

Our Responsibility to Preserve the Seeds of Unity

Joint Media Team

EDP/ EPP

December 15, 2009

The success of any political program or task depends on two important factors. One is the ability to possess a true reading of a given situation and the second is to have a visionary and competent leadership. These attributes were of great asset during the merger process between the political parties of Eritrean People's Movement, Gash/setit, Eritrean Democratic Party, and Eritrean People's Party.

Unity is needed in Eritrean now more than any time before. The horrible situation of our country is undeniably evident. Yes, at a time when the political, social, and economic subjugation and repression is forcing a large number of Eritreans to leave their country, at a time when our people are incessantly exposed to massive human rights violations, and at a time when our people are dispossessed of their properties and held captive in their own country, the question of unity not only occupies a central part of our objectives but also a necessity for which its achievement cannot be deferred. Therefore, all the determinations and efforts of the current leadership of the four uniting political parties have been driven by the unity imperatives and not by political expediency.

We want to build a sustainable unity. It is, therefore, in this sense that we strongly recognize the importance of having an insightful and competent leadership that can objectively sift through and avoid stumbling into the type of past unity that failed and came to nothing. Yet, we believe we should not act on things hastily that might not sustain in the long run. ***As the Tigrinya expression has it "you tie up something with undue haste; and you untie it with undue haste."*** Certainly, unity is a pressing strategic need in our struggle. But it is also a process that requires time and the exercise of prudence and foresightedness by leadership as well as by members in the management of obstacles and in knowing how to avoid them.

Yes, we chose a slow and a long process of unity that involved a careful consideration of many variables. One, we view unity as a concerted endeavor that imposes an obligation on members to exercise mutual tolerance, demonstrate patience, and command the art of mutual concessions and compromises. Two, we believe that the participation and involvement of grass root members in the formulation of policies and decisions as a crucial importance in achieving a sustainable unity. Understandably, some think we took too long in the process, and some believe we moved too quickly into the process, but in hindsight the strategy we followed was correct.

We started the unity process by creating a common understanding and assessment on the plight of our people on one hand and by reading the correct circumstances and conditions of the Eritrean political forces on the other, which in a period of time enabled us to formulate the kind of unity strategy we decided to pursue: One was to bring all political forces that have the same programs

under one political party, and second was to establish an umbrella organization for all parties that espouse different programs, but have a common interest in deposing the repressive regime in our country. In order to achieve such unity strategy, we needed to approach it from a completely different angle. And that angle was to concentrate on studying our political programs, focusing on our common agreeable programs, and identifying our differences. This approach gave us an opportunity to consolidate our common agreements and to work toward building a lasting unity.

Hidden to many people, in the course of building the current unity between the four political parties, we found out that the points of differences were fewer than the points of the agreements. Even those differences were either brought into existence by our past experiences, or were differences that required future participation and involvement of Eritrean people. The point is we reached at mutually agreeable solutions to our differences.

The secret of our success is that we have discovered how not to be the prisoners of our history, how not to harp on the past, and how to be free from the nonexistent and groundless fear of political monopolization and dominations. Important, we have learned things that did not work before, studied the historical perspective part of the previous failed unity efforts, and employed a variety of methods not to repeat the same mistakes. One efficient and democratic process we introduced is transparency, which promotes accountability and gives the public the chance to know what we are doing. This is also one of the traits of democratic governance we strive to introduce in the politics of Eritrea.

All the approaches we followed, the history we learned, the change we introduced, and the differences we have overcome during the various phases of the unity process - in the end helped us reach to the point of becoming one and united political party. We recognize our people are waiting for the day of the unity with great enthusiasm and hope. At this juncture, we believe the seeds of unity have been already sown. And yet, as this unity benefits Eritrean people, it is incumbent upon us in general and the Eritrean younger generation in particular to continue on preserving and cultivating it. Finally, we like to reiterate our call to the Eritrean younger generation that it is crucial for its future not to brush aside the strategic importance of unity. We strongly believe turning a blind eye to unity would amount to gambling with the future of the present generation and the generation that succeeds it.