

**PRESS RELEASE**

UNPO Welcomes the Founding of Peoples Alliance for Freedom and Democracy (PAFD)

26 October 2015, Brussels - The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) welcomes the founding of the Peoples Alliance for Freedom and Democracy (PAFD), established on 23 October 2015. This unprecedented political alliance between the peoples of Ethiopia is the result of a two-day meeting held in Oslo, Norway, between delegates of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), Benishangul People's Liberation Movement (BPLM), Gambella People's Liberation Movement (GPLM), and Sidama National Liberation Front (SNLF). Acknowledging the need for a united effort to put an end to the enduring repression perpetrated by successive and current Ethiopian regimes, the goal of the Peoples Alliance for Freedom and Democracy is to bring a new just political order for the country based on the consent of all peoples.

Although the founding document of the PAFD has just been signed, the initiative already represents a crucial milestone in the struggle for human rights and democracy in Ethiopia. Against the backdrop of decades of blatant disregard of the rule of law, and brutal suppression of the most fundamental human rights by the Ethiopian government, the PAFD arises as a platform that will unify the voices of the oppressed peoples in the country. Through diplomatic, advocacy and awareness campaigns, the PAFD will foster favourable conditions for achieving a peaceful and orderly transfer of power to the peoples by engaging representatives of all the different nationalities and other stakeholders committed to genuine democracy.

Since early 2015, UNPO has actively sought to create favourable conditions for dialogue between diverse marginalised groups in Ethiopia who seek democratic change, most notably through the convening of a high-level conference at the European Parliament on 23 April 2015, with the support of five Members of the European Parliament. In light of the conclusion of the conference - that real democratic change and cessation of ongoing human rights abuses can only be achieved through joint action involving all ethnic and political opposition movements - the founding of the PAFD represents a concrete and meaningful step forward. UNPO applauds this remarkable step towards ensuring the Ethiopian peoples' voices are better heard and calls upon the international community, including the European Union, the United Nations and the Government of the United States of America, to seize this unique opportunity to bring democratic change in Ethiopia. By cutting direct funding to the Ethiopian government, 50% of whose budget relies on foreign aid, there is a real opportunity to achieve an end to state sponsored human rights violations and pave the way for democracy and long term stability.