

Ethiopia Refuses to Abdicate IGAD Chairmanship

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The principle of “**Rotation and Equitable Representation**” is a common feature in all contemporary regional, continental and international organizations. It ascertains that all member states - regardless of wealth, size, or importance - are equal partners entitled to equal responsibility and participation in the affairs of the organization.

However, when we examine the performance of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), this cardinal principle has been violated by Ethiopia for the last five years.

Ethiopia assumed the Chairmanship of IGAD for a one-year term at the 12th Ordinary Summit of the Organization held in Addis Ababa, on 14th of June 2008. Yet in 2013, Ethiopia is still refusing to transfer the Chairmanship to another country.

The Agreement Establishing IGAD clearly stipulates that the Assembly of Heads of State and Government (the ‘Summit’ in short), has to meet at least once a year in a Regular Session. The election of a country to chair the Organization is a standing item on the agenda of the Ordinary Sessions. Hence, the Chairmanship of IGAD has to rotate annually among the eight Member States (i.e. Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda). Member States have also the right to request the holding of Extraordinary Sessions in between the Regular ones.

Ethiopia, invoking all types of excuses, has been deliberately preventing the IGAD Heads of State from holding their annual Ordinary Summit. But, whenever it has an agenda item that serves its political and diplomatic agenda, Ethiopia has never shied away from calling Extraordinary Summits, which most of the time took place on the sidelines of the AU Summits.

In order to understand and compare how the **Principle of Rotation** is practiced and implemented by AU and other RECs and is abused by Ethiopia, see the table below.

YEAR	AFRICAN UNION	SADC	COMESA	EAC	IGAD
2008	Tanzania	South Africa	Kenya	Rwanda	Ethiopia
2009	Libya	D.R. Congo	Zimbabwe	Tanzania	Ethiopia
2010	Malawi	Namibia	Swaziland	Burundi	Ethiopia
2011	Equatorial Guinea	Angola	Malawi	Kenya	Ethiopia
2012	Benin	Mozambique	Uganda	Uganda	Ethiopia
2013	Ethiopia	Mozambique*	Uganda*	Uganda*	Ethiopia

* The new Chairs of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the East African Community (EAC) will be elected in the Summits of the respective organizations to be held in the coming months of this year.

If the “**Principle of Rotation and Equitable Representation**” had been respected, given the fact that there are eight IGAD Member States, Ethiopia would have assumed the Chairmanship again in 2016. But that is not the case. It is, therefore, appropriate for any observer to see IGAD as the ‘**Trojan Horse of Ethiopia,**’ and its Chairmanship, ‘**Chair for life**’.

This begs the question: When a Member State is weeded to the Chairmanship and refuses to let go, should the other seven Member States remain mere spectators? Or have they become so disillusioned with the Organization to care about who is at the helm?

Whatever the answer is, if the status-quo remains unchanged it is only fitting for the Organization to change its name one more time: from IGAD to **EGAD (Ethiopian Government Authority on Development)**.

Source: <http://www.tesfanews.net/ethiopia-refuses-to-abdicate-igad-chairmanship/>