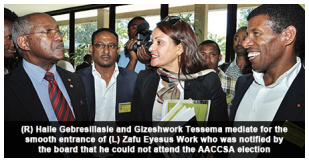

Elias Genete elected Chamber Pres in contentious election

Elias Genete, owner of Agro Prom and chairman of Oromia Insurance SC was elected the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Association (AACCSA)

President with 356 votes in a contentious election, that lasted late into the night last Thursday. Elias defeated Israel Kassa, owner and head of Africa Beza College who received 133 votes.
A little over half of the attendees voted in the race between only two candidates after Teshome Beyene was disqualified by the screening committee and another nominee, Tsehay Shiferaw, president of Awash International Bank, who was previously on the board, declined to participate in the election despite being nominated.
Tsehay told Capital that he refused the nomination because he did not have the time to serve the chamber due to his responsibility at Awash, one of the largest private banks in the country.

Teshome Beyene was disqualified by the credential committee that was appointed by the AACCSA board to screen the candidates.
The committee ruled that he could not run because he did not have a business license. At the meeting the credential committee explained that according to the chamber rule, the nominee has to be a business owner or head of a business. The committee ruled that he did not meet those qualifications and thus could not stand for election.
Teshome countered that he was nominated by Ethio Life and General Insurance of which he is a founding shareholder and board chairman.
After the meeting, Teshome told Capital that the truth was crushed. He told people at the meeting that the election process was illegal, anti-democratic and opposed to chamber rules.
The two reimaning nominees (Elias and Israel) introduced themselves to the general assembly, which included 889 registered members at the event from a total of over 14,000 members registered under AACCSA.
The election process began during the early evening and lasted until 11pm, when people who remained that long were able to hear the final results, although a majority had left by that time.

The election committee then disclosed that Elias was elected Chamber President with 356 votes and that Israel had received 133. Tadesse Meshesha, who is from the Sectoral Association, was elected Vice President. He also competed with just one other person.
Nine new board members were also elected including: Haile Gebresilase, who represents Haile Alem International Plc and received the most votes, Gesesse Teshome, Fasikaw Sisay, Yaregal Gesesse, Haile Asegide, Molla Zegeye, Hunelgn Tigabu, Afework Yohannes and Feseha Shanko.
The new board did not include a single woman, although two were nominated. Previously the board included three female representatives.
Another dispute occurred involving the former president of AACCSA and Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Association (ECCSA) ZafuEyesus Work. Earlier in the week, the outgoing board, which was elected two years ago, sent a letter to United Bank, suspending their representative, ZafuEyesus Work. This meant that he was barred from attending the meeting and the letter said the insurance company would have to assign another representative for the general assembly.
The letter, issued on Wednesday December 18 and signed by Getachew Regassa, secretary general of AACCSA indicated that Zafu was suspended not only for the current assembly but for all events that occurred in the future.
Even though the chamber said that Zafu was not allowed to be part of the event, the former president was at the gate leading to the meeting hall attempting to enter. He was surrounded by a crowd of prominent business community members who supported Zafu and wanted him to be able to attend the meeting.
Most of the crowed gathering with Zafu were supportive of the former president and said the board should let him come into the meeting.
Zafu argued that the board did not have the right to bar him from attending the election and that only a court ruling could bar him from entering the meeting.
Some members of the business community, including Haile Gebreslasie, tried to convince the outgoing president Ayalew Zegeye to let Zafu in the meeting hall. They also attempted to get board members to come to the gate to hear their concern. However their attempts were not fruitful.
Finally, Gizeshwork Tessema, a prominent businesswoman, arrived at the gate and insisted that Zafu enter at the hall. They then walked in together without being challenged.
After the credential committee delivered its report, participants raised concerns about technicalities of the nomination process.
Haile Gebresilase, the prominent athlete and businessman, argued that if the general assembly did not include over 50 chamber members, it should not pass decisions or elect leaders. Other participants also voiced concern over the number of chamber members needed to pass resolutions.
It was the ninth general assembly of the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Association (AACCSA) and was held at Hilton Hotel.