

THE WAY FORWARD: RESPONSIBLE CITIZENSHIP

What does responsible citizenship mean?

How can it make a difference in our individual and collective future?

How can each of us engage in making a better future?

Come and hear Mr. **Obang Metho**, the Executive Director of *the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE)*, as he answers the above-mentioned questions and extends them as a challenge to the students at Gambella University. He will speak on the topic of responsible citizenship and how it is key to making change come to our own lives, families, communities, ethnic groups, regions and nation, spreading the benefits broadly—for no one is free until all are free—a core principle of the SMNE.

We Ethiopians have entered a new era under the leadership Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. Change that was seen as impossible only a year ago, has suddenly emerged—a miracle—and has opened up new possibilities for the future that did not exist in early 2018. *For the first time in more than fifty years, hope is stirring in the hearts of young and old throughout Ethiopia. At the same time, many people know this change is still very fragile. Like a newborn child, it will require nurturance, protection and support in order to survive, develop, strengthen and grow. How will that growth be accomplished in our own case?*

For sure, it will not be delivered on a gold platter to us by our prime minister, parliamentarians and other top officials; but instead, will require responsible citizens, especially youth like those at Gambella University, who are willing to do their best to contribute to its success.

In the past, active involvement, including student protests, was met with deadly force, imprisonment or forced exile. As a result, many avoided it; however, in this new era of change, responsible citizenship is gaining acceptance and legitimacy by this new administration. It is a time for all of us to play a role so we see the right changes improve the landscape of Ethiopian society for years to come. This is a burden of some more than others, starting with the youth of our country, who bear more responsibility because they will be the leaders of tomorrow and the guardians of Ethiopia sovereignty and national integrity.

Mr. Obang has been traveling throughout Ethiopia, speaking at universities to thousands of students and to the elders and religious leaders; yet he is a son of Gambella. He will speak on the role a responsible citizenry can play in strengthening the rule of law, especially in connection to various societal problems such as poverty and violence. He states:

A healthy society, must have citizens that believe in, uphold and support the rule of law. The rule of law, when it is absent, will sustain poverty and create violence among the people because of the injustice. Look at Gambella region; it is a good example. It is one of the most fertile regions, with lots of untapped natural resources; yet, it is one of the poorest, most backward, and least developed. If this region really had the rule of law and an empowered, informed and morally strong citizenry; the food shortages in this region could be transformed into food abundance that could feed Gambella region as well as the rest of Ethiopia.

Mr. Obang will share his observations and *vision for a new Ethiopia where humanity comes before ethnicity or other differences—because each of us is created equal— and where a responsible citizenry can help build a society where freedom, rights, justice and the rule of law create better opportunity for human flourishing; not only for oneself, but also for one's neighbor and beyond.*

Location: Gambella University
Date: Saturday, January 12, 2019

Time: 9 Am