

Press Release

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High-level consultative exchanges held on transitional justice with the political leadership and commissioners of the Somali Region Truth and Reconciliation Commission

As Ethiopia embarks on a comprehensive initiative to deal with unaddressed legacies of its repressive past and grave violations of rights of citizens through a transitional justice process, members of the Transitional Justice Working Group of Experts (TJWGE) exchanged views with key leaderships of the Somali region in Jigjiga on the 22nd of June 2023.

The one-day high-level meetings were attended by leaders of the regional supreme court, justice bureau, police, social and gender affairs bureaus, all members of the Commission for Investigation of Violence, Reconciliation and Reparation of Victims in the Somali Region (TRC), and the Chief of Cabinet. The event was organized as an extension of the ongoing engagements and dialogue of the TJWGE with the TRC and the regional government.

Pursued in an extremely cordial ambience, the bilateral exchange focused on clarifying and understanding the federal and sub-national transitional justice initiatives, the identification of convergences and potential divergences, and on distinguishing modalities for synchronizing regional works with the broader national initiative of the federal government. The agenda also included identifying and brainstorming possible roles which sub-national governments and local traditional dispute resolution mechanisms could and should play in the context of the national transitional justice process - in reading with recognized policy competences of both tiers of governance.

To such end, the TJWGE gave a detailed account of its composition, mandate, approaches, and the works it had undertaken so far. Explanation was offered on the overall methods of the policy drafting process and the rounds of public consultations and input gathering exercises being pursued by the TJWGE on the basis of the 'Policy Options for Transitional Justice in Ethiopia' document.

Similarly, the TRC presented on the mandates, institutional set up, and works of the Commission, including the preparatory workstreams, registration and documentation of human rights violations, the identification of typology of victims and violations, and reparation and reconciliation approaches.

Members of both delegations engaged in candid conversation on various technicalities, offered clarifications as pertinent, and agreed to keep the momentum of the collaboration; furthermore, they pledged to ensure greater harmonization of the two processes - while accentuating that sub-national programs on transitional justice need to operate within the broader framework policies and mechanisms adopted at the national level and in compliance with normative prescriptions of regional and international instruments on transitional justice. This alone, it was agreed, would guarantee that Ethiopia's transitional justice process is implemented in a comprehensive, integrated and cohesive manner - while also establishing a meaningful space for complementary and reinforcing roles played by regional governance structures and localized dispute resolution mechanisms.

