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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Organisation internationale pour les pays les moins avancés (OIPMA), a non- governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[01 February 2020]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



Ethnic conflicts and internally displaced persons – the case of Ethiopia

Organisation Internationale Pour Les Pays Les Moins Avancés (OIPMA) among other issues, lies on conflict prevention in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), including Ethiopia.

Internal displacement due to armed conflict and generalized violence remains one of the most pressing human rights issues of our time. At the end of 2018, an estimated 41.3 million people were internally displaced according to estimates from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). In 2018 the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has nearly doubled. The country has seen 2.9 million new displacements associated with conflict, which constitutes the highest figure recorded worldwide.

With more than 80 ethno-linguistic groups and nine different self-governing ethnic regions, Ethiopia is a land of enormous ethnic diversity. In the past, internal displacement in Ethiopia was mainly caused by natural disasters. While small-scale displacements due to clashes between communities over farmland and water rights have always persisted, inter-communal violence has sparked since the escalation of violence along the Oromia-Somali boundary in September 2017.

One of the most dramatic conflicts occurred between the Guji and Gedeo ethnic groups in April and June 2018 in the West Guji zone of Oromia and the Gedeo zone of SNNP. Over two million new IDPs resulted from this conflict alone. IDPs are among the most vulnerable people worldwide; they have limited access to basic goods and services, are exposed to severe protection risks (women and girls are especially affected by sexual and gender based violence) and are likely to suffer socioeconomic exclusion. In Ethiopia, over 30 percent of all IDPs are in acute need of humanitarian assistance (2019 Humanitarian needs overview). The ongoing inter-communal conflicts have had a severe impact on food availability. Farmland has been destroyed in the escalation of violence, IDPs left their land and were unable to harvest their crops and entire zones have been closed to commercial traffic over long periods of time.

OIPMA welcomes the adoption of resolution A/HRC/RES/41/15 on internally displaced persons by the Human Rights Council in 2019. The HRC rightfully expressed its concern regarding the alarmingly large number of IDPs throughout the world and emphasized that states have the primary responsibility to provide protection and assistance to internally displaced persons and to address the root causes of displacement through evidence-based action and in appropriate cooperation with the international community. The ‘Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement’ set out the rights and guarantees relevant to the protection of IDPs in all phases of displacement – prevention, protection during displacement as well as lasting solutions to displacement. The principles underline the responsibility of national authorities to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons within their jurisdiction.

In 2009 Ethiopia has signed the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa and is currently in the process for the ratification of the Convention. The Kampala Convention builds upon the 1998 United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and constitutes the only continent-wide legally binding instrument for the assistance and protection of IDPs.

The preamble of the convention reiterates the intention of all state parties to “adopt measures aimed at preventing and putting an end to the phenomenon of internal displacement by eradicating the root causes, especially persistent and recurrent conflicts”. Article 9 lists concrete obligations of state parties to protection and assistance during internal displacement, notably the refrainment from discrimination against IDPs and the provision of humanitarian assistance.

OIPMA urges the Ethiopian government to ratify the Convention as soon as possible, especially in view of the recent surge in IDP numbers. A National Reconciliation Commission has been established in Ethiopia in December 2018, with the aim to prevent and resolve internal conflicts. Ethiopia has introduced initiatives to better meet the needs of IDPs.

Two such initiatives are an IDP Advisory Group (which comprises the United Nations Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of the Humanitarian Affairs, IOM, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Danish Refugee Council), and a national steering committee.

OIPMA is concerned that the situation of IDPs in Ethiopia will further deteriorate in 2020 due to the national election taking place in May. The risks for an explosion of regional ethnic rivalries are high and the exclusion of internally displaced persons by disregarding their civic and political rights would lead to further tension. In view of these risks ethnicity must be further depoliticized, ethnic communities must be included and roots of inter-ethnic conflict must be met with the full implementation of national mechanisms that have been installed for that purpose and the application of international human rights treaties which Ethiopia has ratified.

While national governments have the primary responsibility in the protection and assistance of its citizens and residents, when the state is unable to fulfill its obligations, responsibility falls to the international community to protect those in need. The influx of IDPs in Ethiopia places a significant burden on both the national and international bodies responsible for providing protection and assistance to IDPs.

OIPMA welcomes the Human Rights Council's continued attention to the vulnerable situation of IDPs and the root causes for their displacement. However, it is necessary to take the appropriate measures to further encourage Ethiopia, to take actions and implement existing national mechanisms, in order to contain the potential of additional conflicts and increasing number of IDPs.
