

The Upper House of Ethiopian Federal Parliament: An Assessment of Experience and Prospects

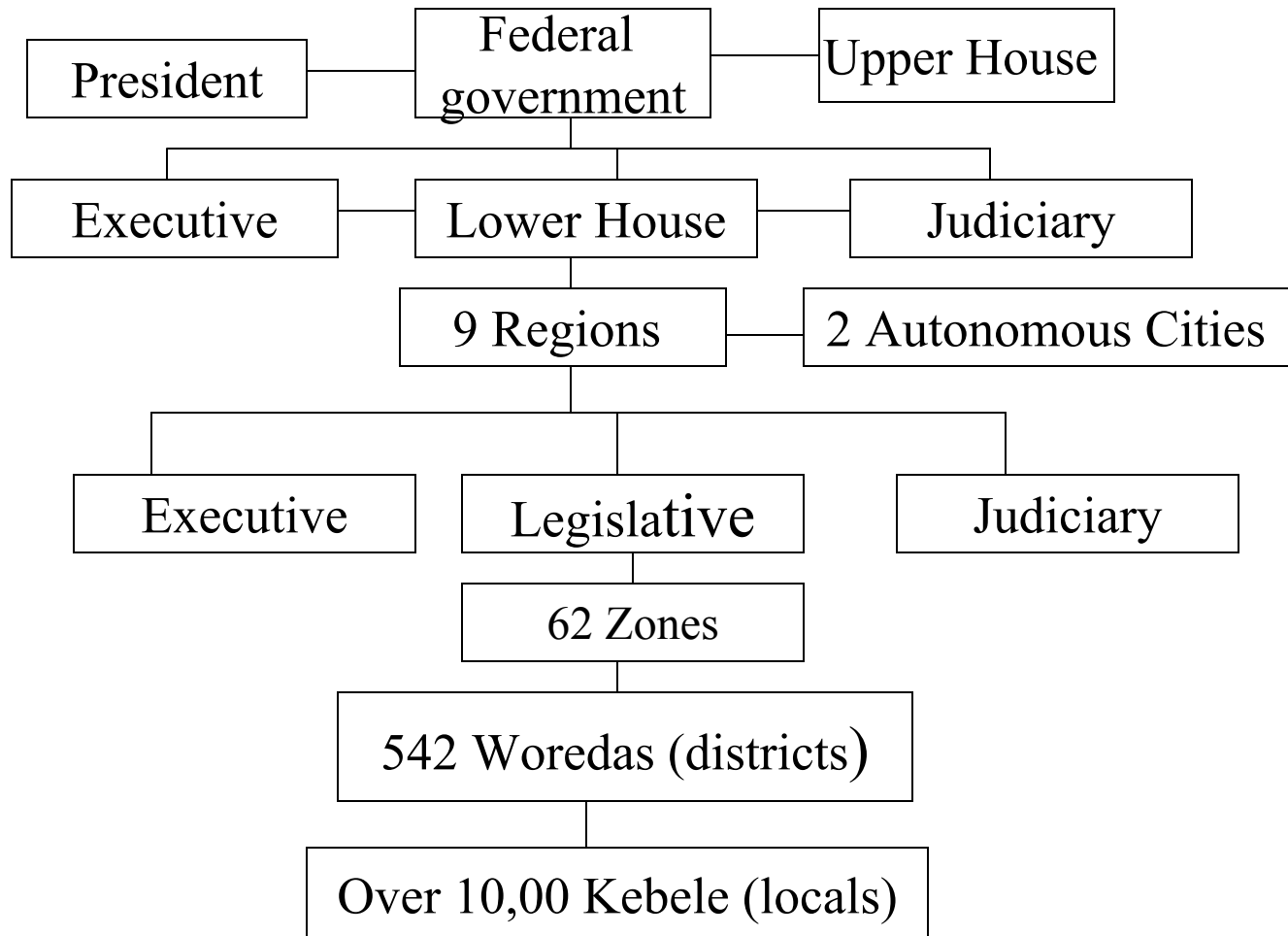
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Federalism has two main features

- **Territorial autonomy** – sub-national units (regions) exercising autonomy in decision-making processes.
- **Territorial representation** – sub-national units representing themselves in political processes.
- “Since 1991, Ethiopia has gone further than any other country in using ethnicity as the fundamental principle of a federal government. And yet this pioneering experiment in ethnic federalism has been largely ignored in the growing literature on democratization and ethnicity in Africa and on the accommodation of ethnic diversity in democratic states (David Turton, 2006)”.

Structure of Ethiopian federalism

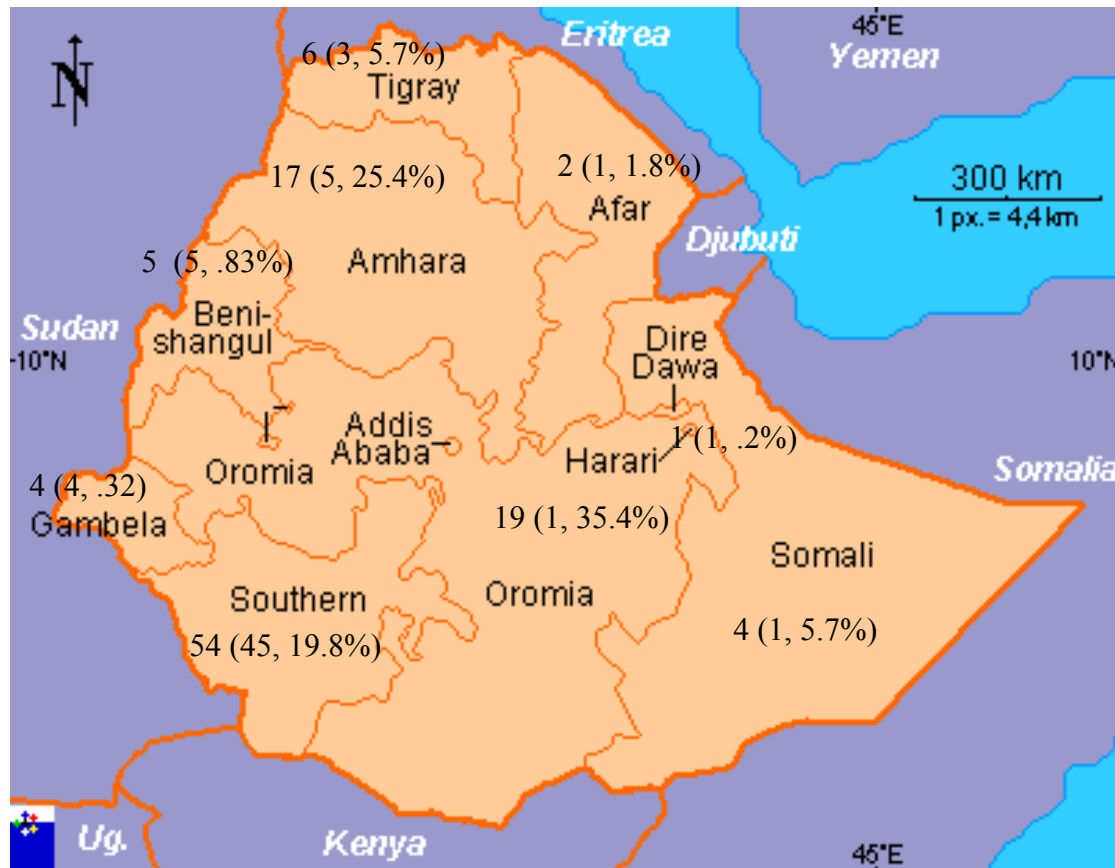


The Upper House of Parliament

- Each ethnic group is represented.
- Members are elected among regional councilors.
- Currently 112 members representing 66 ethnic groups.
- Representation formula: a least one member per ethnic group and one additional member for each one million of its population.
- Distribution of seats in the house determined by the # of ethnic groups, not by population size. *This gives minority ethnic groups a collective (majority) voice.*

Membership distribution by region

(number of ethnic groups, % of population)



Mandate of the Upper House

1. Interprets the constitution.
2. Addresses questions of self-administration or secession.
3. Supports civic education.
4. Resolves inter-state and federal-regional disputes.
5. Devises revenue sharing and distribution mechanism.
6. Monitors the performance functions of regional states.
7. Elects the President of the country.

Assessment of performance of the upper house

- The upper house has immense potential to promote democratization and human rights.
- Implementation of the house's mandate constrained by a lack of organizational resources.

Highlights of 2005-2010 Strategic Plan

- Prepare annual reports
- Produce studies on conflict prevention and resolution methods; civic code cases; and revenue utilization and revenue distribution
- Stakeholder outreach
- Build decision-support systems
- Build planning capacity
- Undertake publicity campaigns
- Improve responsive capacity (conflicts, civic cases, legal/constitutional issues, etc).
- Promote diversity and cohesion/inclusion
- Support development of capacity for budget utilization, governance and conflict prevention and resolution.

Nine (9) proposal to improve the functional performances of the upper house

1. Increase the number of standing committees to effectively implement the house's mandate.
2. Increase the frequency of meetings of the house to at least 10 times a year.
3. Give more power for senators (upper house members) to check executive and legislative functions of government.
4. Foster public participation in decision-making processes.
5. Monitor and evaluate policy and program initiatives.
6. Reach out and help the Ethiopian people in their daily lives.

Nine (9) proposal to improve the functional performances of the upper house

7. Engage with the lower house of parliament.
8. Promote a culture of parliamentary democracy.
9. Form strategic partnership with interest groups in society.

Thank you

- Questions or comments?