

Speech made by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi at the Meskel Square rally (25 May, 2010).

Esteemed compatriots!

**Esteemed residents of Addis Ababa who have converged to Meskel
Square to demand respect for your decision in the 4th national elections!**

I am truly honored to present my organization's message of solidarity at this great rally in which the residents of our capital, Addis Ababa, have come out in the greatest possible numbers to demand that the Ethiopian people's sovereign right to elect leaders of their choice must and will be respected. Through this action you have demonstrated unequivocal support to the ongoing development, democratization and sustained peace.

As the whole world knows the 4th national election have taken place in a peaceful, democratic and credible manner. These elections have been conducted successfully according to plan and we are now waiting for the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) to officially declare the final results. Preliminary results have been coming in since the night right after the election, but the final choice of the people of Ethiopia will be declared, also according to plan, after the National Election Board finalizes its investigations. It should actually be noted that the preliminarily results so far have not covered all areas of our vast country, yet.

However, the preliminary results have shown that the great majority of our people have with great dignity reached a consensus as to who should lead the country in the next five years, in a spirit of freedom and peace.

We, the members of EPRDF, with great humility offer our gratitude and appreciation to the voters who have given us their support freely and democratically. We also offer our thanks to the real backbone of our organization, the women of Ethiopia who are committed to our struggle due to their realization of our track record on gender equality and who want to forge ahead on this path of peace, development and democratization. Our admiration to the women of Ethiopia is indeed boundless!

We are also proud of the youth of our country who have started to benefit from the on going development and also those who are in the process of applying efforts to be productively employed! We offer our thanks and salute the youth of Ethiopia for their unwavering support and enthusiasm!

We also thank the private sector of our country that we have some times offended due to our short coming in the provision of proper services that they deserve. We truly appreciate their confidence in us which they have shown through their votes in this election. We thank them, for their understanding and their trust that the EPRDF is always ready to learn from its mistakes. We thank them for their support.

The vast majority of the residents of our cities and the farmers of our country who actually consider themselves and the EPRDF as two sides of a coin have yet again shown

the world that nothing can ever shake their unwavering support for our organization by voting for us. We are thankful to deserve this Honor!

Esteemed participants of this great rally!

It is to be recalled that in the last election, five years ago, we, the EPRDF lost every seat in the capital due to our failure to achieve our goals. The residents of Addis Ababa denied us their votes because they were offended by our mistakes at various levels. You will also recall that the EPRDF accepted the verdict of the electorate with full realization of its shortcomings. The EPRDF did not attempt to gloss over its mistakes, but decided to conduct a detailed study which enabled in to address all the issues and work towards gaining the confidence of the voters. It is through this process that it has engaged itself in all round of activities to ensure rapid and sustainable development, democratization and good governance.

The residents of Addis Ababa are fully aware of our respect for their decision. They also know, full well, that we are always ready to correct our mistakes and learn from them. It is due to this awareness that they have voted for us in this election. The people of Addis Ababa have demonstrated the fact that when they vote, they base their decisions on justice as related to their rights. I salute and offer sincere thanks to the people of Addis and indeed the whole of Ethiopia who are the legitimate, just and ultimate judges of these elections.

I believe that the people of Ethiopia, beyond recognizing the efforts of the EPRDF and voting it into power have unequivocally sent a clear message to the opposition parties in

our country. The clarion call of the Ethiopian peoples, as made evident in this election is that they can not and will not subscribe to any politics of hate. It has ably shown that it chose those who have a vision of a better tomorrow over those who peddle revenge and discord. It has now made it abundantly clear that not a single life will be allowed to perish as a result of election violence.

I believe that these are important lessons that the opposition can learn from regarding the experiences of the EPRDF. I believe that it is essential for the opposition parties to realize that our people will appreciate their efforts to correct their mistakes and reward them (handsomely) when and if they make a genuine effort to correct their mistakes. The Ethiopian people always Stand on the side of justice. I would like to express my admiration to those opposition parties that have followed this constructive path and advice those who have not followed suit, in their own interest. I offer this advice and request to oblige on behalf of the Ethiopian people and indeed myself.

The results that have come in, so far, have shown that the opposition lost in these elections. I believe that they must accept the decision of our great and proud peoples and not become tools of external forces that don't have the right to act as the ultimate judges of our elections. I request that they refrain from the indignities of serving quarters that are engages in eroding our achievements. I would like to remind the opposition that they must be mindful of their responsibility to respect the dignity and honor of the Ethiopian people and indeed themselves.

We all know the destructive role some political parties have been playing so far. Our people have witnessed the attempts of these parties to mar and discredit the polling

process. They have tried to cause delay by instructing their observers to arrive late at the polling stations. They have tried to disrupt the queues, make all sorts of shouts and cries, to force people to walk away and to discredit the democratic process. Our people have witnessed with dismay and anger the attempts by some of these parties to send in their members with grenades to detonate among people queuing at polling stations at which three committed mothers gave birth while waiting to vote. We have also observed successful and unsuccessful attempts by members of some of the opposition parties to snatch away ballot boxes and burn the votes of the people.

All this has passed. The people have given their verdict. They have said loud and clear that no human life should be lost in the name of elections. The Government respects the decision of the electorate. However, it does not want to be forced to embark upon the business of tracking down people committing crimes. Therefore, I would like to appeal to some opposition parties who have been operating in a manner that is against the code of conduct not to force the Government to take measures against them. I would like to appeal to them, on behalf of the electorate, to respect the law of the land.

During the elections of 2005, we have seen election observers that we believed would observe the process in an independent and impartial manner, take sides and add fuel to the fire. We have seen those we believed were friends and partners behaving like king makers and an appeal court for Ethiopia's politics. Our proud people would still like to extend a warm welcome of friendship and partnership. We say to you: Please give due respect to the decision and the sovereign power of the people to elect their own leaders.

Participants of the demonstration!

We understand that judging by the preliminary declaration of results; you have given us the mandate through your votes. However, we also understand that there are people who have not voted for us. I would like to state here in no unequivocal manner that we will respect the decision of those who did not vote for us as we respect the decision of those who voted for us. I would like to confirm to those who did not vote for us that we will work hard to look into your reasons for not voting for us with the view to learning from them and correcting any shortcomings on our part. We will work day and night to obtain your support in the next election. In the meantime, I would, in the name of all the members and martyrs of our organisation, like to confirm to you that the government that we are going to establish will serve not just those who elected us but also you in an equal manner.

Even though we are proud and joyful of the results we have achieved through our hard work, we are fully aware of the heavy responsibility that the people have entrusted on us through their vote. Although we are happy that we have gratified our people with the results we have achieved, we understand deeply that we still have shortcomings and weaknesses that have aggrieved our people and that we should correct them accordingly. As we celebrate our democracy this day, we, the EPRDF, once again express our heartfelt gratitude to all our people who we always believe have a high sense of judgement and fairness including those who did or did not vote for us.

Even though I am aware that the election results have yet to be declared in full, I would like to confirm to you that as of tomorrow, we will start revising our plans for the coming five years in the understanding that we have obtained massive support and responsibility. We will do our level best to implement the plans and to achieve greater results. The election results have made it abundantly clear that we have achieved more than we expected. Once again, I would like to confirm to you that we understand that this is not something to brag about. This is a manifestation of the heavy responsibility that the people have given us.

We make this pledge to all the parties who did not succeed in getting the support of the people, during this election, that whether or not you have won seats in the parliament, as long as you respect the will of the people and the country's Constitution and other laws of the land, we will work by consulting and involving you in all major national issues. We are making this pledge not only because we believe that we should be partners in the renewal efforts of our country, but also because we recognise that irrespective of their numbers those who voted for you have the right to participate and to be heard.

The important point in the election process is not the result of the election. It is not about which party won the election. It is Ethiopia's renewal. The winner is Ethiopia's democracy and all Ethiopians. Thus we say congratulations to all the electorate and to our country's forces of peace and democracy.

Once again we, over five million EPRDF members, on behalf of our martyrs and our selves solemnly express our gratitude to day, standing before you, the Ethiopian people,

who have the sovereign right and power to appoint or dismiss your leaders. We salute you!

Thank you.