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Warmest greetings to fellow Ethiopians for a Happy New Year.

We in the SMNE want to extend our warmest greetings to our fellow Ethiopians for a Happy New Year. The “better year” for which we are hoping, will not be possible without our commitment to making changes. In fact, without such changes, Ethiopia faces the possibility of implosion and disintegration. We must face the fact that right now, Ethiopia is dying—literally, as a people, and figuratively, as a nation. If we do not face the desperate urgency of our crisis, we will be so disconnected from reality that we will be unwilling or unmotivated to take action to save the life of this people and nation!

The emphasis must be on our own personal responsibility and personal accountability responding with humanity towards others, as this is where the change must start! This is change that is driven by a change of thinking that comes from leaving behind those attitudes, beliefs, prejudices and ideas that have contributed to the virus that dehumanizes our society that has infected Ethiopia—ethnic hatred, tribal favoritism, selfish ambition, lack of compassion, numbed consciences, the devaluation and abuse of other human beings, violence, pride, deceit, corruption, stirring up division, unhealthy competition, apathy, the expectation of a “hand-out” to take care of one’s own problem or the problems of others rather than taking the initiative and the worship of leaders and demonization of those with whom we disagree.

We have developed a culture of victims and perpetrators that continues to be recycled into new victims and perpetrators, regardless of who is in power—on the small scale—in our homes, communities, businesses and on the streets of our cities, and also on the national scale between those in power and those who suffer the consequences from the actions of those in power.

If we stubbornly refuse to admit the truth and to make the necessary changes, we will only add to our misery; however, if we use our individual and collective failure(s) to push us to become more compassionate and healthy individuals and thereby, a more compassionate and healthy society that can work together, we have much reason to have hope for our future and for the future of our children. The more of us that do this, the greater the impact we will collectively have on our society. This cannot happen unless Ethiopians work together in solidarity based on shared principles of freedom, justice, equality, human rights and civility as its foundation and compassion as the thread that connects all of these principles together within our society.

The conditions under which the vast majority live are so difficult that many Ethiopians must concentrate all their energy on merely surviving. Pervasive hunger, malnutrition and death—of not only children, but also adults in the rural areas as well as the cities—from starvation is worsened by rising prices, drought and the overall mismanagement by the government in genuinely dealing with this crisis.

Societies without compassion for others are societies that will be unstable, conflict ridden and devoid of the joy, peace and deeper happiness that bring meaning to life and nation. What makes people human is emotion. When you don’t have emotion, you do not feel or respond to the pain or suffering of others. A society that loses its compassion towards others loses its humanity and everyone suffers as a result. It becomes the survival of the fittest where you trust no one and only care about those closest to you. You will play favorites with these few while at the same time, cover for them and not hold them accountable because you cannot trust “outsiders.”

As each of you who were able, celebrated the New Year at home, eating with your family or going out for supper or as you bought gifts for someone special, remember those who do not have anything in Ethiopia.

Remember the prominent Ethiopian opposition politicians like Bekele Gerba and Olbana Lelisa and all other political prisoners, human dignity warriors, human rights activist and the unsung heroes and heroines who made untold sacrifices in the struggle, for freedom, justice, peace, equality and democracy to our beautiful people and country.

Remember the homeless, dirty Ethiopian child with no clothes, walking barefoot and sleeping with no blanket in the streets. Remember the young girls who are selling their bodies in Addis Ababa and towns in our country in order to buy food. Remember the other beggars on the streets, all with their own stories and emotions. Each one of them is precious in God's sight. They are unemployed youths, elderly widows, disabled veterans of the military, disabled or sick with HIV or some other disease. Many came from the rural areas, seeking employment or a better life and found nothing.

Think of the victims of the land grabs in Gambella, some who died and many others who are displaced. Think of the Ethiopian women who are daily being trafficked to the Middle East to be prostitutes or forced servants. Remember those who died trying to make it by boat across the Red Sea to Yemen, who could have made it except their boat was stolen and they were forced to swim at gunpoint.

Remember the mothers who just buried their children in the last few months because they had no food. Remember those parents who are inwardly suffering as their children are too weakened by hunger to cry out any longer for food. Remember the young child who is taking care of his or her younger siblings because their mother and father have died of HIV/AIDS.

Remember the victims of terror such as the young girl or mother who has been raped in the Ogaden by the same soldiers who are supposed to protect them. Remember those whose fathers and brothers have been killed, beaten or tortured as they were trying to protect their mothers and sisters from such assaults. Think about the families displaced from homes simply because they live near natural resources that others want and those others are willing to take their land by force.

Remember the family members of those activists who are still waiting for the release of their children so they might come home. Remember these activists and the thousands of freedom fighters like them who are still behind bars, in the dark cells of prisons throughout Ethiopia the country—including journalists like Reeyot Alemu and Woubshet Taye, artists like Debebe Eshetu who did nothing but speak out for what was right.

Remember the children who are not getting the opportunity to go to school because their father was killed. Remember the homeless who were evicted from their homes—later to be bulldozed down—because another Ethiopian from the West, with money, went to Ethiopia and leased their land from the government.

Remember the orphans who have such a fragile future. Remember the disabled who cannot walk, see, hear or is mentally disabled, but in this society, no one is taking care of them. Remember the soldier who lost both legs and cannot take care of himself.

This is not only limited to Ethiopians in the country. Think of the refugees from Ethiopia in foreign countries, in the Sudan, in Libya, in Eritrea, in Kenya, in Egypt and even those in the west who are having a difficult time surviving away from family and home simply because they are trying to seek safety or a better opportunity in a foreign country.

Please, as you celebrate with joy, put yourselves in the shoes of those fellow Ethiopians who have nothing in terms of worldly possessions—who have been viewed as discardable people by their own government and by many within our society. Refuse to promote the devaluation of these human beings. These are our people. May God restore our compassion and our humanity.

If we are to be a caring people and a healthy society, we should see these Ethiopians as part of our family. God wants us to see them as our people, but we are not living up to what God expects of us. As we celebrate this day, think of the Ethiopians in pain, in misery, in sorrow, in loneliness and in hopelessness for “we are our brother’s keeper.”

For those in America, Canada and Europe, when you return to Ethiopia, do not treat the other Ethiopians—like the homeless and the disabled—as if they were not your own people. Do not consider yourself to be a tourist for you are one of them. Eat with the maid who is cooking the food. Be a Good Samaritan to those who have nothing. We should feel their pain and attempt to relieve their suffering, giving them the boost, wherever and whenever possible, that might enable them to survive or to become independent.

May the Next Year Be Known as the Year Ethiopians Showed Such Great Compassion that they Changed the Direction of Ethiopia! If we are wishing for a better life and year, we have to change. If we are to improve the future for Ethiopia, we ought to do our part by caring for each other. ***Our actions should not be only limited to those who are privileged and educated, but it should be extended to the people who have nothing at all—which is the case for the majority of Ethiopians. This will require those who have more, to share, especially those Ethiopians who live in the western countries.*** They should share not only with their families, but also with other Ethiopians who are part of their greater family.

This New Year celebration should not be a year of wishing for something better, but a year of action towards the betterment of our people. Let this to be a year when **we put our humanity before our ethnicity, a year when we can act on the belief that unless all Ethiopians are free, none of us will be free.** Until we all have the basics to survive, we must share what we have.

Let this year be the year to forgive and heal the bitter divisions between the people. Let this year be the year when the divided political parties can see that there is something bigger than their own political party and that is God first, then our humanity and then our country. Let this be the year when people will work together for the common good despite our differences.

We hope that next year will become known as the pivotal year when Ethiopians came together in solidarity of purpose, becoming a society known for its compassion towards others. We in the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia hope you will join us in preparing the way for a better year and future. We are proposing to launch a new project that might become the viable alternative necessary to replace the Meles regime; while working to preserve the security, protection and rights of all Ethiopians as laid out in the principles of the SMNE.

We cannot avoid looking at the truth of what is at the heart of our failure—we have lost our compassion for others. A society that loses its compassion, loses its humanity. A society that loses its humanity loses its soul. A society that loses its soul, dies.

Listen and you will already hear the cries of a dying Ethiopia. Let us urgently call on God to help revive the soul of Ethiopia—that He might help us recover our soul, our humanity and our compassion before it is too late to save this nation and people!

Please do not hesitate to e-mail your comments to Mr. Obang Metho, Executive Director of the SMNE, at: obang@solidaritymovement.org