



**Communiqué from the fourth Retreat of ASSECAA, Addis Ababa-Ethiopia 24-25 Sept, 2011.**

Under the generous patronage of the House of Federation of Ethiopia, and in a vernal atmosphere of the beautiful capital, Addis Ababa, the fourth Retreat of the Association of Senates, Shoora and Equivalent Council in Africa and Arab World (ASSECAA) was held from 24-25 September 2011.

Delegates from the following member countries attended the Retreat:

1. Council of the Nation of the Democratic Republic of Algeria
2. Shoora Council of the Republic of Yemen.
3. The House of Federation of Ethiopia.
4. Shoora Council of Qatar.
5. Shoora Council of the Kingdom of Bahrain.
6. The Senate of the Republic of Burundi.
7. National Council of Provinces of South Africa.



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8. The Senate of the Republic of Gabon.
9. The Senate of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.
10. Council of States of the Republic of Sudan.
11. House of Dignitaries of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.
12. The Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Egypt, Morocco and Saudi Arabia were represented by their own ambassadors to Ethiopia.

Participating Organizations:

a- The African Parliamentary Union.

At the outset, the delegates observed a one-minute standing in mourning of the death of late H.E. Abdul Aziz Abdul Ghani, Speaker of Shoora Council of Yemen, who passed away in the aftermath of the criminal bomb attack that targeted him alongside the leadership of the Republic of Yemen.



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They paid tribute to the pivotal role he , as one of the founding fathers of ASSECAA, played in establishing and sponsoring the Association during its founding stage.

- The Secretary General of ASSECAA, Mr. Abdulwasie Yusuf Ali, delivered a speech welcoming the delegates and thanking the Ethiopian government for their consent to host the retreat and the facilitations they made to ensure the success of the event.

The Secretary General spoke highly of Mrs. Rose Francine Robgombe, the Chairperson of the Association, for the substantial efforts shed exerted in order to enhance the role of ASSECAA and achieve its objectives for the sake of bolstering relations among members' states.

He also lauded the paper presenters for their invaluable presentations, and briefed the delegates on the contents of each paper while confirming that all the papers are relevant to the responsibilities and obligations of members.

Mr. Kassa Tekelbrahan, Speaker of the House of Federation of Ethiopia, gave a welcome speech in which he hailed the participants to the retreat, expressing his pleasure at the hosting of such an event.

He pointed out that his country played a historic role in building up as a bridge for cultural and trade cooperation between Africa and the Arab World.

He further indicated that the ethnic and religious diversity prevalent in his country served as a stabilizing factor of co-existence among Ethiopians.



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He confirmed that Ethiopia is pursuing an approach to the achievement of Peace, Development and democracy by fulfilling its obligations of attaining peace and security in ASSECAA member states and the African Union members.

Mr. Tekelbrahan touched upon the developments his country has made on the political, economic and human rights fronts since the overthrow of the former dictatorial regime.

In conclusion, the speaker of the House of Federation emphasized his country's commitment to ASSECAA's vision which is in harmony with that of his country. He highlighted that Ethiopia will work towards the achievements of the Association's objectives, especially in terms of reducing violence, combating poverty, famine and backwardness, and boosting democracy being an effective means for resolving the intricate problems disturbing Africa and Arab World.

Madam Rose Francine Rogombe also addressed the participants, and dwelt upon the role ASSECAA is playing as the only link between Africa and Arab World. The Guest of Honour Ambassador Binhane G/ Kirestas, the Minister of the State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, gave a speech, pointing out that Africa and Arab World share a common history, which enables them to achieve joint cooperation and common interests.

Speeches of Heads of Delegations:

Head of delegation delivered their addresses, underscoring their full commitment to the attainment of the objectives for which ASSECAA was established, by means of:

- Building a robust bridge of cooperation between Arab and African countries.
- Enhancing democratic awareness and practices in the regions of Africa and Arab World as an actual means of good governance and reduction of social and political disputes in the two regions.
- Searching for modalities meant for reducing poverty and unemployment.



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- Consolidating national and regional efforts to face the impending danger of food shortages and rising costs of living in Africa and Arab World.

Presentation of work papers:

The participant to the retreat reviewed the work papers.

The first paper, titled “The Role of Second Chambers in Ensuring political and socio- economic justice to establish peace and security” prepared by Dr. Ahmad Mohammed

Al-Asbahi, member of Shoora Council of Yemen.

Dr. Al-Asbahi pointed out to the unique characteristic of the Association, being the sole framework holding together the two regions. He highlighted that the role of ASSECAA is steadily, cooperation and keen interest in strengthening bonds of cooperation amongst our nations. Therefore, a note should be taken of the current situation in our countries, in order to find convenient solutions thereto.

The paper included the following key points:

- Conflicts and tension spots still threatening security and stability.
- Human development, coupled with deprivation and unequal opportunity, is the heaviest burden on economy.



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- The Disparity and inequity in the era of globalization has terribly reflected on the lived reality.
- Deliberate and in deliberated foreign targeting.
- Focusing on the essence of achieving social justice to attain peace and stability.
- Based on the above, the role of second chambers comes as a result of concerted efforts to mobilize capacities and innovative energies crucial for change besides a public and political will to make proper decisions on change.
- It is essential that regimes should emanate from the region's social and value systems.
- Working towards enhancing value-based policies.
- Boosting modern nation state building through establishing the principle of equality before law.
- Emphasizing the impartiality of state's military and civil institutions.
- Achieving social justice and equality.
- Tacking such faults is an impunity for political systems, and administering socio-economic and political justice.



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- Setting out a common policy for food security and cooperation by setting up an afro- Arab economic grouping.

The paper further reveals the positive role being played by the Association in its capacity as an umbrella think –tank for second chambers in Africa and Arab world.

Second chambers play the vital role of enhancing economic and political justice, which is unequivocally considered the noblest of all the tasks of the modern nation state that employs all its executive and legislative apparatuses to ensure peace and stability through various economic mechanisms. This would bind the Association at this very stage to bring all second chambers together under its banner by making genuine efforts to spur the unicameral countries to embrace the principle of bicameralism to guarantee the region's rights to fair power – sharing and oversight over horizontal development at the national level so that one region may not surpass other region in terms of development, as this, if happens, would cause a development imbalance. Such actions are compatible with the Association's first objective of enhancing bicameralism. The importance of this paper was manifested in the kind of the discussion it raised.

The participants considered the burning issues of fighting famine, desertification, youth issues, unemployment and respect for human rights.

These also include women's issues that are either being experienced or debated by different fore in Africa and Arab world with the aim of making them effective in finding solutions to such issues besides opening up new horizons to the future.

Ambitious for stronger and more effective relations, the association believes that the level of political and economic cooperation and social communication is much smaller than the size of human, economic and cultural resources available to such countries.



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Consequently, ASSECAA feels that there is need to carefully reflect on the extent to which it has enhanced these relations and achieved its goals.

The second paper, entitled “Strategies for successful developing economies-lessons from Ethiopia”, was presented by the Speak of House of federation of Ethiopia, head of the Ethiopia delegation to the retreat.

The paper focused on the human development value, making human resources the focal point of development, in the sense that manpower is considered as the key actor and the beneficiary development.

Thus, the Ethiopian experience depends on the importance of manpower as the major engine of peace and development. This means that human resources should be trained, their qualification raised, and their rights respected.

Therefore, the Ethiopian constitution provided for human rights, including ethnic group’s rights, through the House of Federation (the second chamber).

Accordingly, complacency as regards the achievements made is the key driver of development in Ethiopia; it raised production rates. And the Sudanese constitution is no exception in this regard. It actually provides for human rights, state right and supervision over balanced development through the obligation of the council of states. In the fact, many of member states’ constitutions are adopting this concept as evidenced by the discussion of the paper.

Afterwards, the participants discussed the third paper titled “Impacts of globalization and current financial crises in the west on economic development in Africa and the Arab world and ways out “. The paper was prepared and presented by Dr .P.T. Costantino, professor of political science, college of Administration, Economics and information science. The paper dealt with the



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global credit crisis considered the biggest ever financial crisis since the Great Depression that still casts its shadows on the global economy, as capital flow predictions are still bleak due to the unprecedented drop in the private capital flow. The paper also dealt with the effects of this crisis on the global welfare as well as the options that prevent its surge.

The writer comes to the conclusion that the enhancement of democracy involves institutionalizing the political game that ensures full political participation and competition. This requires building a constant matrix of political institutions at the institutional and societal level. This formula would only culminate in the implementation of the principle of power transfer through the existing independent electoral authorities, constitutional provisions for rights and freedoms based on equal citizenship and independent, efficient judiciary being the institution that safeguards citizens against despotism in all its kinds and forms.

The writer concluded that consolidation of democracy, as a prerequisite for any economic growth, essentially requires adopting political pluralism that encourages and protests the ground rules of sound political participation and electoral competition coupled with an effective mechanism for enforcing accountability that ensure oversight over the executive authority.

Moreover, the delegates deliberated upon the work paper titled “ Arab revolutions “ prepared by Dr. Ahmed Al-Asbahi, which dealt with the latest development in the Arab and African arena, including the regime changes that took place in the region. Such changes are expressive of a political crisis that led to a regime collapse. The Tunisian youth revolution, which is an example of such revolutions, has erupted one month after the global seminar on youth and today’s challenges was held.

The writer comes up with the following lessons:

- Change is not an obstacle to stability, rather it is one of its basic requirements.



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- What is going on today is due to the negative accumulations of growing corruption.
- It's better to rectify the reality than to ignore it.
- It's a mistake to restrict political crises to specific regimes. Therefore, a change needs a radical remedy rather than a superficial one.
- Any change movement cannot succeed without dealing with the reality.
- Institutionalism constitutes a guarantee for stability away from exploitation and opportunism that gives way to failed people to practice all forms of deception and misleading campaigns.
- The important of respect for human rights.

#### Recommendations

The Retreat arrived at the following recommendations:

- Enhancement of the role of bicameralism to strengthen the democratic institutions in member countries.
- Consolidation of parliamentary diplomacy to achieve the common interests of member countries.
- Respecting human rights, especially the rights of women.



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- Spurring the private sector in member countries to work towards cooperation and joint action.
- Resolving the problems facing youth to help them achieve their ambitions for education and job opportunities that enable them lead a dignified life.
- Making use of the successful experience of sustainable development, particularly the Ethiopian development experience, and exchange of experience among member states.
- Respecting the rights of different ethnic groups and adopting equal citizenship as a basis for rights and duties.
- Reviewing investment positions, social communication, and unifying political visions among member states so to be able to encounter current challenges.
- Strengthening relationships with parliamentary Organizations in African and Arab World such as the African Parliamentary Union , the African Union and the Arab League.
- Enhancing cooperation among financial centers in member countries.
- Establishing political economic studies center to present views an recommendations to ensure the strengthening of relation among member countries.
- Building up and taking care of the family and paying an adequate attention to women.



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- Taking care of school environment and redrafting curricula.
  
- Civil society organizations and political parties should pay their role in enhancing democracy.
  
- Incorporating youth into public life sectors.
  
- Giving youth the chance to make their own preferences.
  
- The youth should interact with the sophisticated technological development while getting enough training and enhancing competence.