Statement

By
The Permanent Mission of Ethiopia to the UN and
Other International organizations in Geneva

At the
ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment
23rd to 25th June, 2021, Geneva

June 23, 2021
Thank you, Madam Chair,

Ethiopia is not unfamiliar with the Humanitarian challenges. It has been challenged for decades with recurrent drought, seasonal flooding and landslides, the frequency and intensity of which have been increasing through time. In recent years, the humanitarian landscape has been further complicated by localized inter-communal conflicts which displaced many. Each year, the Government, in coordination with international partners, strives to address the food and non-food needs of millions of Ethiopians affected by such calamities.

Let me highlight some of the underlining factors that contributed to the humanitarian situations in Ethiopia,

- Climate disasters such as El Nino and La Nina have been resulting in recurrent drought and flood affecting the rain dependent agriculture and livestock productions of the country. This have been causing crop loss, disruption of livelihood and remain to be one of the main sources of food insecurity prevalence in the country. To alleviate the severity of the problem, the government has attempted to diversify the agricultural practices through expanding irrigation system in lowland areas and cluster-based activities to boost productions in the sector but the challenge still remains as climate shocks continue to be part of our reality.

- The worst desert locust infestation in 25 years continues to devastate the agricultural sector, the pillar of Ethiopia’s economy. It has so far damaged around 365,015 of hectares cropland and millions of
hectares of pastures across the country. The swarms have threatened the livelihoods of millions and left them food insecure.

- Conflicts in Benishangul Gumuz, Tigray, Oromia, Amhara and South Nation and Nationality Regional states continue to cause loss of life and livelihood, further exacerbating humanitarian situation. Such incidents have left millions displaced and in critical need of humanitarian assistance.

- The unprecedented impacts of COVID-19 pandemic have further worsened the humanitarian situation in the country. The onset of the pandemic exacerbated the humanitarian situation causing millions to lose their jobs, put students out of school and increase the vulnerability of many to domestic violence. International cooperation and solidarity is important to tackle the pandemic. Ensuring timely and fair covid vaccine distribution is critical to have a safer world. Ethiopia is calling for covid vaccine equity. The aforementioned and proved difficulties to restore the lives of all those who were in humanitarian emergencies in the previous years.

- In order to meet these humanitarian challenges, the government of Ethiopia has established multi-layered institutional frameworks down to district level that collects data and analyses and also carry out early warning systems on the humanitarian situations throughout the country. We have also developed a Strategic Humanitarian Response Plan, in collaboration with UNOCHA, for the year 2021.

Regarding the situation in Tigray region, I would like to share with you the efforts of the Government to address the problem. In the first round of humanitarian response, effort was made to reach out to 4.5 million people in the Tigray region through the delivery of food and non-food items. In the second and third rounds, the relief efforts were able to reach out to 5.8 million people. So far, 181,974 metric tons of foods, worth $143 million have already been distributed. Currently, 6 operators namely World Food Program, World Vision, CARE, Relief
Society of Tigray (REST), Food for the Hungry and the Ethiopian government are providing food assistance in the region.

The Ethiopian government has provided full and unfettered access for humanitarian actors to operate in all parts of the region, through a simplified blanket approval process. In the areas where safe movement of humanitarian access are strained, military escort is offered as a matter of last resort to reach those in need. Rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts are underway with progress being made in restoring basic social and economic services.

In line with the alleged crimes and human rights violations committed in the Tigray region, the Government of Ethiopia has committed itself to carrying out investigations to bring the perpetrators of such crimes to justice. This concrete commitment to ensuring accountability has been demonstrated by action. So far charges have been pressed against more than sixty soldiers who have been suspected of killing civilians and engaging in acts of sexual violence. These are testaments to the willingness and capability of the Ethiopian government to ensure accountability. Those who were involved in committing crimes will be brought to justice and will be punished to the full extent of the law.

As the facts on the ground warrant, investigations are being expanded in their scope by coordinating the efforts of the military justice system, regional law enforcement authorities and federal investigators and prosecutors. In addition to these efforts, a joint investigation team composed of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has already been deployed on the ground and has commenced its work.

There is no doubt about the enormity of the challenges in the Tigray region. It is through working with the government that the humanitarian response can be accelerated and reached out to every person in need. The Ethiopian
government is well aware of its responsibilities towards its own citizens and its obligations under international humanitarian law.

In conclusion, Ethiopia will remain committed to providing principled and coordinated humanitarian assistance to those who need it throughout the country. I would like to use this opportunity to thank partners who provided support so far.

I thank you!