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Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society
Organizations for Elections

Monitoring Report:

Nomination, selection, and
appointment process of the new
members of the National Election
Board of Ethiopia.

August 2025

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Introduction

The Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections (CECOE) was established in 2019 with the aim of augmenting and coordinating the role of Ethiopian CSOs in election observation – monitoring, voter education and preventing post-electoral conflicts. Following its establishment, the CECOE opened a new chapter in the country's CSO sector by systematically observing the Sidama referendum which took place in the same year of the coalition's establishment. Building upon this experience, during the 6th Ethiopian general elections the coalition had implemented several seminal projects that tectonically shifted the role of Ethiopian CSOs in electoral processes.

During the Sixth National and Regional Elections of Ethiopia, CECOE recruited and deployed over 3,500 long-term and short-term observers to nine regional states and two city administrations which participated in the June and September 2021 elections as well as the South West Ethiopia referendum for a status of statehood. Furthermore, the Coalition implemented a media monitoring initiative which monitored election related information on seven selected mass media outlets, 40 political party social media accounts and 40 CSO organisations. In addition, the coalition also reached over 25 million online users and several million citizens using mainstream media outlets in its voter information and education program. CECOE also coordinated the financing of voter education campaigns implemented by its members, securing over ETB 1,200,000.00 for VE activities in different regions.

CECOE has also successfully observed the referendum that was held in the six zones and five special woredas of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) in February 2023. In a bid to systematically observe this referendum, the CECOE recruited, trained, and deployed 434 stationary and 76 mobile observers. Based on its election and referendum observation findings and studies, CECOE engaged stakeholders in the public and CSO sectors in several electoral reform and advocacy activities. To that end, the Coalition has organised several consultation forums, validation workshops, published policy briefs and commentaries, and produced and aired tv advertisements. Currently, CECOE is working on a wide array of short-term and long-term programs related to elections, good governance, and peacebuilding. One of the projects that comes at the forefront in this regard is the “Women Political Participation” project which CECOE co-implemented with Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) with a fund secured from the European Union.

Following the resignation of Her Excellency Birtukan Mideksa, former Chairperson of the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), Her Excellency Melatwork Hailu was appointed as Chairperson. Under her leadership, the NEBE has organized elections to fill the seats of constituencies where elections had not been conducted during the Sixth General Elections in 2021. It is to be recalled that the Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections (CECOE) published a report in 2023 assessing the nomination, selection, and appointment process for the NEBE Chairperson and offered recommendations to improve future appointments. Likewise, CECOE has recently assessed the nomination, selection, and appointment process for a new Vice Chairperson and two board members. This report presents an analysis of these recent appointments within the existing legal framework, based on publicly available media reports and official press releases from the nomination committee.

Background

The NEBE was reestablished under Proclamation 1133/2019 as part of the democratic reform agenda that commenced since 2018. Prior to the adoption of the proclamation by the House of Peoples' Representatives (HoPR) in November 2018, Birtukan Mideksa, a former judge and opposition figure, was appointed Chairperson of the NEBE. Her appointment was widely regarded as a significant step toward restoring credibility and independence to Ethiopia's electoral institution.

A new Board was established as per the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia Establishment Proclamation No.1133/2019. The Board comprised Deputy Chairperson Wubshet Ayele and board members Bizuwork Ketete, Abera Degefa (PhD), and Getahun Kassa (PhD). Subsequently, Getahun Kassa (PhD) resigned from his position and was succeeded by Fikre Tamerat.

Since 2019, the NEBE has overseen major electoral processes, including the 2019 Sidama referendum, the June and September 2021 general elections, the South West and South Ethiopia referendums, the Wolaita referendum rerun, as well as the outstanding elections and re-elections of the Sixth General Elections held in 2024 in the Benishangul-Gumuz, Afar, Somali, and Central Ethiopia regions. These elections and referendums were carried out amidst security and logistical challenges.

In 2023, Birtukan Mideksa resigned from her position as Chairperson of the NEBE.¹ She was succeeded by Her Excellency Melatwork Hailu, the current Chairperson of the NEBE. In accordance with Article 12 of Proclamation No. 1133/2019, Board members serve a six-year term, with the possibility of a single renewal, contingent upon the recommendation of the Prime Minister and approval by the HoPR. The initial term of the Deputy Chairperson and two board members ended in June 2025.²

¹Africa-Press (2023) 'News Update: Ethiopia Election Board Chairperson Resigns'; Africa-Press- Ethiopia, 26 June. Available at: <https://www.africa-press.net/ethiopia/all-news/news-update-ethiopia-election-board-chairperson-resigns> (Accessed: 8 August 2025).

²National Electoral Board of Ethiopia Establishment Proclamation No. 1133/2019, Article 12.

Legal Background

The FDRE Constitution stipulates that members of the Board shall be appointed by the House of Peoples' Representatives upon the recommendation of the Prime Minister, leaving the specifics of the nomination process to be determined by detailed laws.³ In line with this, the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia Establishment Proclamation No. 1133/2019, under Article 5, provides the necessary particulars regarding the appointment of board members. According to the proclamation, the Prime Minister establishes an independent committee composed of eight (8) members responsible for recruiting nominees for membership on the management board.⁴ The committee is composed of one representative each from the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences, the Ethiopian Confederation of Employees, the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce, and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. The remaining three members are selected from civil society organizations and respected elders, ensuring a balance of institutional and community representation. The law also sets out the necessary qualifications that members of the Nomination Committee must demonstrate, emphasizing neutrality and competence, and, where appropriate, requiring them to meet criteria applicable to Board members. Additionally, the proclamation requires the Nomination Committee to maintain proportional gender balance among its members.⁵

Per the proclamation, a person shall become a member of the management board only if he or she fulfills the following criteria:⁶

Is Ethiopian by birth and holds Ethiopian nationality;

Is not a member of any political party;

Has advanced professional qualifications in matters related to elections, particularly in law, political science, public administration, statistics, information technology, or other related fields;

Is of good ethics and character, and possesses strong leadership capacity that enables him or her to effectively carry out the assigned responsibilities.



³Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Article 102(2).

⁴National Electoral Board of Ethiopia Establishment Proclamation No. 1133/2019, Article 5 (1) (a-f).

⁵Ibid, Article 5(2)

⁶Ibid, Article 6(1)(a-e).

The process begins with accepting nominations from the public, political parties, and civil society organizations.⁷ However, the law does not specify the modalities for the submission of nominees or the time frame allotted for nomination. Based on the suggestions received, the committee shall select nominees who meet the legal criteria for membership on the management board through a transparent and competitive process.⁸ The selected nominees, upon securing their consent, shall be made public and submitted to the Prime Minister.⁹

In recruiting nominees, the number prepared by the committee must be twice the number of available positions on the board at the time of selection.¹⁰ After receiving the list from the committee, the Prime Minister shall consult with representatives of competing political parties regarding the proposed nominees.¹¹ The Prime Minister then submits the list of nominees, corresponding to the number of vacant positions on the board, to the House of Peoples' Representatives for appointment.¹² Where the position of chairperson or deputy chairperson is vacant, the Prime Minister is also mandated to propose nominees for those roles.¹³ The process is finalized when the nominees receive the approval of the majority in the House of Peoples' Representatives. However, the composition of the management board shall, to the extent possible, reflect ethnic and gender diversity.¹⁴

The term of office for members of the Management Board is six years.¹⁵ A member may leave office before the term expires, either by his/her consent or by a decision of the HoPR, based on the grounds listed under Article 12(3). Members may be reappointed for one additional term.¹⁶ The Prime Minister may directly recommend the reappointment of members to the HoPR within one month of the expiry of their term.¹⁷

⁷*Ibid*, Article 5(3).

⁸*Ibid*, Article 5(4).

⁹*Ibid*

¹⁰*Ibid*, Article 5 (5).

¹¹ *Ibid*, Article 5 (6).

¹²*Ibid*, Article 5 (7).

¹³*Ibid*, Article 5 (8).

¹⁴*Ibid*, Article 6 (2).

¹⁵*Ibid*, Article 12 (1).

¹⁶*Ibid*, Article 12(2).

¹⁷*Ibid*

Establishment of the Nomination Committee

On March 26, 2025, the Prime Minister established a nomination committee composed of eight members. The committee was composed of the following individuals:

Priest Tagay Tadele

Chairperson - representing the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia.

Teketel Yohannes

Member - representing the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences.

Kassahun Follo

Member - representing the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions.

Sebsib Abafira Abajobira

Member - Representing the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations

Rigibe Gebrehawariya

Member - representing the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission

Bayuh Bezabih

Member - representing civil societies

Yohannis Benti (Dr.)

Member - representing civil societies

Engidaye Eshete

Member - representing civil societies.

This committee has begun its work and announced an open call for nominations from citizens, political parties, and civil society organizations to ensure a transparent and participatory selection process. The nomination period commenced on April 9, 2025, and will conclude on April 29, 2025.¹⁸ To facilitate the submission of nominations, the committee has provided multiple channels, including email, WhatsApp, Telegram, postal mail, in-person submission, and a Google form. This multi-channel approach aims to accommodate a wide range of individuals and groups who wish to participate in the nomination process.

Nomination, Selection, and Appointment Processes for NEBE Board

On May 22, 2025, the Nomination Committee announced the completion of the nomination process.¹⁹ In its press statement, the nomination committee chairperson, Priest Tagay Tadele, disclosed the names of the final candidates to the public. The chairperson stated that the committee received more than 1,000 nominations. Furthermore, he mentioned that the committee conducted a three-level screening process of the nominations, focusing on candidates who satisfied the criteria set under the proclamation and complied with the nomination form requirements.

¹⁸ Facebook (2025) Post published on 8 April. Available at: <https://web.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1119292623571064&set=pcb.1119292713571055> (Accessed: 8 August 2025).

¹⁹ Fana BC, 6 አጠቃላይ ይፋ ተደርገዋል available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30eTUMYWW2M>

According to the Chair, during the first screening phase, the number of nominees was reduced to 168. This reduction was primarily due to redundancy in nominations. Subsequently, to select a qualified vice chairperson and two management board members, the committee applied different criteria, narrowing the list to 12 candidates for final screening. The chair announced that among the 12 candidates, 9 were interviewed. Moreover, the committee requested the submission of educational credentials and experience details of the candidates, which were submitted to the committee.

The Chairperson noted that the committee undertook considerable efforts to ensure that candidates enjoy public trust, possess a record of participation in elections, and demonstrate legitimacy. Particular attention was given to incorporating public interest into the nomination process. The Chairperson also announced that the committee believes the selected candidates meet the legal criteria, possess expertise and knowledge beneficial for conducting free, fair, and credible elections, and, if appointed as NEBE management board members, will work, lead, and coordinate independently and impartially. Finally, based on scores received, the committee unanimously approved the following individuals as final candidates, who were then submitted to the Prime Minister. The shortlisted candidates who were referred to the Prime Minister are:-

Tesfaye Neway

Federal First Instance Court Vice President and Spokesperson to the Federal Courts.

Daro Jemal

Her profile has not been specified.

Teklit Yimesil

Federal High Court Vice President

Firehiwot Girma

Executive Assistant to Commissioner, National Rehabilitation Commission

Nesim Ali

Judge Harari Region High Court

Yared Habtemariam (Phd)

Debre Berhan University School of Law

On June 12, 2025, the HoPR appointed the following nominees;

Tesfaye Neway

Vice Chairperson

Nesim Ali

Member

Teklit Yimesil

Member

Findings



Composition and Inclusion

The nomination committee organized by the Prime Minister to appoint the Vice Chairperson and two board members of the NEBE aligned with the legal requirements, as all representatives were drawn from institutions listed under Article 5 of the proclamation. Article 5(2) specifically mandates that committee members selected from these institutions should reflect proportional gender balance. However, in practice, this requirement was not fully met. Out of the eight members of the nomination and selection committee, only two were women, representing the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and a civil society organization. Consequently, the committee's composition did not adequately achieve gender proportionality. CECOE commends the two institutions for their efforts in ensuring women's representation. Given the technical nature of election administration, the professional composition of the Board is also crucial. Based on announcements from the Nomination Committee and media reports, the newly appointed Board members predominantly have legal backgrounds, particularly as judges. While a strong legal foundation is vital for effective election management, diversity in professional expertise especially in academia, public administration, and technology is equally important. Such professional diversity enables the Board to effectively oversee, coordinate, and implement complex electoral operations. On the other hand, the Board's composition, in addition to gender representation, reflects a commitment to ethnic diversity.



Public Participation and Accessibility

The committee announced an open call for public nominations and shared the available modalities within a designated time frame through media.²⁰ Methods provided for public submission included email, WhatsApp, Telegram, postal mail, in-person submission, and a Google Form. The addition of the Google Form, which was not available in previous nomination processes, represents a positive step toward improving accessibility and expanding participation. Civil Society engagement in the nomination process has also been observed. Organizations such as TIMRAN and AWIB advocated for the nomination and support of women candidates.²¹ Similarly, the Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations Council (ECSOC) issued calls encouraging civil society organizations to participate in the nomination process by putting forward qualified candidates.

²⁰ Fana BC, የብሔራዊ ምርጫ ቦርድ ሥራ አመራር ቦርድ መልማዊ ኮሚቴ ሥራውን ጀመረ <https://www.fanamc.com/archives/289094>

²¹ The calls for nomination were issued digitally via the organizations' websites: TIMRAN, "Call for Nominations to the Management Board of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia," April 9, 2025, <https://timran.net/2025/04/09/call-for-nominations-to-the-management-board-of-the-national-electoral-board-of-ethiopia>; and AWIB, "Call for Nomination," accessed August 7, 2025, <https://awibethiopia.org/announcements/call-for-nomination>.



Transparency

Transparency is a fundamental principle that underpins the integrity, fairness, and accountability of the nomination process. In this context, transparency refers to the openness, accessibility, and clarity of both information and decision-making. Following its formation and public announcement, the nomination committee launched an open call for nominations from citizens, political parties, and civil society organizations. The nomination period ran from April 9 to April 29, 2025. On May 22, 2025, the NEBE Nomination Committee Chairperson, Kesis Tagay Tadele, publicly announced that the committee had finalized its selection process and submitted the final list of candidates to the Prime Minister.²² The establishment of the committee, the nomination period, the methods of nomination, and the public announcement of shortlisted candidates are all commendable steps aligned with transparency. However, the screening and shortlisting processes were not clearly explained. Although the committee received over 1,000 nominations, it was revealed that the initial shortlisting stage reduced the pool to 168 candidates by removing duplicate submissions. Beyond eliminating duplicates, the criteria and procedures used to further evaluate and narrow down the candidates were not disclosed.



Consultation with Political Parties

According to the proclamation, after receiving the list of nominees, the Prime Minister is required to consult with representatives of competing political parties. This step is not merely procedural; its purpose is to build broad political consensus, enhance the legitimacy of the appointees in the eyes of all electoral contestants, and foster trust in the NEBE's impartiality. In an interview held with Sheger Radio Station, the President of the Ethiopian Political Parties Joint Council (EPPJC) confirmed the council's receipt of a letter requesting nominations. Additionally, the President confirmed that a representative of the Prime Minister held consultations with political parties.²³

²² Fana BC, 6 እጩዎች ይፋ ተደርገዋል available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30eTUMYWW2M>

²³ Sheger FM 1021፣ አዲስ ስለተሾሙት የቦርድ አባላት ምርጫ የኢትዮጵያ የፖለቲካ ፓርቲዎች የጋራ ምክር ቤት ምን ይላል? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B-uBZcn5IOQ>

Conclusions

The recent nomination process for the appointment of the Vice Chairperson and two board members of NEBE demonstrated several positive steps toward enhanced transparency and public engagement. Notable improvements included the use of multiple submission channels, which broadened access and participation. Considerations for ethnic and religious diversity mark an important step in ensuring inclusivity. Furthermore, the consultation with the EPPJC and political parties is also consistent with the legal requirement set by Proclamation 1133/2019. Having said that, several areas call for improvement. The Board's professional composition remains limited, with a predominance of former judges, which limits the necessary professional diversity required to effectively oversee complex electoral processes. Additionally, the lack of adequate information on the criteria used to shortlist nominated candidates highlights the need for clearer, more open procedures.

Recommendations:

While the efforts to appoint a vice chairperson and board members in accordance with the legal framework are commendable, CECOE puts forward the following recommendations to address identified gaps:

Nomination Committee

Although the Committee publicly announced the commencement of the nomination process and the available submission channels, it would have been more effective if the announcement had also

been made in multiple local languages. The Nomination Committee could enhance transparency by publishing the list of all valid nominees and disclosing the gender and diversity data collected during the process.

Political Parties

Political parties should play an active role in the nomination process to help ensure that qualified candidates, who enjoy public trust, are selected.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

Although some civil society organizations (CSOs) made efforts to nominate candidates, much more is expected of them in actively engaging in the processes both by mobilizing to put forward nominees and by encouraging broader public participation in the nomination process.



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