be conducted in the language that is prescribed as a working language under the Constitution, Amharic. However, so as to be able discussants that do not understand Amharic to take part in the discussion/negotiation, the NEBE will provide a translator.

## **12. Issues not covered**

Where situations arise that are not clearly addressed in these rules of engagement, appropriate solutions shall be devised on the basis of inputs and ideas of participants, Chairpersons and the Supporting Committee of Experts.

### **13.Amendment**

These rules of engagement may be amended at any time at the request of discussant parties when they approve the amendment by a majority vote.

### **14.Scope of Application**

These rules of engagement shall apply to parties participating in discussions/negotiations, Chairpersons and observers of discussions, and the Supporting Committee of Experts.

## **15. Effective Date**

These rules of engagement shall be applicable on the parties that gave their consent to discuss the rules of engagement and wrote their names in the list below as well as on parties that will in the future indicate their agreement in this document. These rules of engagement shall remain enforce between the date of their adoption on 10 January 2019 until the completion of the joint political parties discussion forum.



















