SUCCESSFUL HORN AFRICAN AMERICANS FOR PEACE
(HAAP) 1ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN MINNESOTA

By Wolday Gebremichael

Saint Paul, MN (April 16, 2008)—HAAP launched its first Human Rights Conference which was held on April 13, 2008 at RiverCenter, situated in the City of Saint Paul, Minnesota, USA in which thousands of attendees had participated comprised of Gambellans, Eritreans, Ogadenis, Somalis, Ethiopians, Oromos, Americans, Africans and many more. Some of the key note speakers include elected officials such as Congresswoman Betty McCollum, Senator Amy Klobuchar, Chris Coleman Mayor of the City of Saint Paul, and Mrs. Robin Philips the Executive Director of the Minnesota Human Right Advocates delivered speeches welcoming and endorsing HAAPs first annual Peace conference. Furthermore, HAAPs Community Leadership and steering committees delivered message pinpointing the causes of the instabilities, human right abuses, genocide, ethnic cleansing and the chaos perpetrated by the TPLF Minority Government of Ethiopia.

The first speaker was Congresswoman Betty McCollum who welcomed and congratulated the attendees of the peace conference and further underscored that the Horn of Africa has become one of the most troubled geopolitical zones of the world—essentially due to the expansionistic and dictatorial behavior of the Ethiopian Prime Minister, Mr. Meles Zenawi. Furthermore, she condemned the Ethiopian Prime Minister for the extrajudicial killing of 193 innocent Ethiopians simply for peacefully demonstrating of the daylight stealing of votes of the 2005 Ethiopian election. Moreover, the Congresswoman criticized the Bush Administration for supporting the invasion of Somalia by arming the Ethiopian government and subsequently for destabilizing Somalia, for the killing of tens of thousands, and for the displacement of millions of Somalians. In addition, she exposed the catastrophe of earth scorch of hundreds of Ogadenian villages, the rape, and killings, and displacements of thousands of Ogadenis.

She also touched basis on the failed US foreign policy in the Horn of Africa for not having a balanced diplomatic relations with the countries of the Horn of Africa and for not playing a constructive role in resolving the border dispute between Eritrea and Ethiopia. Moreover, she also stated that the diplomatic relations between the governments of the US and Eritrea is at its low time ever. In her final message the congresswoman said that the Ethiopian government uses hanger as a political weapon and the Bush Administration abused the US power negatively by empowering Prime Meles Zenawi to use US helicopter gunships and tanks to kill innocents civilians and therefore to destabilize Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and the Horn of Africa at large.
Congresswoman Betty McCollum concluded her message wishing HAAP success and expressed her hope that the upcoming US president who will be elected in November of 2008 to employ a balanced and fair US foreign policy in Africa in general and in the Horn of Africa in particular so that peace may flourish.

Next, Mr. Amano Dube, president of the Oromo community of Minnesota addressed the crowd representing HAAP and highlighted the philosophy of HAAP reflecting the aspiration of the people of the Horn of Africa such as: stability, peace, coexistence, human dignity, harmony, unity in diversity, universal sisterhood/brotherhood, and rule of law. Further he stated that HAAP will work relentlessly to implant the above stated values.

Next a video conference sent by Amy Klobuchar a US Senator was delivered. Senator Klobuchar wished HAAP all the best and promised to work with them to empower human dignity, peace, reconciliation, to foster and enhance the colorful cultural and religious diversity of Horn African Americans that have originated from the Horn of Africa.

Robin Philips, Executive Director and Lawyer-representing the Minnesota Human Rights Advocate (MHRA)—a nonprofit and legal advising foundation delivered a brief solidarity message wishing HAAP good luck and promising to work with and to cooperate to enhance legal matters, human dignity, immigration issues, and the like.

Mayor Christopher B. Coleman Mayor of the City of Saint Paul sent a solidarity message wishing HAAP good luck in its endeavors and expressed his admiration for the noble mission it initiated to “establishing peace and stabilization in the Horn of Africa”. Furthermore, he stated that, “…At a time when unrest and violence are ongoing, your work to advocate and discuss current issues is essential to the creation of more peaceful environment”. In conclusion, Mayor Coleman said, “…I support your efforts to take part in this historic Peace Conference”.

Following to the messages of the elected officials and foundations, HAAPs Community Leadership of Minnesota conveyed solidarity messages reflecting their respective communities relative to the peace conference. As shown bellow, from left to right namely Mr. Alemayehu Baisa for Oromia, Dr. Bereket Feday for Eritrea, Mr. Akwaye Cham for Gambella, Mr. Ibrahim for Ogaden, and Mr.
Mohamed Ali for Somalia spoke briefly endorsing the 1st Horn African Americans for Peace (HAAP) Annual Conference held in the city of Saint Paul.

Subsequently to the solidarity messages of HAAPs Community Leadership, six (6) speakers namely from Gambella, Eritrea, Oromia, Ogaden, Somalia and Ethiopia addressed thousands of crowded gathered that had attended the conference.

As depicted on this picture, the first speaker was Mrs. Sophia Tsarina who exposed Prime Meles Zenawi as a criminal thug who is responsible for deporting over 80,000 Ethiopians of an Eritrean origin simply, because he disliked the color of their eyes. She farther underlined that during the Ethiopian war of aggression against Eritrea, prime Meles intentionally targeted non military sites to destroy Eritrea’s infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, telecommunications, hotels, water reservoirs and innocent civilians—in which later EEBC found him guilty and confirmed that the TPLF government intentionally caused such deplorable destruction. Sophia further quoted numerous human rights abuses and genocide committed by the Minority TPLF government of Ethiopia geared to destabilizing Ethiopia and the whole Horn of Africa at large including Somalia and Eritrea. Finally, she expressed her pleasure seeing the “unity on diversity” of the people of the Horn of Africa and for coming together to work and to empower themselves and to expose the terroristic Wayne regime that is causing pain and agony in the Horn of Africa.

Next Professor Asafa Jalata spoke reflecting the injustices committed against the Oromo people by successive Ethiopian regimes. Asafa underlined that successive Ethiopian wars of aggression had decimated over 5 million Oromo people and the sad pattern of decimating the peaceful people of
Oromia continues by the current TPLF regime intended to wipe them out from the face of the earth. In closing, Professor Asafa, challenged HAAP to maximize its efforts and to continue fighting for human rights, peace, justice, for the rule of law and to expose the injustices perpetrated on the people of the Horn of Africa by the TPLF Minority Government of Ethiopia.

Next Dr. Hannad Malingur--spoke eloquently representing the people of Ogaden who motivated thousands of people to stand up and give him hands of applaud. Dr. Hannad said, “even if others give up, the Ogaden people will never give up and since freedom is not free, ONLF will fight to until it regains human dignity, freedom, respect, the rule of law, and justice”. In conclusion, Hannad showed horrifying PowerPoint slides whereby the Wayne army burning the villages and Towns of Ogaden, killing innocent civilians including babies, very old men and women, animals, grass, and even trees. The scenery was very sad that demonstrates the Wayne acts of fascism, apartheid, terrorism, and racism.

The next speaker was Professor Ojulu Tokon representing the plight of the people of Gambella. Professor Ojulu stated that in November 2003, the TPLF Minority Government of the current Ethiopian regime massacred over 3000 Gambellans that include babies, very old men and women, mothers, fathers, and innocent civilians for no reason. According to Professor Tokon, subsequent to the 3000 massacre innocent civilians, tens of thousands of Gambellans left their homes and went to neighboring countries such as the Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, and some ended up to Europe, Australia and North America. He further stated over 2000 Gambellans ended up coming to the State of Minnesota. Professor Ojulu Tokon fought alongside of the Gambellan Peoples Liberation Movement (GPLM), and in 1991 he joined the EPRDF and had participated in the Eritrean referendum representing the Ethiopian government. Ojulu was elected to serve at the Ethiopian Parliament and later was appointed to write the infamous Ethiopian constitution that included article 39 which allows nations and nationalities to declare their own sovereignty using such article in which it happened to be a time bomb and may eventually scramble Ethiopia similar to the situation of the scrambling of the former Soviet Union.

The following speaker was another Ethiopian former government official named, Judge Birhanemeskel A. Segni who while in Ethiopia worked as a lawyer, as a Judge and finally as an attorney consulting the Ethiopian Mission at the UN in New York. Birhanemeskel exposed the Weyane regime equating it with the apartheid of South Africa in which he mentioned some Wayne cadres used apartheid manual books written and used by the Africana’s that had divide and ruled Black South Africans during the apartheid era and this compelled Birhanemeskel to leave the racist Wayne regime. In closing, Birhanemeskel advised HAAP to live up to its mission and continue struggling until Wayne is removed from office. He further admonished HAAP to be inclusive regardless ethnicity, religion, gender, creed and national background in the fight against the Wayne terrorism that is sweeping the Horn of Africa.
The last speaker was Mr. Mohamed Hassan—a Somali about the state of affairs of Somalia and stated that Somalia has become the killing field of innocent Somalis by the Wayne Army ever since it invaded Somalia in December of 2006. Mohamed is a historian by profession and therefore he easily put the pieces of the facts on the killing ground so eloquently, mobilized the audience, and challenged them to stand united and fight the Wayne in unison. Despite of the instability and killing that is taking place in Somalia, the tone of Mohamed was very reconciliatory and echoed hope that someday the people of the Horn will once again live in peace, harmony and coexistence treating each other as brothers and sisters.

Lastly, after 6 hours of deliberations, the steering committee comprised of Gambella, Ogaden, Eritrea, Oromia, Somalia and Ethiopia stood up together and thanked the speakers as well as the audience for coming to the historic conferee for peace and reconciliation.

Finally, the closing remarks, pieces of advice and suggestions given by the speakers, community leaders, keynote speakers, elected officials and steering committees were compiled and hence passed as a resolution stated as follows:

**RESOLUTION:**
The Horn African Americans Community Leadership alongside the speakers endorsed the steering committee to continue its efforts to implementing the following objectives:

- HAAP will work relentlessly to expose human right abuses and genocide committed by the TPLF government of Ethiopia perpetrated throughout the Horn of Africa
- HAAP will sponsor more workshops, symposiums, and conferences to empowering human rights, reconciliation, coexistence, respect of diversity and enhance unity in diversity
- HAAP holds Wayne responsible for the crime it committed such as rape, lynching, mass massacre, mass arrest, detention, extrajudicial killing, invasion of sovereign nations, instability of the whole Horn of Africa, disruption of democratic process and election, and hence will work to bring it to a court of law
- HAAP Calls the upcoming New US president, whoever might be regardless whether she or he to treat sovereign countries of the Horn of Africa equally with dignity and respect unlike the biased Bush Administration foreign policy that favors punishing some at the expense of others which is not wise
- In the final analysis, HAAP declared that it will maximize its efforts and will work with any peace loving entities whether be it foundations, humanitarian organizations, individuals, ethnic groups and religious diversity regardless of their national background and creed so long as they respect human dignity, the rule of law, the universal declaration of human rights and the policy of non interference in the internal affairs of others.
In closing, the event was one of a kind in which it attracted thousands of people who had participated from Eritrea, Gambella, Ogaden, Somalia, Ethiopia, the US, representatives from numerous African countries and many more. Media outlets such as Fox News, KFAI, and other print media outlets have covered it and interviewed HAAPs representatives. In addition, Twin Cities Horn African American Community Media outlets such as the Somali Radio & Cable TV, Eritrean Community Cable TV & Radio, Oromo Radio & Cable TV, etc covered the event extensively.

Following is a sample of pictures that depicts the colorfulness of the vent.