

SOME ASPECTS OF A PROPOSAL FOR A PLAN FOR PEACE IN ETHIOPIA

I) Stages: 4 stages have been identified

Stage 1) In the near future, on 11, 12 and 13 March, a preparatory meeting of accredited representatives of various Ethiopian political organizations will be held in a non-governmental context but with the tacit support or clear interest of Western governments, to draw up a call for a "conference for national reconciliation and the drafting of a plan for peace and reconciliation".

About twenty people, working for 3 days will determine:

- major obstacles on the path to peace and reconciliation
- the terms of the call for a dialogue and reconciliation
- the topics to be treated during the conference.

We have reason to think that very diverse political parties would currently be open to this kind of proposal.

Stage 2) The setting-up phase (3 to 6 months) would be devoted to:

- defining the concrete procedures for preparing the reconciliation conference;
- enabling the various parties and groups to prepare their "Proposals for a durable peace in Ethiopia" for the conference.
- bringing together elements which can serve as concrete references on the various themes retained for the reconciliation conference on the basis of the historical experience of other countries, ("The paths to peace" which summarizes the proceedings of the Paris peace conference, constitutes an initial contribution in this direction).

Stage 3) A national reconciliation conference

More or less one thousand people who represent the various active forces in Ethiopian society would meet in Ethiopia itself with the diplomatic and material support of Western governments. The conference may last several weeks. The objective would be to propose a process for constructing peace in Ethiopia based on the grounds defined in the preparatory conference.

Stage 4) The implementation of the process of constructing peace with international support.

II) What may be entailed in the peace process

The themes to be discussed at the preparatory conference and subsequently at the national reconciliation conference could be of three types: the minimum political conditions to be met; the symbolic and material acts to reconstitute trust and to reconstruct the country; procedures for international aid.

1) Minimum political conditions

Swaying from one direction to the other, the balance between regions and ethnic groups has not been respected and the resolution of conflicts by violence has been common. Prerequisites must therefore be met. They could include: an agreement on the mechanisms for solving conflicts, for example a "council of elders" consisting of Ethiopians over a certain age; a "charter of national reconciliation" defining a few simple principles of respect of human rights, respect of religious and ethnic differences and free development of the civil society and the means of controlling the respect of the charter; respect of the principles of balance between national cohesion and local autonomy; the principles of autonomy for minorities.

2. Restoring trust and reconstructing the country

The acts to be accomplished are both material and symbolic. They include the following:

- Rehabilitation and reconversion of veterans, support for all victims of war, solution in a spirit of reconciliation of the problem caused by the countless "victims of peace" deprived of their livelihood and their dignity because they belonged to the "losing side".
- Reconstruction of an apolitical administration and national army respectful of the constitution and trained to manage a democratic country.
- A long term strategy of "education for peace". In a country as durably affected by a culture of violence, working with young people is essential. Multi-ethnic youth camps, national service mobilizing them for reconstruction work, training in non-violent management of conflicts can be aspects of this.
- Creating conditions for the reconstruction of rural and agricultural society seriously destabilized by the policy of "villagization" and insecurity. This effort can include recycling of technical professionals, providing training for the Ethiopians in NGOs in the field of development, and setting up the basic infrastructure of agricultural organization (transportation, loans, seed, representative organizations ...).
- getting the economy going again by emphasizing micro-initiatives which could reconstitute the local economic fiber (reconstituting economic circuits, labor-intensive public works project, credit for villages ...).
- triggering factors, symbols and training for national cohesion.

3. Material, moral and financial support from the international community

The support required of the international community concerns various aspects of the reconciliation and peace construction process.

- moral and material support for holding the national reconciliation conference.
- support of the reconstruction of an administration and armed forces respectful of individual and minority rights.
- supervision of the democratization process by international observers.
- contribution of experience and funds for the various aspects of the reconstruction and development plan.

Given the amplitude of the challenge, the support of the international community for the process of constructing peace in Ethiopia could be an opportunity to consolidate experience gained over the years and whose lessons of success and failure have been insufficiently exploited.