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## **While we celebrate the Nation, and Nationalities Day**

Thomas J. Peters

"Celebrate what you want to see more of."

As an Ethiopian having lived through Aste Hailesilassie era as a little boy, and then Derg's reign, spared from being a victim of red terror, only to survive sheltered behind my age, consider myself an eye witness to how far we came as a country. As such regard the transformation that took place in the last quarter of a century as a big leap in its history. What seemed unattainable goal, a quarter a century ago and beyond, voiced, promoted and carried by forward thinking students, educators, and the general public, only as slogans and placards then, "Rights of Nations and Nationalities", is taking roots. A solid foundation has been laid for our bright future, to enrich our harmonious co-existence of all Nations and Nationalities, ensure our democratic rights, and make headways to a prosperous united country as we barely open the gates of the new millenium. It is at a great cost as countless of our brothers and sisters had paid the ultimate sacrifice for all of us to exercise, enjoy and cherish this monumental achievement as it is irrevocably detailed in the preamble of our constitution as follows:

"We, the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia: Strongly committed, in full and free exercise of our right to self-determination, to building a political community founded on the rule of law and capable of ensuring a lasting peace, guaranteeing a democratic order, and advancing our economic and social development."

The fruition this change brought about is evident, as it instills a sense of ownership in all of us, though there are still certain minority elements, that argue ethnic based federalism, where Nations and Nationalities freely exercise their rights, would lead to conflict, animosity and eventually disintegration. As we celebrate the Nations and Nationalities day, it is affirmative that the argument is losing its ground, and as Paul Harvey once said, "I've never seen a monument erected to a pessimist."

Aside from the so called, New world, established by immigrants from every continent of the world, such as United States of America, Ethiopia is probably the most diverse in its population mix of religion, Nation, Nationalities, and languages within its border.

Unfortunately the majority of its nation and nationalities mix, lived in the shadows and were treated as second and third class citizens with in their own country as the power was exercised by privileged groups or classes through domination, force, or coercion. Identity, Languages, Cultures, and views of many were forsaken and marginalized. The ideological supremacy of a system of values that supports the class or group interests of the predominant classes or groups interests were made to shine, while the subordinate groups,

are influenced to internalize the value systems and views of the privileged groups and, thus consent to their own marginalization. Inversely as the right of self-determination is now enshrined in the constitution for all Nations and Nationalities, the exercise has gained credence and has been recognised to measure up as having achieved basic human right as well as a democratic principle. Thus it is now imperative that the demand of the Nation and Nationalities to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination has gained substantial grounds and therefore cannot be ignored anymore. Let's celebrate.

Essentially it has never been any clearer, that empowering the regional ethnically-based semi-autonomous administrative regions, by delivering governance at the local level to enhance democracy is gaining momentum. It is glorifying to see what has been achieved so far in the area of culture, religion, and language enrichments with in its respective Sector (Kilil). Our unique identity with in the mix of our diverse country is splendid, thus as we celebrate, we all need to fathom that we are indeed a country of ethnic composition, therefore the right of self determination of all Nation and Nationalities is tantamount, if social and political stability is to be prevalent and economic development is to be realized.

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