

Concluding Resolution of the 7th Congress National confederation of Eritrean Workers (NCEW)



The 7th Congress of the National Confederation of Eritrean Workers was held at the Hotel Asmara Palace from 27-29 March 2017 under the theme, “**Strong Organization for Robust Union**”. The opening session was attended by 519 people, of which 255 were congress delegates, and honorary guests including H.E. President Isaias Afwerki, Ministers, senior Government and PFDJ officials, Army Commanders, Members of the diplomatic corps, invited guests and observers. Besides, other 30 representatives of foreign regional and international trade unions, including the ILO participated at the Congress.

In the speech which H.E. President Isaias Afwerki delivered, he pointed out that the National Confederation of Eritrean workers has a long and glorious background of the struggle of Eritrean workers, and that it was appropriate and timely to ask what tasks it accomplished in the past quarter of a century and what its future course looks like. He further alluded that the answer to this question does not concern only the confederation of workers, but it also involves the participation of government institutions, organizations, corporations and different enterprises. He underlined that the vision and strategy of the past quarter of a century’s course of nation building were 1) maintenance of the sustainable improvement of the livelihoods of citizens, 2) increase production for real economic growth and prosperity, 3) lay down strong infrastructure in all sectors with a balanced regional distribution, 4) create employment opportunities using the national potentials in all sectors, industries and enterprises, 5) stage by stage build effective and clean institutions, and above all 6) produce a skilled and well disciplined, as well as organized workforce in all industries and enterprises.

President Isaias, who indicated that the domestic conditions have to be viewed in relation to global and regional conditions and developments, and for that matter that they have been dealt with in an inclusive manner, further explained that during the past quarter of a century, the forces who started to racing to create a one camp global order after the end of the cold war, have caused disturbance, economic destruction and sufferings in the world, and especially in our niche.

H.E. President Isaias elucidated in great detail that in order for the one camp world order to reign, the suppression of workers' movements, belittling and weakening the forces which advocate for social justices, exploiting raw materials of the underdeveloped countries and interrupting their all-rounded developments, making them become administered by a system which is an agent for their corrupt agendas, skimming the cream of their human resources, making their beggars and benefactors of their aid, shedding crocodile tears as their advocates, ... were the episodes of the last quarter of a century.

Lastly, H.E. President Isaias Afwerki implored the NCEW 7th Congress that, although it is not to be expected to answer all matters, in order to realize the domestic goals it should maximize its contributions more on issues related to labor and laborers in the various sectors, as well as to come out with a road map for the exchange of experiences and strengthening of foreign relations.

The General Secretary of the NCEW, Mr. Tekeste Baire, underscored that without a country workers cannot exist in peace, and likewise a country cannot also develop and prosper without workers. He pointed out that the Eritrean workers had waged political and armed struggle for national independence, and since independence they have made significant contribution in the fight against the foreign hostilities initiated under the pretext of a border. Hence, he elaborated that the NCEW has been obliged to omit some of its planned activities, with due diligence to its national tasks and that of organizing workers.

Mr. Tekeste reiterated that the NCEW has been building and expanding the relations and cooperation which it established with regional and international trade unions ever since the time of the armed struggle. He expounded that the NCEW has organized big international conferences inside the country and enabling different regional and international trade union organizations to observe the activities of the NCEW and thus enabled them to witness the prevailing peace and development and to perceive the true image of our country, and pointed out that the congress needs to assess this aspect in depth so as to enable the NCEW, in the future, to firmly engage in foreign relations that benefit the Eritrean workers and their country.

Mr. Tekeste concluded his opening speech stating, "as it is indeed the attribute of the political culture of the People's Front of moving forward by assessing the past which has nurtured and brought us to this stage, in this congress which is being opened with the theme "**Strong organization for a robust union**", we look forward to getting important ideas that would help us move forward, built upon this culture of assessing our strengths and weaknesses."

Besides, the 7th NCEW Congress hosted a seminar on “**Peace and Cooperation in Africa and the Development Trends**”, delivered by Mr. Yemane Ghebreab, Head of Political Affairs of the PFDJ. In his presentation, Mr. Yemane explained that a political system which is based on citizenry and an administration that reflects the reality of one’s people and country are among the decisive factors in the building of prosperous and stable society. Since the political system and administrative structure in most African countries is based on nationality, religion, culture and ethnicity, rather than citizenry and nationalism, Mr. Yemane expounded that it has become a source of grabbing power, and a cause of instability and conflicts. Pointing out further that the basis of a prosperous and stable society is an organized and sustained participation of the entire society in the political affairs of its country, Mr. Yemane Ghebreab warned that peace and prosperity in the African continent cannot be attained without the participation of workers, the youths, women and other segments of the society.

Additionally, he discussed in detail the dangers inherent in copying and adopting experiences of others, and clarified that Africa should design its own all-rounded growth. In the elaborate seminar he presented, Mr. Yemane attributed indicated that conflicts in Africa originate from the monopolization of power and wealth by the few, and that the Eritrean liberation struggle is an illustration that the sustained and organized participation of the society is the basis for stability and growth.

On 28 March 2017, the Head of Economic Affairs of PFDJ, Mr. Hagos Ghebrehwet gave a seminar on “**Economic trends and employment prospects in Eritrea**”. Citing that Eritrea’s economic system follows the principle of increasing productivity by reducing consumerism, Mr. Hagos elucidated that priority is being given to the preparation of infrastructure facilities necessary for the agricultural sector in which 65% of the Eritrean population is engaged. He underlined that instead of an economy reliant only on mining it is preferred to pursue an economic path that expands services. Defending that the organization and training of human resources is decisive for a country’s development, Mr. Hagos explained that focus is being given to building internal capacities. And since the interests and rights of workers are related to productivity, he reminded that the Eritrean workers have to heighten their vigilance on increasing productivity.

Mr. Hagos, who claimed that an industrious and efficient workforce is essential for the development of a country, stated that in Eritrea there is ample job opportunity, and that the youth graduating from the colleges are adequate to the future plans, as well as that there is no worry that would exceed the country’s needs.

Mr. Hogos said that the goal of the PFDJ is to maximize productivity with lesser labour. At last he replied the economy related question raised by the audience.

At the Congress, several solidarity messages from regional and international trade unions, in addition to the support message from the Bisha Mining Company, were presented. The Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU), International Confederation of Trade Unions (ITUC), International Confederation of Trade Unions-Africa Region (ITUC-Africa), Italian Trade Unions (CGIL/CISL/UIIL), Turkish Trade Unions Confederation (HAK-IS), Sudan Workers Trade Union Federation (SWTUF), a Swiss Non-governmental Organization (SUKE), as well as the International Labour Organization (ILO) presented messages of solidarity and partnership.

On the first day of the NCEW 7th Congress, a workshop on “Freedom of Association and Collective Agreement” and another on “Labour Migration Episode” were presented respectively by Dr. Mohammed Mwamadzingo from ILO/ACTRAV and Ms. Wafaa Abdelkadir from ILO Cairo.

On the second day, the 7th NCEW Congress elected an Electoral Secretariat in a democratic manner. Its members were:

1. Mr Kibreab Kidane
2. Mr. Tesfai Ghirmai
3. Mr. Tsegai Bahta
4. Mrs. Adhanet Andom
5. Mr. Araya Kibrom

Following this, the General Secretary, Mr. Tekeste Baire presented a ten-year report on Organizing, Labour Relations, Education and Training, International Relations, Administration and Finance, Public Relations, Committee on Women Workers, Activities of Regional Offices and other issues. After thorough discussions the congress adopted the report with overwhelming majority votes.

Considering the existing conditions of the country and recognizing that it is in a moment of transition, the Congress decided to convene its next session after two years. After assessing that the NCEW Constitution needs corresponding review, and conducting thorough point by point discussion on the draft proposals, the Congress endorsed the amended Constitution.

In a brief speech he delivered at the conclusion of the Congress, the Head of Political Affairs of the PFDJ, Mr. Yemane Ghebreab noted the workers livelihoods cannot be improved without the ascertainment of economic liberty, and urged that the prime focus of the NCEW should be increasing its role in the economic development of the country. Recalling that the NCEW is an offshoot of the EPLF slogan, “**Let the masses become conscientized,**

organized and armed”, he prompted that it has to become engaged in the creation of better investment opportunities, raising the quantity of the workers and their productivity, encouraging the training, innovativeness among the youth and women workers, and thus align with the country’s programmes of development and resistance.

Resolutions

The 7th NCEW Congress resolved that

- in accordance with the guidance provided by the senior Government and PFDJ Officials, existing from the narrow circle the NCEW will step by step expand its organizational domain, by embracing larger number of workers through the undertaking detailed studies on efficiency and productivity of workers, prospects for future employment, rights and obligations, areas of employment, geographic coverage, distribution ... of workers
- since organizing the workers and professionals in the public and private sectors creates force, the NCEW shall strive to increase its members many folds
- the NCEW shall work to raise the vocational skills and industriousness of workers and to enable them to become equipped with modern education, training and technology
- since the force of the Confederation depends on the competence of the Federations and Base Unions, the NCEW shall exert more endeavors to strengthen and embolden them
- in order to strengthen its organization and enable it to possess reliable foundations, the NCEW shall work harder focusing on the female and male youth workers, and in the administrative regions it shall strive, in cooperation with the government, PFDJ and other partners for the growth of labor and laborers
- the NCEW shall exert efforts to strengthen its economic capacity and diversify its sources of income
- since the relations that the NCEW establishes are important for the creation of common views and harmony among each other by exchanging experiences, and it contributes towards the peace and development of our region and continent, the NCEW shall make efforts to build partnerships based on mutual cooperation with regional and international trade unions

Recommendations

The 7th NCEW Congress further made the following recommendations:

- in order to ascertain the continuity of the organization, implement the succession process with male and female youth which possess vocational skills and put national interests first
- since pension is a social security of workers, to expand the coverage of the existing pension scheme and based on past experiences to put in place regulations and facilitate its implementation
- since the organizing activities carried out by the NUEW and NUEYS among the youth workers and women workers is causing overlaps, to find ways that codeine their activities
- NCEW to undertake campaigns concerning organizing, productivity, socio-economic matters, health and safety at place of work, labor laws and collective agreements, etc. in order to raise the awareness of its members and increase the participation of workers in the country's development drive
- Recognizing that the NCEW has neat modern personnel and financial management system and that this is audited regularly, to maintain and upgrade this system in order to make it pace with the momentous demands

On its final day of its meeting, the 7th NCEW Congress, in accordance with the endorsed transitional constitution, elected a Central Council consisting of 65 permanent and 7 substitute members which implement its activities for the coming two years. It also elected a supervisory committee constituted of three members.

The Central Council in turn, on its first regular meeting held on 29 March 2017, elected the General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary. The remaining six members of the Executive committee shall be elected in its forth coming meeting.

Eternal Glory to our Martyrs!!

Victory to the Masses!!

29 March 2017

Hotel Asmara Palace