



ERITREAN DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE

Date: 05 Nov. 2009

An open letter to Mr. Jose Manuel Barroso

Subject: the October 9 Conference on Eritrea,
Organized by EEPA in Brussels

H.E. Mr. Jose Manuel Barroso
President of the European Commission

Dear Mr. Barroso

Let me have the opportunity to extend my best wishes for the second term of your presidency and I also wish you more success to attain the goals of the European Commission.

We in the EDA (Eritrean Democratic Alliance) would like, in this letter, to express our reservations and anxiety on the forthcoming conference organized by the Foreign Policy Advisor (EEPA) of the EU, on November 9, alleged "to align the stands of USA and EU regarding violation of human and democratic rights in Eritrean".

Our apprehension is about how this conference was organized and how its participants were selected. While the most concerned Eritreans, the whole opposition forces, especially the EDA – the wide National Front and umbrella of 13 political parties and organizations working in unison – were excluded. The EDA that was formed as a result of the strong and prolonged great efforts of our people, its struggling organizations, and genuine civil societies, was excluded from the organizing and participation processes of this conference. Our apprehension is also based on the possible disparaging impacts of this conference on the ongoing struggle and unity of the Eritrean opposition forces.

Our moral obligations and our political conceptions can not allow us to stand indifferently towards any forum raising crucial issues concerning the fate of our people and country, be it zonal, regional, or international conference, held without the participation of the viable opposition organizations represented by the EDA Umbrella, and organizations, movements, civil societies, intellectuals, veterans, nationalist religious leaders etc. struggling for change. We in the EDA, at the same time as we appreciate and welcome all initiatives taken by any peace loving peoples, governments, humanitarian organizations and international communities, for backing our ongoing justified and legitimate democratic struggle, we reject and deem unacceptable all maneuvers to design groundless substitutes for the united

opposition. In this conference, you could have assured participation of all concerned struggling Eritreans and their contribution on the debate of their common cause and concern, instead of organizing it in an unjust way of marginalizing approach. Still, we reiterate our appreciation of the EU novel strive and initiative to tackle our Eritrean concern at this level and its attempts to help our people, however, we think this particular conference won't bear any fruit, for it's not sowed on the ground conducive to that reality.

As we know it all, the relation between The Eritrean Democratic Alliance (EDA) and the European Union has been fostered by the External Relation Department of the EDA, our permanent representative and contact person in the EU, and the initiative of the resolute nationalist volunteers from Eritrean civic societies. Ironically enough it's under such relation, the ongoing exclusive and divisive conference is expected to take place. Unfortunately we shall all see what goals and outcome it is designed for, and as to how it shines on the current Eritrean political scene. Sidelining the wide main stream opposition and embracing divisive and destructive isolated approaches is a sad episode that will yield disruption.

The Eritrean Democratic Alliance-EDA is the sole giant and vibrant umbrella and a wider united front that reflects the form and substance of the entire mosaic of the Eritrean polity. It represents the Eritrean social and political reality. It includes political organizations of multinational, national and religious backgrounds that struggle for peace, justice and democracy. In this critical situation our country and the struggle of the opposition is going through, we are highly astonished by the step that excludes the broad national front-EDA but embraces some limited parties in a divisive and exclusionist conference. As such we are obliged to raise the following points to your attention.

1. The said divisive conference is taking place while the Eritrean dictatorial regime, due to its repressive internal and arrogant foreign policy, is totally isolated, and while proved as a regional spoiler and almost on the verge to be sanctioned by the UN, AU, and IGAAD. To this effect, we are totally dumfounded as to why such divisive way is chosen instead of consolidating and encouraging sanctions against the regime?
2. As to the conference, we regard it as an attempt to create impediments against the widely expected "broad national conference for democratic change" for which the entire members of the Eritrean Democratic Alliance, organizations, movements, civic societies, intellectuals, religious celebrities and veterans are working for, and looking forward for its realization soon, in an all embracing way, to unite all the efforts and capabilities of our people for democratic change.
3. We are here to remind that this exclusive conference with all its form and content is disruptive, creating mistrust and exclusionist divisive mentality and behavior. It disarrays the overall capacities of the member organizations in particular and the opposition camp in general. In fact it's a step to intervene in our internal affairs.

It is with this reality we arrived at the obvious conclusion that the two-day Belgium conference that disregards the main opposition body and with those mentioned ultimate dangers posed ahead won't be an effective alternative either for the realization of peace, justice and democracy for our people or for peace and stability for our region. Therefore and as a conclusion, we put the following points to be underlined by your office.

1. We assure that no one is delegated, to attend or speak on behalf of the Eritrean Democratic Alliance-EDA in the said conference.
2. We utterly reject and disregard the ongoing conference, be it knowingly or unknowingly done, its outcome is not for the benefit of our people or our unity and organized common action. In this regard we humbly remind the European Union to clarify its stand about organizing such a conference and how its participation in it would be.
3. We eagerly desire and humbly ask The EU to uphold and galvanize the already fostered relation with the Eritrean Democratic Alliance. Such communication and relations would certainly facilitate for the EU to follow up developments in Eritrea, and correctly assess the genuine actors for democratic change in the opposition camp, so as to play constructive role in the democratization process and avoid such dubious conferences held under its auspices. Hereafter, the EDA keenly reminds the EU that such conferences should be held in manners that serve the legitimate interests of our people, our region and the international community. It should also be made open in a fair way where the main stream concerned bodies can take part. We are of the opinion that all conference organizing parties should refrain from attaining narrow short term gains and concentrate on strategic thinking and in a responsible approach.
4. Therefore, the organizer body of this conference, under the leadership of the head of the EEPA and representative of one of Belgian NGO - Dr Merijam Van Raysen - and her lobbyist advisors shall bear the responsibilities and consequences of the said conference and its outcomes.

Tewolde Gebresellasie
Chairman
Eritrean Democratic Alliance
Executive Committee

Cc: Mr.Karel De GUCHT
Commissioner Development
and Humanitarian Aid