

Brussels, October 24, 2010

Resolution of Afar Forum

The Afar Forum (AF) conference held in Brussels on 22-24 October 2010, under the theme '*the current development, challenges of the Afar people in the Horn Africa: Reflections on the past and the way forward*' attracted a great number of delegates from across the Afar Diaspora in Europe, USA, Canada and NGOs from the Horn Africa countries and opposition groups from Eritrea, Ethiopia and Djibouti. Governments from these countries were invited, however only representative from Ethiopian Embassy attended. The conference provided a forum for politicians and policy makers, academics, researchers and Afar Diaspora to discuss the issues which have adverse influence on the development of Afar people, and thereafter to make recommendations for the future development work.

The first day of the conference programme was concentrated on academic papers presentations, while the second day focused on Afar political parties, NGOs and on the socio-political situation of Afar people. The last day was focused on the way forward i.e. to enhance building partnerships, to recognise the role and contribution of the Afar Diaspora, to strengthen the Afar forum, and consecutively to be partners in solving the regional challenges. Overall, this year conference was a huge success and unique due to the quality and quantity of the academic papers presented as well as the number of delegates from various organisations.

Taking into consideration the challenges the Afar people is facing, the conference has given priority to strengthen and increase the capacity of the Afar Forum to respond more effectively to these challenges and made the following general recommendations:

- To strengthen the existing Diaspora communities/associations to be more effective, and further to establish a platform through the Afar Forum for all Afar communities to coordinate their efforts to support and become development partners in the region
- To encourage establishment of more Afar NGOs in Diaspora
- The Afar Forum to create and improve the communications among the Afar Diaspora

The conference discussed the Afar situation in Ethiopia and acknowledged the development efforts the Afar regional state made so far, however highlighted the shortcomings and made the following recommendations:

- Afar Forum calls for respect of the boundary of Afar regional state territory and calls upon the Afar regional state to publish a map. Such undertaking may help to evade current conflicts between Afar and the neighbouring nationalities
- The governments of Ethiopia and the Afar regional state to take decisive actions to alleviate the intra-clan conflict in Afar area particularly around Zone 3 and address the root cause of these conflicts
- Conflicts related to land grabbing and displacement should be properly addressed and its impact on the Afar pastoralists should be assessed accordingly

- The Afar regional state to assume its constitutional right and fully implement the use of the Afar language as an administrative language
- To release all political prisoners languishing in the prisons of Afar region without due process
- Ethiopian Federal army to stop harassment and repression of Afar pastoralists along Djibouti – Addis Ababa main road

The conference discusses the situation of Afar in Eritrea and expresses deep concern about the situation and made the following recommendations:

- AF demands the Eritrean regime to stop the systematic mass displacement of Afars from costal area of Eritrea and to stop social engineering and demographic change in the area
- AF denounce the current violation of human right by the Eritrean regime and demand to implement the rule of law in the country
- The Afar Forum commends Eritrean Government for using the Afar language as education medium in primary schools however demand the right to exercise the Afar language as administrative language in Afar area

The conference discussed the situation in Djibouti and acknowledges that in the past the situation in Djibouti was relatively better compared to other states in the region; however the conferences expressed serious concern about deteriorating of human right and the deepening of inequity between the ethnic groups in Djibouti in the recent years. Consequently, the conference made the following recommendations:

- AF demands the Djibouti regime to stop the violation of human right in general and the right of Afar people in particular
- AF demands to stop the ethnic based marginalisation and social injustice projected by the Djibouti regime toward the Afar population in the country
- AF Demands the regime in Djibouti to stop interfering and fuelling the conflict between Issa and Afar in Ethiopia, and instead AF demands the regime to promote peace among these brotherly ethnic groups

Finally, the Afar Forum made the following appeal to the international community, human right organisations and NGOs to support the Afar people struggle for peace, democracy, equality and justices:

- The Afar Forum calls upon the international community to recognise the Afar Refugees in the Horn of African states and provide them with necessary support as refugees in accordance with UN declaration
- AF Calls upon international community to assist Afar refugees in Ethiopia with immediate assistance due the grave situation in the refugee camps
- Afar Forum calls upon the international organisations to help and support grass root Afar NGOs
- Afar Forum calls upon the UN to acknowledge Afar as Indigenous People and to protect their right according to UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples