



Kinijit International Council

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The Road Ahead: One Kinijit One Voice

From the Executive Committee, Kinijit International Council, September 4, 2007

The Road Ahead:

Over the past two years, we have witnessed and continue to witness the determination of the Ethiopian people and their democratic leaders, especially the CUDP, to defy formidable odds and to sustain the democratization process. This is the plus side. On the other hand, dissension and divisions continue to create havoc within the Opposition camp, including supporters of CUDP in the Diaspora. This situation compels us to consider the potential options that may lie ahead of us.

The CUDP both with the country and abroad faces the following potential challenges:

- a) The challenge from the leadership of **the EPRDF** that is determined to undermine and break the unity and solidarity of the CUDP. The leadership of the ruling party is fully aware that the most formidable Opposition party with potential to challenge its political and economic dominance is KINJIT. In particular, it is fully aware that the organization and leadership of Kinijit has to be 'destroyed' at any cost. Hence the imprisonment of the entire leadership of Kinijit for almost two years. The fact that the leadership has been released from jail does not remove this strong challenge from the EPRDF. More than any other factor in political competition, the EPRDF fears Ethiopian nationally oriented or patriotic leaders. Individuals and groups that have national appeal are therefore a constant target of the leadership of the ruling party. Kinijit, its leadership and the Ethiopian people must be in constant watch to ensure that such leaders are not isolated and disabled; succession to such leaders must be part of the political strategy of the entire organization and its supporters.
- b) The CUDP faces a similar challenge from **external powers** (governments) that have a vested interest in Ethiopia and the entire region. In their 'game scenarios' they dissect the values, world views and tendencies of leaders within the CUDP to determine who may be manipulated and cultivated to support their national interests and who may not be. Such assessments will likely create 'divisions' within the Kinijit leadership. We have an obligation to the organization and to the Ethiopian people to assess who is who and who stands for what and why?
- c) The CUDP faces and will face obstacles to its agenda **from other Opposition parties**, including **National Liberation movements** that do not accept Ethiopia's national unity and democratic pluralism. This phenomenon plays into the hands of the EPRDF, foreign powers and neighboring countries that do not necessarily



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support the long term interests of the Ethiopian people and the country's transformation into a powerful political, economic and social force in the region.

- d) The CUDP must be aware that, both within the country and overseas, its organization and leadership may be and can be **penetrated by different political actors** and 'agents' that are determined to create havoc within its ranks. Seemingly supportive of its political agenda, they operate in sleek and insidious manners.
- e) Both within the county and in the Diaspora, Kinijit and its external organization have faced and will continue to face '**cynicism and doubt**' from its supporters about the capabilities of leaders to resolve differences to achieve political objectives. More than any other of the above obstacles, the leadership must be expend talent, wisdom and leadership in restoring the confidence and trust of its supporters with a consistency that is required of a mature political party; and with a strategic approach that empowers, emboldens, involves and engages its supporters and members. It takes village to move the "spirit of Kinijit" and the village must be more inclusive than ever before. This is the bedrock of 'Kinijit's" sustainability and future.
- f) It is clear from the past two years that there are emerging differences in the style and composition of organization leadership within CUDP both within and outside the country that must be addressed carefully, strategically and calmly. As long as there is a consensus on the vision, direction and programs of the CUDP, differences of style, leadership composition and succession, modus of operation and tactics must be resolved through internal dialogue and conflict management using all avenues. Leaders and key supporters of Kinijit who were in jail and those who fled the country have lead responsibility to be models of leadership and democratic problem solving. The formidable obstacles mentioned above and, others that the organization will face in the future require political maturity and a high level of emotional intelligence that befits a country of close to 80 million citizens with complex social, economic and political problems. In fact, the acid test of political leadership will remain the capacity and readiness to address and resolve differences strategically, quietly and maturely.

Against the formidable barriers and challenges mentioned above, it behooves us to ask what potential scenarios that may emerge and how we can and should address them. We see three potential situations that are worth discussing and debating, with a view of preparing ourselves for a sustainable struggle in the years ahead.

(To be continued...)