Ethiopia is the cradle of human beings and the origin of ancient civilizations. It is a nation extensively endowed with plenty of historical, social, cultural, ecological, natural, religious etc resources and diversities. The country consists of more than 80 nations and nationalities with their own respective historical, cultural, linguistic, religious and other remarkable peculiarities.

All these tremendous peculiarities and identities of the Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities and Peoples were anonymously ignored for ages. They were also mercilessly oppressed and exploited for centuries. Likewise, these nations, nationalities and peoples had been deprived of their basic human rights and their fundamental democratic freedoms were denied. Consequently, all Ethiopians were forced to live as secondary citizens in their own country. This was the very destiny of all the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia until the demise of the military Dergue rule in 1991.

Of course, there were also bitter seeds of inequality and mutual mistrust among these nations, nationalities and peoples sown by those irresponsible unitary regimes to consolidate their own rule at the expense of unity and solidarity of Ethiopians. These harsh seeds had their own contribution in maintaining and elongating the exploitative and oppressive regimes in the nation for they put meaningful hurdles against the unity of the Ethiopian nations, nationalities and peoples. Thus, the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia made to fight each other for ages while in fact they did never have irreconcilable interests between/among themselves.

However, the Ethiopian nations, nationalities and peoples never crippled their hands and minds even for a second. They, rather, tirelessly struggled against the brutal regimes of their ages. The Bale, Gojjam and Tigray farmers’ movements as well as the student movements of the 1960s were among the notable ones of their struggles against the oppressive and exploitative regimes.

Thanks to their unreserved and tireless struggles and incalculable sacrifices of the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia, they eventually pressurized the then dictatorial regimes in various walks of life. As a result of their esteemed struggle against those cannibal regimes, Ethiopians ensured their basic human rights and democratic freedoms through promulgating their own common treaty-the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE).

The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) opened a new prominent chapter of political history in the nation. It ensures basic human rights and fundamental democratic freedoms of the Ethiopian nations, nationalities and peoples for the first time in their history. It closed each door of exploitation, oppression and inequality once for ever. And hence, Ethiopians entered to a new era of equality and mutual cooperation to safeguard and ensure their common interests which they paid unreserved sacrifices for.

The preamble of the FDRE constitution starts by saying “We the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia”. It for the first time in Ethiopian History recognizes that the nations, nationalities and peoples are the real owners and beneficiaries of their own constitution. Furthermore, this phrase indicates that the constitution is the real manifestation of their sovereignty and equality as well.
They are also strongly committed in full and free exercise of their rights to self-determination to building one economic and political community founded on the rule of law and capable of ensuring a lasting peace, guaranteeing a democratic order, and advancing their economic and social development. The preamble also ensured that the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia are determined to consolidate, as a lasting legacy, the peace and the prospect of a democratic order which their struggles and sacrifices have brought about.

All the nations, nationalities and peoples have become the sources of every sovereign political power for the first time in the political history of the nation. Article eight of the FDRE constitution strengthens this by stipulating that all sovereign power reside in the hands of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia. This Constitution is an expression of their sovereignty. According to paragraph three of this article, the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities and Peoples shall be expressed through their representatives elected in accordance with this Constitution and through their direct democratic participation. Thus, direct participation of citizens has become an integral part of the constitution to ensure their day-to-day economic, political, social etc demands and spheres as well.

This Constitution for the first time ensures that all political powers spring from the free will and real consent of the Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities and Peoples. Today, they are not passive receptors of oppression and exploitation as what they had been for ages. They are, rather, the actual sources of every political power in every level of government structures. Moreover, they have become real engines of the ongoing development endeavors of the nation to ensure their upcoming Renaissance. Their diversity has also become meaningful expression of their real unity and strength.

Equality of the Ethiopian languages, religions, beliefs, traditions, cultures, etc is constitutionally ensured without any discrimination. No language, religion, belief, tradition or culture etc is inferior or superior to any other language, religion, belief, traditions, culture etc. This is quite a new political chapter in the political history of the country. Thus, Federalism becomes the best viable political instrument in creating one political and economic community through consolidating every effort to develop and maintain one’s language, religion, belief, tradition, culture etc. That is, Federalism has been ensuring the real unity and solidarity of all Ethiopians which in turn ensures rapid and sustainable development in the nation.

Today, the Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities and Peoples have unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession as per article 39 of the constitution. Furthermore, every Nation, Nationality and People in the country has the right to speak, write, develop its culture and language, to express, develop and promote its culture and to preserve its history. This constitutional right is the result of their lifelong struggle, in fact. This constitutional instrument also enabled them to rectify the wrongly attached perceptions between/among themselves and go hand-in-hand to eradicate their common enemy-poverty.

Moreover, they do have constitutional right to full measure of self government that includes the right to establish institutions of government in the territory these Nations, Nationalities or Peoples inhabit. Their right to equitable representation in State and Federal Governments is also constitutionally ensured.
However, there are certain quarters that intentionally attempt to divert this daylight fact. They purposefully claim that the constitutional right of the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia to self-determination, including their right to secession, would disintegrate the nation and hence promote poverty and backwardness of the country. They also suggest that Ethiopia should be divided among geographical units of administration by ignoring settlement patterns, language, identity, cultural and psychological make ups, social backgrounds and consent of the people concerned.

Advocates of these premises intentionally committed fundamental errors. In the first place, they preached forced unification without the free will and consent of the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples concerned. Ethiopian history, however, reveals that forced unification push the nation in to endless chaos and political mayhem for centuries. It was also the prime factor for the existed poverty and destitution of the country and its peoples. Furthermore, forced unification approach never realized real unity of any country throughout the world, so did in Ethiopia. Thus, the only viable and proper remedy of unity in a democratic order is coming together through the free will and full involvement of all the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples under their common treaty-their Constitution.

Regarding development, article 43 of the FDRE constitution ensures that the Peoples of Ethiopia as a whole, and each Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia in particular have the right to improved living standards and to sustainable development. Moreover, it stipulates that Nationals have the right to participate in national development and, in particular, to be consulted with respect to policies and projects affecting their community. And practically, Ethiopia is securing rapid, successive and equitable economic growth in the last successive eight years. All the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of the country are equally benefiting from the rapid economic growth on the basis of their participation and contribution to the development efforts. Basically, all Ethiopians have been given equal opportunity for development indeed.

The FDRE constitution also equally recognizes the equality of each of the Ethiopian Nation, Nationality, People, language, religion etc without any sort of partiality. Hence, it closed all possible doors of mistrust, conflict and disagreement over the identity question. The fundamental question of all the Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities and Peoples has been shifted from identity to development, peace, democratization, good governance etc (For the identity question is precisely addressed in the FDRE Constitution). That is why they are unreservedly working to emancipate their mother country from abject poverty and backwardness through their collective efforts. Thus, the main tenet of the advocates of the territorial integrity of the nation regardless of the objective demands of the Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities and Peoples has become invalid and irresponsible indeed. That is, the objective reality on the ground practically disproved their erroneous tenets-territorial integrity regardless of the consent and free will of the people.

After all, Nations, Nationalities and Peoples could not secede because they are given constitutional right to secession. Normally, secession is the inevitable child of oppression and exploitation. And no body can practically prevent secession while oppression and exploitation is a rule in a given nation, be it in the North or South Pole of the globe. That is, it is not the right to secession that disintegrates the nation; it is rather, prohibition of these basic human rights and fundamental democratic freedoms that unavoidably lead to disintegration and dire consequence, in fact.
World history tells us that nations, nationalities and/or peoples demand independence to escape existing inequalities that prevail in the “older nation” no matter whether the constitution of the “mother country” allows secession or not. Hence, no one can practically prohibit secession for it is not written in the constitution while at same time prevailing oppression and exploitation. On the other hand, no nation or nationality can secede because it is said to be constitutionally ensured right of nations and/or nationalities.

After all, the world has become a global village in which unity and cooperation have become main instruments of economic as well as political powers. The European and African Unions and many other Asian cooperative organizations are some of the manifestations of the need for unity in the contemporary world. So, there is no need to create forced unity while unity/integration has become the real source of both economic and political power in this modern age. This has also been practically witnessed in Ethiopia in the last 20 democratic constitutional years.

The constitutional right of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia to self-determination including the right to secession ensures that Ethiopia is their common country in which they live together under mutual understanding and cooperation. It further guaranteed them that any sort of violation of their constitutional rights would be automatically unacceptable and void. That is, Ethiopia has become equal home of all the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples in which they live under mutual cooperation to fulfill their common interest and collectively fight against their common enemy, poverty, thereby to ensure their renaissance through their joint efforts.

Today, the Ethiopian nations, nationalities and peoples are found at their climax level in fighting against their common enemy-poverty- and thereby to consolidate their development endeavors through putting their Growth and Transformation Plan in place. The voice of every Ethiopian in contributing every possible due to make the Grand Renaissance Dam real is one of the most remarkable signs of our unity. Thus, our Federalism has become our common factor to ensure our common interest that we dreamed of it for ages.

Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities and Peoples are found at the eve of their 6th day. This 6th Nations and Nationalities Day to be held on 8 December 2011 would have a great contribution to promote positive image of the country in which all the nations, nationalities and peoples will farther consolidate their promise to ensure implementation of the five years Growth and Transformation Plan along with promoting their own socio-cultural values. Thus, Federalism and rapid, successive and equitable development of the nation have become two sides of a coin without which the new reality of Ethiopian is normally impractical.

Hence, the fundamental argument of the opponents of the FDRE Federalism, particularly article 39 of the constitution, is unrealistic and erroneous. Thus, the FDRE Federalism ensures development and democratic needs of the Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities and Peoples, although the arm-chair critics of the system restlessly present piles of unfounded counter premises. Moreover, Federalism has been the real remedy to rectify historically unjust relationships between/among the nations, nationalities and peoples and to farther promote their shared interests.

Currently, Ethiopia is one of the top movers both in terms of economic growth and human development as well. Ethiopia secured 11.4 percent economic growth in the 2003 Ethiopian fiscal year (Last year) while almost the entire globe was suffering from economic and financial
crises. And it is said to be one of the few countries which are continuously improving their human development according to recent global reports on the subject. These all successes are the real fruits of our Federalism indeed. To have a better image, let’s see some great achievements in the areas of human development.

Education is one of the most critical factors in ensuring human development efforts in a given nation. Likewise, Ethiopia gives special focus on it as part of its core development efforts in the last 20 years. Thus, the number of elementary schools increased from 16513 in 2004/5 to 25217 in 2009/10 as precisely indicated in the five years Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) document. Similarly, the number of secondary schools goes up from 706 in 2004/5 to 1202 in 2009/10. And Higher education institutions dramatically increased from two to more than 22 government Universities in the last 10 years. This number of higher education institutions does not include private Universities and University Colleges.

Ethiopia has also become an exemplary model nation in meeting Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the Health sectors for the nation gives proper attention to the sector. For instance, the number of Health posts increased from 4211 in 2004/5 to 14416 in 2009/10. And the number of clinics and public hospitals goes up from 644 and 79 in 2006/7 to 1787 and 111 in 2009/10 respectively. Moreover, there are more than 38000 women Health Extension workers across the nation.

Ethiopia is also witnessing remarkable successes in the areas of infrastructure development in the last consecutive years. The length of road networks, for example, dramatically increased from 19017 kilometers in 1990/91 to 49000 kilometers in 2009/10 while the number of mobile phone customers grow from less than half a million in the year 2006/7 to 25 million in 2009/10. As a result, farmers and pastoralists are able to reach the wider market to sell their products in reasonable price for they have relatively sufficient access to information. This is the very reality of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia today.

Thus, Ethiopia has become a nation where rapid and sustainable development has been realized even at the time of global economic and financial crises. The secret of its success springs from its home grown policies and strategies which in turn are the results of objective demands of the Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities and Peoples. And the real demands of these nations, nationalities and peoples’ goes hand-in-hand with the Ethiopian Federal system of governance.

Thus, our Federalism, which springs from the free will and full consent of all Ethiopians, has been ensuring rapid and sustainable development in the last eight consecutive years. And the Nation has been entering to remarkable development shell through joint efforts of all Ethiopians. As a result, Ethiopia has been associating with rapid and sustainable development along with ample investment opportunities in the contemporary globe. This is the new reality of Ethiopia today which everybody may easily understand it without digging more.

And hence, Federalism enabled Ethiopians to have a common vision- **to build a country where Democratic Rule, Good Governance and Social Justice rein upon the full involvement and free consent of its people, and once extricating itself from poverty to reach the level of a middle income economy as of 2020-2023.**

-------------------End-------------------