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Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia  
**OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER**

December 2, 2020  
Addis Ababa

### **Elections 2021 discussions with Political Parties and Civil Society Organizations**

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed held discussions with political parties and civil society organizations in the presence of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia, on the upcoming elections scheduled for mid-2021. The discussions were preceded by a presentation on the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders and an overview of electoral systems. The highly anticipated and historic election, which will be held following the reforms of critical democratic institutions in Ethiopia over the past two and half years, is noted as the most consequential election in its demonstration of Ethiopia's democratization journey initiated in 2018.

Participants of the discussion raised a number of issues including:

- not rushing to elections without putting the necessary foundations in place
- creating an enabling environment
- ensuring the primacy of rule of law preceding the elections
- placement of an election code of conduct for stakeholders including election observers
- stocktaking of legitimate political parties
- engagement of political parties according to the 'rules of the game'

Responding to questions and issues raised by participants to the discussion, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed:

- shared the need to be principled in the elections discourse by all parties as there is consistent switching of positions on holding elections, by flagging many excuses on why the environment is not conducive;
- emphasized that elections are among the critical foundations of democratization processes and that waiting for the perfect environment and prerequisites demanded to be in place would only forestall elections further;

- reiterated that as a democratic practice, it is important to undertake elections while in parallel working to address imperfections along the way;
- cautioned for the need to be data driven when referring to public impressions to avoid farfetched claims;
- reminded political parties that such continued dialogue platforms through which multiple voices are expressed are an essential part of the democratic process;
- highlighted the importance of fighting corruption within all political parties, including the ruling party;
- confirmed that pre-election problem solving mechanisms have been discussed, planned upon and will be rolled out by the government to enable a conducive environment for all competing parties;
- encouraged the formation of a committee to be chaired by NEBE and comprising key political party representatives with the task of flagging to the government any problems party's encounter for remedial action;
- confirmed the development of an election code of conduct by Prosperity Party, in addition to that of NEBE, which the ruling party will be governed by. The purpose of Prosperity Party's own code of conduct is to ensure that all its members enable free and fair elections, as a commitment to laying the foundation and templates for democratic elections in Ethiopia;
- affirmed the Federal Government's commitment to rebuilding the Tigray Region, serving its people and providing for essential needs, despite the current infrastructure damage caused by TPLF and long-term neglect of the people;
- cautioned against an emerging narrative that the people of the Amhara region and Tigray region are conflictual, which denies the close relations between the people of both regions;
- acknowledged that there are long standing land contestations which can only be addressed through a legal process that puts into consideration public consultations of both region's people and findings of the Administrative Boundaries and Identity Issues Commission which is tasked with studying such contestations;
- called upon all to work together and become guardians of peace, understanding that effecting change through belligerence does not work;
- reiterated the efforts of the Federal government to make the 2021 elections free and fair

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