

## Brief media report on the Founding Congress of “UDC”

“An updated version”



From 23 to 25 August 2019, the city of Frankfurt- Germany, hosted the Founding Congress of the Unity for Democratic Change “UDC”. Yes, UDC was the result of more than a year of long-running dialogues among three Eritrean parties in the opposition arena, which are struggling for a national goal of ending authoritarianism and establishing an alternative constitutional government on the basis of multi-party system and in light of free elections in which the Eritrean people are engaged as they are the first stakeholders and beneficiaries in bringing about the desired democratic change.



As a result of ongoing and meaningful dialogues, the Eritrean People's Democratic Party, the Eritrean Movement of Justice and the Forum of Dialogue have decided to dissolve their respective organizations and to establish a new organization with the participation of their members individually. The affiliation of the nascent organization was determined to be based on the members' choice of the agreed principles, which were simply as the following:

1. working to put an end to the existing dictatorship;
2. Cooperating, in the transitional phase, together with other forces of change, to lay the prerequisite political foundations upon which Eritrea will be a multi-party place in the post-transitional period;
3. In the final stage, after paving the required structures for the political exercise, the Eritrean parties can act and participate in free elections with close participation and active control of the people at home.



Therefore, as the discussions of the three parties started earlier and were continued in the congress hall during the three days of its sessions, the only priority for the participants was to change the abnormal situation that exists in the country. And for that reason was acceptable to postpone the issue of forming ideological or partisan organizations to the post-transition period, at which point the UDC members can, if they wish, become a well-defined political party or begin to establish their own political forms.



The documents presented for discussion and approval, such as the Road Map, the political program and other internal regulations, were all in line with the new struggle framework chosen by the three unified organisations to walk through it to reach the stage that political exercise with the participation of all the colours of the Eritrean political spectrum is allowed after the demise of PFDJ regime.



Considering the papers mentioned and following up the discussions during the three days of the congress, it is clear, on the one hand, that the newborn organization has left its door open to join every Eritrean whose convictions are consistent with the political vision adopted by it. On the other hand, as a result of the outcomes of its members` deliberations, that UDC has pledged to work with all national forces in terms of coordination, unity and integration of those who hold the same political vision that accommodates all citizens on the basis of citizenship.



### **Opening session on Friday 23 August 2019**

The members of the congress arrived at the conference hall at 7 pm and after the registration process and the verification of attendance and the quorum, the opening day of the meeting was devoted to acquaintance between the members coming from Europe and America, where many of them met each other face to face for the first time. Other members from the Middle East, Australia and the USA also participated via Skype and Zoom communication. Truly, the opening ceremony was an intimate evening that paved the way for the next two days.



**Saturday, August 24, 2019**

As the second day's sessions were long and full of thoughtful debates, the deliberations lasted for more than 12 hours.

The following three people were elected as members of the Secretariat:

1. Berih Melake;
2. Suleiman Hussein
3. Hamid Drar.



Following the adoption of the rules governing the conduct of the meetings the participants engaged in the discussion of the papers submitted by the Preparatory Committee, which had been distributed in advance to the members few months ago to aiming at they go through all the documents and prepare for the congress. As noted above, the most important papers were:

- (A) By-laws and other internal rules of UCD;
- (B) The Road Map;
- (C) The political program.



With regard to the name of the nascent organization and after deep discussions of the connotations of that name and in line with the vision centered around the three short-term objectives mentioned above, as evidenced by the totality of deliberations, the congress preferred to move away, at this stage, which requires the need for a rally inclusive embrace all those who seek for the change in Eritrea.



As a result, everyone preferred to stay away from adopting partisan or organizational titles that created only to attract members of a specific political or ideological orientation. The priority does not reflect the interim and immediate priorities of getting rid of the tyrannical regime in the country. Hence, the UDC was selected from eight names proposed for the new organization.

Accordingly, by discussing the three papers above and making the necessary amendments and additions, the sessions of the second day ended.



### **Sunday 25 August 2019**

The participants continued to discuss the different topics in the agenda for the third day. Amongst those issues were:

- (A) The internal situation of Eritrea;
- B. Regional and neighbouring countries developments;
- C - The international situation and its impact on the Eritrea.

On the internal situation, the discussions centered on two main aspects.

The first one was the situation inside the country and the agony of the people. The second aspect dealt and discussed the opposition camp and the challenges that hindered it yet from eradicating the dictator at home.



In their discussions, the participants assessed that the situation of the regime is poor by all standards, but that this does not mean that it suffers from the weakness that prevents the continuation of its oppression. Deliberations on the opposition camp have also taken place in the context of the ineffectiveness of the methods used by the opposition factions to bring about democratic change, which was characterized by narrow organizational thinking and the aspiration to the conflict of power prematurely. All participants have stressed the need to get rid of the old tools by adopting policies that put the highest priority to postpone the power struggle to a stage where the Eritrean people are able to choose in the light of free and fair elections and atmosphere of stability.



The presence of many veteran activists in the congress, including the two great activists Mohammad Brhan Blata and Mesfin Hagos, gave the readings related to the above three topics and other issues to which the participants were exposed more deeply. Both activists have analysed the objective regional and international developments in a way that helped the members to extrapolate the future and define its features to avoid the difficulties facing the opposition in light of the intertwined and conflicting interests of regional and international powers.



As a result, Mr Mesfin Hagos and Mr M. Brhan Blata recommended that the participants to avoid rushing in adopting final immature readings to understand the paths of international relations as a reflection of the state of engagement in the interests of more than one party towards our region. At the end of the discussions, the new leadership was urged to work in more than one angle to build bridges of communication with all to accelerate change in Eritrea.



On the other hand, the conference stopped at length on the suffering of Eritreans in refugee camps in neighboring countries and the tragedy experienced by young Eritrean fugitives from the regime in Eritrea. The congress urged the leadership to give the suffering of the refugees the utmost importance and intensify communication with international organizations working in that field to help those refugees and alleviate their agony.



Within the resolutions and recommendations adopted by today`s Congress, UDC affirmed that it is ready to work and coordinate until unity with all Eritrean opposition organisations active in the arena in order to strengthen work with everyone without exception and for the interest of Eritrea and the unity of its territory and people. The Congress called on the elected leadership to do everything necessary to implement the resolutions in various fields on the ground.

With the adoption of political resolutions, issuing the final statement and electing of 21 members of UDC Legislative Council, (which will going to elect the Executive Body composes of 7 members), the congress concluded its sessions in the early hours of Monday 26 August 2019.



Members of the elected legislative leadership included the following:

1. Freweini Ghebretsadik;
2. Mesfin Hagos;
3. Hamid Drar;
4. Mohammed Brhan Blalat;
5. Suleiman Hussein;
6. Tsighehannes Kidane;
7. Alem Yohannes;
8. Gallaway Saeed;
9. Yasin Ibrahim;
10. Tesfamichael Yohannes;
11. Saba Fsehaye;
12. Brhane Ghebrekrstos;
13. Antonio Tesfai;
14. Taklesenbet Teklai;



15. Dr. Asefaw Tekeste;

16. Efrem Taffere;

17. Suleiman Sediq;

18. Kbrom Grenet;

19. Desbele Ghebrehiwet;

20. Hanetse Kahsai;

21. Dr. Bahlbi.

The following are the reserve members:

22. Ahmed al-Kaisi;

23. Menghisteab Gobeza;

24. Woldu Neghasi;

25. Medhanie Andehaimanot.



Information Committee - Frankfurt - Germany

26 August 2019