The 30th Regular Council Meeting of the Ethiopian Teachers Association (ETA) has been held in Shalom International Hotel, Nekemte town, West Wollega Zone of Oromia National Regional State for three consecutive days from October 9 to 12, 2017.

In the course of its three days session, the Council had conducted extensive deliberation on social and economic issues of teachers including matters associated with education and national development. Pursuant to the duties and responsibilities vested in the Articles of Association of ETA, the Council deliberated on annual performance report of the head office for 2016/17 FY, internal and external audit reports, reports submitted from Teachers’ Associations of Regions and City Administrations as per the agenda items set for deliberation including quality education, teachers’ training, disruptive factors in school areas (security issues), cheating in examinations, implementation of education quality assurance programs, the role of ETA, teachers’ rights and benefits, strengthening structure of teachers’ associations in universities, technical and vocational education and training institutions, agricultural colleges and education offices and private education institutions, and formation of teachers’ associations where they are not existent; enforcement of Labor Proclamation; construction of buildings of the Association at all tiers; establishment of female leadership caucus of Ethiopian Teachers’ Association and deliberated on other identified issues raised from Council members, which needed decision. Moreover, the Council deliberated on matters associated with Executive Committee and Audit Committee Operational and budget plans for 2017/18 FY.

The council has adopted the following three key resolutions selected to publicize to members and the wider stakeholders.

1. Conflicts being observed in different areas of the country

It is to be recalled that border-like conflicts which occurred in different areas of the country in the
past two /three years, due to various underlying motives, have caused significant damages to human life and property estimated at millions of birr. Conflicts which broke out in Amhara and Tigray adjacent areas, in Southern parts of the country and recently on border lines of Oromia and Ethiopia Somali regions, for instance, inflicted substantial damage. Damages have been caused to students and teachers in these areas who need to be free from such disruptive activities. As these violations would impact on Constitutional rights of citizens to free movement and work and generate asset, all pertinent bodies need to attach due attention and provide appropriate response to this situation so that perpetrators of such unlawful act would be brought before justice; and the Council dwelt on this issue at depth. It was also noted that our members at all tires should denounce such act, and contribute towards rehabilitation of fellow compatriots affected by such act of violence. It was also determined that structures of our Association at all tiers try to make constructive efforts in the process of response; and to this effect in addition to contribution of birr 100,000.00 ETB (one hundred thousand birr) for schools’ feeding program budget of the last year, make contribution of birr 70,000.00 (seventy thousand birr) in support of students and other groups of society evicted by the recent violence which occurred in Oromia and birr 30,000.00 ETB (one hundred thousand birr) for those affected in Somali regional state, which means total amount of birr 100,000.00 ETB (one hundred thousand birr in support of fellow compatriots.

2. Structure of ETA and Bargaining power

Since its establishment in 1949, Ethiopian Teachers Association has been working in collaboration with Ministry of Education to protect the rights and benefits of teachers so as to provide quality education to citizens. In the process, leaderships of the Association have been performing several gratifying activities owing to their credibility with the Ministry of Education. However, it was observed that some of our benefits were decreased by Ministry of Civil Service from time to time despite consultations and mutual understanding between Ethiopian Teachers Association and Ministry of Education submitted to Ministry of Civil Service. For instance, while the ceiling grade tier of civil service employees was nine, the ceiling grade tier of teachers remained limited to 6 although teachers are part of civil service employees; however, despite agreement reached with Ministry of Education in 2011, which provided increment of career ladder of teachers up to 9, like any other civil service employees, only one grade increment was granted by the then Ministry of Civil Service in 2010. We lodged out grievance to H.E. Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, upon obtaining endorsement from the then Minister of Education H.E. Mr. Shiferaw Shigute, which led to granting of increment of teachers’ career ladder to nine five years later in July 2016. It is to be recalled that our Association did not participate in the process of consultation of public servants’ salary scale adjustment (pay increment) of January 2017. Thus, from the experience of other countries, it was learned that it is essential to have a body which can submit the agreement reached with the Association directly to Cabinet (Executive Organ).
In this respect, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Nigeria, South Africa could be cited as examples from Africa. In these countries, there is a government institution called “Teachers’ Service Commission” which is designated with the powers to engage in bargaining with Teachers’ Association and submit outcomes of the bargaining to cabinet. Thus, the ETA Council decided to submit request to government to establish similar institution that has familiar knowledge of the nature of teaching profession, and is authorized to approve recruitment of teachers, determine dismissal, setting standard, etc and carry out any other duties of Civil Service office, and ensure participation of our Association in the process of bargaining in accordance with Labor Proclamation.

3. Construction of Building

As regards the ongoing building construction works of the Association at all tiers, it is to be recalled that ETA Congress has decided in 2013 held in Addis Ababa City that member teachers shall contribute a one month salary. Again the Congress held in Amhara region in November 2016 re-discussed on the implementation of its previous decision and re-decided that the leadership at all levels should begin payment first and teacher members shall continue on as per the decision of the Congress of which 40% of the contributions shall be spent on construction at the headquarters and the remaining 60% shall be utilized for construction of buildings in regions. In this respect, the progress has been evaluated in the course of this session. Accordingly, it was noted that in the course of its deliberations General Assembly of ETA held in November 2016 recalled the need for all leadership bodies of the association to commence collection of members’ contribution starting from July 2017 prior to commencement of large scale consultation with teachers. In this respect, elected leadership bodies of Teachers’ Associations in Oromia, Amhara, Southern NNP Regional states and Addis Ababa City Administration which have already opened account for the purpose of collection of contributions for use in building construction have deposited collections of contributions and submitted copies of deposit slips to four presidents of the regional teachers associations in front of the Council. Thus, it was decided that experience from this Council should be take away to respective Councils and then Executive committee of regions at all tiers on the basis of this experience shall perform the same. It was also noted that the effort to persuade members of ETA needs to continue and commence the payment starting from July 2018.

In the end Council called for unity among teachers and requested solidarity from stakeholders for the successful implementation of the resolutions.