

PREFACE

Ideally, government should create and maintain the conditions for peaceful coexistence and cooperation between the political, religious, ethnic, and regional groups within its jurisdiction. Governments around the world struggle to achieve this ideal. Ordinary citizens bear the brunt of war, violence, and conflict when this ideal is not achieved. Ethiopia is not alone in falling short of creating the conditions that support peaceful coexistence in its many diverse communities, this despite the fact that government officials, opposition leaders, concerned citizens, organizations, and scholars strive to create an environment conducive to constructive dialogue. This undertaking by Ethiopian scholars, a conference entitled, “Between Failure and Redemption: The Future of the Ethiopian Social Contract” held on May 8-10 in Addis Ababa, is an effort to create and continue a constructive dialogue that will build upon Ethiopia’s unique and distinguished history as well as the potential of its diverse society.

This interdisciplinary conference was the result of a collaboration between Northwestern University’s Pritzker School of Law, Addis Ababa University’s College of Law and Governance Studies, and the Harvard Law School’s Human Rights Program, and was made possible through the financial and administrative support of Northwestern University’s Roberta Buffett Institute for Global Affairs. The two-day conference brought together Ethiopian scholars from a wide variety of fields with diverse opinions. In addition to contributing papers, participating as discussants, and providing invaluable contributions in the discussions, many of the conference participants also collaborated in establishing and implementing the conference concept.

The conference brought together scholars and researchers with ongoing or established records of work on topics relevant to the conference, or who have dedicated their intellectual energies to the study of these topics. It was an honor that the invited scholars obliged us by coming together to discuss how Ethiopia’s constitutional structure could manage both unity and diversity and foster a stable political community. It was a privilege to have read the insightful papers and essays, and to have listened to the enthusiastic conversations about the issues the participants strongly feel about. The

whole idea of the conference is relevant not only in Ethiopia but also for people all around the world who struggle with similar issues; there is a lot we can learn from the dialogue in Ethiopia, including in the U.S., where we have extremely polarized politics.

As these proceedings were being finalized, the Ethiopian Government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) signed on November 2, 2022, an Agreement for Lasting Peace through a Permanent Cessation of Hostilities, and further negotiations continue. We are hopeful that the ideas articulated here can help transform this fragile truce into a stable and just future, not only in the northern regions of Ethiopia, but across its entire territory.

I want to thank the participants for being part of this conference and the people who organized it. I want to thank Dr. Abadir M. Ibrahim and Dr. Mizanie Abate in particular for initiating the conversations this conference grew out of. A special thank you to Prof. Sossina Haile, Dayna Dion and Seife Ayalew who, although they were eventually not able to join the meeting in Addis, have played such indispensable roles as members of the organizing committee. I also thank Symon Ogeto and SEED Group for organizing the conference wonderfully. I am also grateful to Dr. Getachew Assefa from the School of Law at Addis Ababa University (AAU), for partnering with us for this conference and for the long-established relationship between AAU Law School and Northwestern University. I also thank Rediet Baye Ayalew, who was on the job facilitating the conference, Kokebe Wolde from the School of Law at AAU for assuming the responsibility to prepare and edit the conference proceedings, Harrington Weihl for copyediting the publication and Abchu Wassihun and Loid Taye for serving as conference rapporteurs. I would also like to thank Northwestern University Libraries for supporting us in the publication and distribution of the conference proceedings. Special gratitude extends to the whole team at the Roberta Buffett Institute for Global Affairs in Chicago who helped us with the budget for this conference.

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