



Security Council

Seventy-sixth year

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meeting
Thursday, 26 August 2021, 3 p.m.
New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Tirumurti (India)

Members:

China	Mr. Dai Bing
Estonia	Mr. Lipand
France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
Kenya	Mr. Kimani
Mexico	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
Niger	Mr. Aougi
Norway	Ms. Heimerback
Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Mr. Bynoe
Tunisia	Mr. Ladeb
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America	Mr. Mills
Viet Nam	Mrs. Tra Phuong Nguyen

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Ethiopia to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, to whom I now give the floor.

The Secretary-General: I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting on the situation in Ethiopia—a matter that is increasingly preoccupying the African continent and the wider international community.

The military confrontation, which started some 10 months ago in the northern region of Tigray, is spreading, and the level of human suffering is growing, with serious political, economic and humanitarian implications for Ethiopia and the broader region. All parties must recognize the simple truth — there is no military solution.

Last week, I issued an appeal for action on three fronts: first, calling on all parties to immediately cease hostilities; secondly, ensuring a commitment to unrestricted humanitarian access everywhere and fully re-establishing public services; and, thirdly, creating the conditions for the start of an Ethiopian-led political dialogue to find a solution to this crisis. Those steps are essential for two critical reasons.

First, the unity of Ethiopia and the stability of the region are at stake, and they are very important. The military front lines in Tigray have now reached the regions of Amhara and Afar. The declaration of a unilateral ceasefire by the Government of Ethiopia on 28 June and the withdrawal of the Ethiopian National Defence Forces from Mekelle did not lead to a comprehensive ceasefire. The Tigray region remains largely under a de-facto humanitarian blockade and cut off from key public services, such as electricity and communications. The Tigrayan forces have since suspended their presence into the neighbouring Amhara and Afar regions, where fighting has escalated. Other

actors in Ethiopia have entered the fight through mass mobilization and the activation of regional armed groups. Inflammatory rhetoric and ethnic profiling are tearing apart the social fabric of the country. The wider region is already witnessing the political, economic and social impact of the conflict beyond the borders of Ethiopia.

Secondly, the human price of this war is mounting by the day. A humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding before our eyes. More than 2 million people have been displaced from their homes, and millions more are in immediate need of life-saving humanitarian assistance, including food, water, shelter and health care. At least 400,000 people are living in famine-like conditions. Last month, UNICEF warned that 100,000 children faced life-threatening severe acute malnutrition over the next 12 months. Refugee camps have been destroyed. Health-care systems have been decimated, with hospitals and clinics attacked and looted. That has all been exacerbated by electricity and communications blackouts.

I am also deeply concerned by reports of horrific sexual and gender-based violence from survivors, including women and children. I condemn those atrocity acts in the strongest possible terms.

That is compounded by other serious allegations of human rights violations and abuses against civilians, reportedly perpetrated by all parties to the conflict. There must be accountability. A joint investigation by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission is concluding.

The United Nations and its humanitarian partners have mobilized to reach more than 5 million people with food or other essentials, but their capacity to respond is severely constrained by insecurity, delays and a host of restrictions on the work of humanitarian organizations. Overland access to Tigray now depends on a single route, through the Afar region, which involves passing through numerous checkpoints. Humanitarian organizations require roughly 100 trucks' worth of assistance and supplies to reach Mekelle every day. Yet, since mid-July, an average of fewer than 10 trucks per day have been able to get through, and no trucks have arrived for more than a week, while food warehouses are now empty. Sadly, humanitarian workers have been arrested and even killed.

Well beyond Tigray, the conflict in the Afar and Amhara regions has reportedly displaced 300,000 more people. This is taking place alongside efforts to maintain broader humanitarian support across Ethiopia, in response to intercommunal violence, flooding, locust infestations and other challenges.

The conflict is also taking a heavy economic toll, illustrating once again the utter folly of war. The conflict has already drained more than \$1 billion from the country's coffers. Debt is mounting, and access to credit is drying up. Inflation is increasing, and basic food items are running low. Meanwhile, Ethiopia is suffering from the fifth-highest incidence of coronavirus disease cases on the continent.

For all those reasons, I repeat my fundamental call — all parties must immediately end hostilities without preconditions and seize the opportunity to negotiate a lasting ceasefire; foreign forces should leave the country; unrestricted humanitarian access to all areas in need must be guaranteed; humanitarian workers must be respected and public services must be re-established.

I believe that there is an opportunity to address the conflict peacefully, which the parties must seize in the interest of Ethiopia, and conditions must be created for the start of an inclusive national political dialogue in order to address the underlying causes of the conflict and ensure that Ethiopian voices direct the pathway to peace.

On these issues, I have been in contact with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. I also received a letter on this matter from the president of the Tigray region, as elected at the time, in response to my appeal, which was also addressed to the President of the Security Council. The United Nations is ready to work together with the African Union and other key partners to support such a dialogue. In the period ahead, the attention and unity of the Security Council will be critical.

Allow me to express one final word of profound regret about the tragic events unfolding in Ethiopia. Ethiopia is a country full of promise, driven in large measure by the energy and initiative of its youth. It is heartbreaking to see many young Ethiopians being instrumentalized and mobilized in war efforts. Their energy is being channelled into a path of division and destruction, instead of one of building a better future for all Ethiopians. They will be the ultimate casualties in this needless conflict. In every sense, the future of

Ethiopia is at stake. Let us pledge to do all we can to advance the path of national cohesion and peace.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): I would like to preface my remarks, if I may, by offering my sincere condolences to the families of the victims of the horrific attack today in Kabul.

I want to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting today. I thank the Secretary-General for his insightful, yet — I must admit — deeply troubling briefing today. I would also like to thank Ambassador Amde, our colleague; it is critical to have him with us today.

Over the past nine months, we have witnessed a severe and deepening political crisis in Tigray, which is now expanding to neighbouring regions of Ethiopia. The immediate consequence has been a massive humanitarian emergency, with more than 5.2 million people in need of assistance in Tigray alone. We deeply regret that it has come to this. We were warned months ago. We spoke of the risks here at this same table. Sadly now, if the crisis is not urgently addressed, the longer-term consequences for the unity of Ethiopia and the stability of the wider region are potentially catastrophic. That is why Ireland has continually raised this unfolding crisis as a matter of the deepest concern. The Secretary-General's presence and clear messages today underscore just how serious this situation has now become.

I strongly echo what the Secretary-General calls "the simple truth" — that there is no military solution to this conflict. We agree with him that regional partners and the African Union in particular have a crucial role to play in finding the political solution needed to end the crisis. We have been underlining this message since we joined the Council, and I was pleased to see today that former Nigerian President Obasanjo was appointed by the African Union as the High Representative for the Horn of Africa. We welcome that appointment.

No one in this Chamber underestimates the complexity of this crisis. We certainly do not. But that is not an excuse to stand by and do nothing. Today we heard from the Secretary-General about where we might start. Today all Council members have an opportunity

to support the Secretary-General and those caught in this crisis by sending three clear and united messages.

First, all parties to the conflict must immediately cease hostilities and come to the table to negotiate a lasting ceasefire. Secondly, all parties to the conflict must ensure full, unimpeded and safe humanitarian access, as well as the restoration of public services. Thirdly, conditions must be created to allow for dialogue in order to find a solution to the conflict in Tigray, and a broad range of stakeholders must engage in a process of inclusive dialogue to address the significant challenges affecting Ethiopia. The international community — that means us — must stand ready to support this process.

The shocking spectre of famine continues to loom. We know that millions of people are displaced and that hundreds of thousands are already starving. There is absolutely no time to waste. This is not a time for reflection. On the contrary, it is a time for action. The sad reality is that without further, immediate and scaled-up action, the horror of starvation will overwhelm parts of Ethiopia again, with harrowing echoes of past tragedy. Too many ordinary men, women and children will suffer; too many will die as collateral damage in a war not of their making. As we just heard in clear terms, their basic humanitarian needs in terms of food and shelter are not even close to being met. I repeat — this is a time for action. As humanitarian workers continue to face violence and unnecessary obstacles in carrying out their work, we say that it is past time to act.

We call again on the Ethiopian authorities and all other actors to immediately facilitate full, unimpeded humanitarian access. We also urge the Government of Ethiopia to restore basic public services for the people of Tigray. Access to food, medical services and education are the very least that the people deserve. The human dignity and human rights of millions are at stake.

We also call on the Tigrayan forces to immediately end their military offensive and withdraw from the Amhara and Afar regions. The longer the conflict persists, the greater the suffering of all Ethiopian people. We have taken careful note of the letter referenced by the Secretary-General that was sent by the Tigrayan representatives, which may be an important development. We further call on the Amhara forces to withdraw from western Tigray. I also echo the call of our African colleagues for external forces to withdraw from Ethiopia.

We are horrified by the conflict-related sexual violence and atrocities that have defined this conflict. It is clear that women and girls have been systematically raped and abused throughout the conflict and that communities have been traumatized. All those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law must be held to account. That is true not least because countering impunity is essential to preventing further violations. We await the findings of the report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. We hope that that work will draw to a conclusion without undue delay. We also call on all parties to refrain from using inflammatory rhetoric and dehumanizing language, which serves only to fuel ethnic and political tensions across Ethiopia. Such dehumanizing rhetoric is never acceptable. As history tells us, nothing good can come of that.

I began today by saying that the Council has an opportunity and a responsibility to send a clear and united message. Let me return to that point. We need a cessation of hostilities and for the parties to come to the table to negotiate a lasting ceasefire. We need unimpeded humanitarian access, and we need a political solution to the crisis in Tigray and an inclusive national dialogue. Leadership to forge a path towards peace must be found among the parties to the conflict. Time is of the essence. The very lives of the Ethiopian people are at stake. Now is the time for action.

Mr. Lipand (Estonia): I thank Secretary-General Guterres for being with us today and for the remarks he made. Estonia welcomes today's very timely Security Council meeting and reiterates the need to keep the situation in Tigray on the Council's agenda.

We are deeply worried about the escalating conflict in Tigray, which is aggravating an already dire humanitarian situation and increasingly threatening the wider stability of the region. The reports of the growing number of civilian casualties, especially among children, are alarming. It is essential that all parties adhere to international humanitarian law and do their utmost to protect civilians.

It must be acknowledged by all that there can be no military solution to the conflict. We join the Secretary-General in calling on the parties to cease hostilities, as an immediate priority, and start negotiations for a permanent ceasefire. We call on the Tigray forces to

stop their offensive, in particular in the neighbouring Amhara and Afar regions, which has already caused massive displacement and will only expand the scope of the devastation and suffering.

At the same time, we call on the Government of Ethiopia to request the immediate withdrawal of Eritrean troops from Tigray to ensure unfettered humanitarian access to the region and restore basic services, including water, fuel, electricity, communications and banking in all areas affected by the conflict. We also urge the Government to facilitate overcoming the challenges faced on the ground by humanitarian aid organizations in order for them to be able to assist those in need.

Estonia is increasingly concerned about the conflict-driven food security crisis, which has been deteriorating primarily owing to the interruption of supply lines. Approximately 400,000 people are already living in famine — the direst level of acute food insecurity — with 4 million more people approaching the same situation.

Continued reports about violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including widespread sexual and gender-based violence, are deeply worrisome. In that context, we reiterate the importance of the ongoing joint investigation by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. The perpetrators must be held accountable and brought to justice. We are also worried about reports of arbitrary detentions and enforced disappearances of ethnic Tigrayans in Addis Ababa. We call on the Ethiopian authorities to investigate those possibly unlawful and discriminatory practices.

In conclusion, the people of Tigray have suffered enough. While the immediate priority must be ending the hostilities, that should be followed by an inclusive and credible political process, with the aim of national reconciliation. The conflict in Tigray can be resolved only through dialogue.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I join my colleagues in conveying my sympathy to the family and friends of the victims of the abhorrent attacks that occurred today in Kabul.

I would like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his statement.

I will underscore five points.

While the conflict has been ongoing for nearly 10 months, a principle based on the reality of the situation must prevail. Our first priority, which is also the responsibility of the Security Council, is to end the conflict and safeguard the unity of Ethiopia. We will succeed in achieving that goal only if all the forces involved shoulder their respective responsibilities.

As we know, the conflict is being waged by several parties — the Federal Government, regional militias and special forces, and their Eritrean allies, on the one hand, and the Tigrayan forces on the other. Calling for a cessation of hostilities, humanitarian access and dialogue does not mean that we are partial to any one side.

As the Secretary-General made perfectly clear, the conflict will not be resolved by the use of weapons. All parties must agree to a ceasefire. We also call for the definitive withdrawal of Eritrean forces from Ethiopian territory. We call on the Tigrayan forces to withdraw to within the regional borders of Tigray in order to avert any escalation. A compromise must finally be reached with the Amhara forces on the border dispute between the two regions within the framework of the Constitution. Attacks against civilians, extrajudicial executions, the forced expulsion of populations and sexual violence based on ethnicity or the supposed political affiliation of individuals cannot go unpunished regardless of the identity of the perpetrators.

In that regard, France reiterates its full support for the joint investigation into human rights violations, which must irrefutably establish the facts. Its conclusions must be followed by action. We deeply regret, moreover, the difficulties encountered in the collection of evidence and call on all parties to guarantee access for the investigators.

Achieving a ceasefire is essential to dealing with the humanitarian emergency. France calls on the Ethiopian Government to uphold all its commitments with regard to guaranteeing humanitarian access. It is imperative to remove obstacles impeding the delivery of aid by all means, including by road. It is also up to the authorities to restore electricity, telecommunication services, the Internet and the banking system. In addition, France is concerned about attempts to discredit humanitarian actors. France condemns all forms of violence or intimidation against humanitarian and medical personnel.

Finally, it is urgent to create the conditions necessary leading to a process of dialogue and reconciliation. We once again call on all parties to assume their responsibilities. The Federal Government must set up a national dialogue with representatives of all sectors of society in order to find a political solution to the divisions in Ethiopia and preserve its unity. At the same time, we call on the Tigrayan representatives to show that they are open to dialogue.

Lastly, France supports regional efforts to bring about peace. In that regard, we welcome the appointment of the former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo, as the African Union High Representative for the Horn of Africa. We call on the countries of the region to resolve their differences through genuine dialogue, particularly with regard to the Al-Fashaga triangle area and the Renaissance Dam. We call on all parties to refrain from any action that could inflame tensions and to respond constructively to the mediation efforts of the African Union.

Ms. Heimerback (Norway): With sadness and disbelief, we are yet again discussing the prospect of a man-made famine in Tigray. The expansion of the armed conflict into the neighbouring regions of Afar and Amhara will only increase the suffering. The ramifications for the entire country are grave and potentially undermine regional peace and security in the Horn of Africa.

Let me thank the Secretary-General for his frank briefing. We are grateful for his tireless diplomatic efforts to end the conflict. We hope to see that his leadership in preventive diplomacy is replicated by other key actors such as regional institutions. As we have been told, the humanitarian consequences of the conflict in Tigray are massive. In order to end the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Tigray, several immediate actions are crucial.

First, the Federal Ethiopian authorities and all other actors must secure rapid, safe and unimpeded access for humanitarian aid to the region; secondly, all parties must do their utmost to facilitate the work of humanitarian organizations and their personnel; and, thirdly, all parties must fully respect international humanitarian law and provide security for humanitarian workers.

Repeated assurances from the Ethiopian authorities of compliance with humanitarian obligations have failed to materialize. In reality, Tigray is placed under a strict closure regime, and the provision of humanitarian

aid through land convoys and air access is being obstructed instead of facilitated. We strongly condemn the many vilifying comments made in public regarding humanitarian actors and workers. Such hateful rhetoric is creating more insecurity and putting the lives of humanitarians at risk.

It is incumbent on all parties to protect the human rights of all people. That includes protection from stigmatization or ethnic profiling. We are deeply concerned by allegations of serious human rights violations and abuses in Tigray and other conflict-affected areas, including against children. Norway condemns in the strongest possible terms the reported killings of civilians and the widespread and systematic use of sexual and gender-based violence. Additionally, the reported systematic destruction of vital infrastructure and health centres is equally unacceptable. They must be rapidly restored.

The alleged atrocities, violations and abuses of international human rights and international humanitarian law must be documented and investigated, and those responsible must be prosecuted. Bringing perpetrators to justice is critical for prevention and deterrence. We welcome the joint investigation by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, as well as the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights independent commission of inquiry, into alleged atrocities in Tigray. We expect all findings to be used to ensure accountability. Norway will continue to make sure that the fight against impunity remains high on the Council's agenda.

Norway urges all actors in the conflict to immediately end the violence and enter into dialogue. To facilitate that, Eritrea must fully withdraw from Ethiopian territory; Tigrayan forces must end their expansion into neighbouring regions; and Amhara federal forces and militia must withdraw from Western Tigray.

Finally, it is vital that States in the region, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union (AU) bring their full weight to bear in order to end the hostilities in Tigray and Ethiopia. We recognize the efforts undertaken in that regard thus far by Prime Minister Hamdok in his capacity as the Chair of IGAD, and we welcome today's appointment of former President Obasanjo as the AU High Representative for the Horn of Africa.

Likewise, the Council must lend all possible support to regional efforts. We should speak with one voice in calling for the cessation of hostilities, unimpeded humanitarian access and a peaceful resolution through dialogue. The Council should receive regular reporting on humanitarian access to Tigray, including clear indicators of any gaps in the response and assistance needed. We cannot allow the humanitarian situation in Tigray to deteriorate even further into catastrophe, or the conflict in Ethiopia to destabilize the Horn of Africa, without pursuing all available avenues towards a political solution.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): Let me also offer the United Kingdom's condolences in connection with all those who lost their lives in today's terrorist attack in Kabul.

I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing. He described a desperate situation, and it is right that the Council considers how it can help. I would therefore like to make three points in response to what we have heard.

First, all parties must cease hostilities, and unfettered humanitarian access must be provided to relieve the toll of the conflict on ordinary Ethiopians. As the Secretary-General told us, more than 400,000 people in Tigray are experiencing famine conditions, which is more than in the rest of the world combined. Only a fraction of the 100 trucks of aid required every day are getting into Tigray. Banking, electricity and communications services remain suspended, posing serious obstacles to humanitarian operations. The spread of fighting into neighbouring Amhara and Afar states, displacing tens of thousands of civilians, will only extend the human suffering and prolong the conflict.

We therefore call on Tigrayan forces to immediately cease fighting in Amhara and Afar. We reiterate that Eritrean troops must withdraw completely from Ethiopia, as the Government of Ethiopia has requested. We call upon the Ethiopian Government to fully enable humanitarian access, including by removing bureaucratic barriers to aid delivery and allowing sufficient cash and fuel into Tigray to enable humanitarian operations.

Secondly, I want to emphasize the need for all parties to ensure the protection of civilians and to comply with international humanitarian and human rights law. The Secretary-General's briefing gave further weight to the reports we have been receiving of

atrocities committed by all sides. Such atrocities include brutal and systematic sexual violence, massacres and the indiscriminate shelling of towns. We have also witnessed an increase in hate speech and attacks on the humanitarian community.

The United Kingdom fully supports the joint investigation by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. It is crucial to prospects for peace and reconciliation that the investigation be thorough and robust. The perpetrators of atrocities must also be held to account.

Thirdly, let me underline the urgency of pursuing political dialogue to end the crisis. The United Kingdom is a long-standing friend and partner of Ethiopia. We have been proud to work alongside Ethiopians to support their progress in reducing poverty and building sustainable economic growth. The current conflict is already reversing that progress. It now threatens the long-term stability and prosperity of the country, and the region.

We want to see Ethiopia return to a positive trajectory. Ten months in, it is clear that there is no military solution to the conflict. The only way that Ethiopia can return to peace and prosperity is through an inclusive political settlement. That requires talks between the parties, urgently and without preconditions. We support the efforts by the Secretary-General, Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and the African Union (AU) to make that possible. We therefore welcome the announcement today of the appointment of former President Obasanjo as the AU High Representative for the Horn of Africa.

It is abundantly clear what the parties need to do now to end the dreadful toll of human suffering in Ethiopia. The United Kingdom joins the Secretary-General and other members of the Council in calling on all parties to cease hostilities, allow unfettered humanitarian access, comply with international law and begin a process of dialogue to resolve the conflict.

Mr. Mills (United States of America): Let me begin by thanking those that have offered condolences in connection with the victims of the evil and cruel terrorist act this morning at Kabul airport. It is much appreciated.

I also thank Secretary-General Guterres for his insightful yet, as my Irish colleague said, disturbing briefing today.

In our most recent session on Ethiopia and the situation in Tigray, on 2 July (see S/PV. 8812), the United States, Ireland and the United Kingdom called for public discussion in the Council focused on the protection of civilians. We called then for a negotiated ceasefire and unfettered humanitarian access. We also called, more broadly, for a national political dialogue that would be inclusive of all Ethiopians.

Since then, no progress has been made on any of those fronts at all. As we have heard from the Secretary-General, the military confrontation has escalated. The Ethiopian Government has not responded positively to proposals for negotiations — instead, it has publicly called for the mobilization of militia. The Tigray People's Liberation Front, meanwhile, has expanded its own military campaign into the Afar and Amhara regions.

Ongoing Tigray People's Liberation Front military operations in those regions are displacing hundreds of thousands of civilians. That, too, must stop immediately. Eritrean defence forces have re-entered Tigray. Reports indicate that military alliances among armed groups in other regions risk sparking a wider war in Ethiopia. Instead of striving to create space for negotiations and dialogue, leaders on all sides have used inflammatory rhetoric that is increasing polarization along ethnic lines. This is all gravely concerning to all of us. These developments are eroding the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Ethiopian State.

The United States is particularly concerned about reports of ongoing violence in the Tigray region and other parts of northern Ethiopia, including attacks against women and children. The Ethiopian Government and the TPLF, as well as associated regional militias, must end the fighting now, allow humanitarian access and move towards a negotiated ceasefire immediately and without preconditions. Meanwhile, Eritrean Defence Forces (EDF) must refrain from further increasing or regionalizing the conflict.

Today, I would like to focus on those three concerns — the dire humanitarian situation, the need for immediate negotiations towards a sustainable ceasefire and the withdrawal of Eritrean forces.

First, contrary to its public commitments, the Ethiopian Government and regional authorities continue

to cut off Tigray, with limited entry of humanitarian goods or personnel. This withholding of humanitarian aid, particularly food, is leading to unnecessary death and untold human suffering. Last week, after repeated warnings, aid agencies ran out of food stocks in their warehouses in Tigray. That comes after all of us were told, over the past three months, about famine conditions in Tigray. Millions are at high risk of food insecurity in northern Ethiopia, and, of those, hundreds of thousands are estimated to be at risk of starvation in Tigray.

The heroes trying to fend off such starvation — humanitarian workers — are, as we heard, being targeted and killed simply for providing aid to those who are in need. Despite a small increase in the number of convoys and flights entering Tigray, we estimate that just 7 per cent of the needed humanitarian supplies were able to reach Tigray over the past month. That statistic is based on the World Food Programme's projection of what is needed and the Ethiopian Government's own reporting on how many trucks have gotten through.

Let us be clear this shortage is not because food is unavailable. It is because the Ethiopian Government is still limiting humanitarian aid and personnel, including land convoys and air access. We are troubled by disturbing reports that the Ethiopian Government is intentionally withholding humanitarian assistance to starving Ethiopians. These impediments to the movement of humanitarian supplies must be removed immediately, and trucks must be allowed to enter and deliver life-saving assistance to Tigray. If these impediments continue, large numbers of people will starve to death, and many more will die from disease. The Council was very clear when it adopted resolution 2417 (2018) in 2018. Denying humanitarian access and depriving civilians of objects indispensable to their survival is a violation of international humanitarian law and can constitute a war crime. That is happening on our watch.

The impediment to the movement of humanitarian supplies is not the only humanitarian crisis in the country. We are also alarmed about reports of reprehensible attacks against Eritrean refugees. One humanitarian worker was killed by TPLF forces in Amhara region last week and humanitarians have observed the looting of offices and warehouses of non-governmental organizations by the TPLF, with the supplies being taken into Tigray. That is utterly unacceptable. The humanitarians are there to save lives; they must be

protected. The trajectory of the conflict over the past 10 months demands continued Security Council action.

Secondly, the United States remains deeply concerned about the role of Eritrea in fuelling the ongoing crisis. The presence of the Eritrean Defence Forces in Ethiopia remains a significant barrier to ceasefire negotiations and to a political resolution of the conflict. The evidence that Eritrean Defence Forces engaged in a pattern of serious human rights abuses in Tigray is overwhelming. Therefore, earlier this week, the United States sanctioned the EDF's Chief of Staff Major General, pursuant to United States Executive Order 13818, which builds upon and implements the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act. To avoid additional measures from the United States, the EDF must immediately and permanently withdraw from northern Ethiopia. That leads to my final point.

With all the suffering and instability, it is clear that the fighting and abuses by all parties to the conflict must cease. Negotiations for a ceasefire and political discussion on a way forward must commence immediately. Given the magnitude of unspeakable suffering, the Security Council has come together, and I believe that we are making clear to all parties to the conflict that there is no military solution.

I would like to reiterate the Secretary-General's call today for all parties to the conflict to halt offensives, come to the table without preconditions and negotiate a lasting ceasefire. Without the commitment of the Ethiopian Government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front to both unimpeded access and a negotiated ceasefire, the fighting will continue, and more civilians will die.

The United States welcomes the personal engagement of the Secretary-General and his leadership in initiating dialogue towards a resolution of the conflict. To that end, we encourage the Secretary-General to work closely with the African Union, and regional and international partners, with the full backing of the Security Council.

Let me conclude by saying that the United States is committed to supporting the people of Ethiopia and the wider region as they work to resolve these challenges and overcome current divisions. The ties between the United States and Ethiopia are deep and historic. There is a reason Ethiopia is the largest recipient of United States humanitarian and development assistance in the world. We stand with the Ethiopian people. They

deserve to live in peace with each other and to lead healthier, more resilient and prosperous lives.

Mrs. Nguyen (Viet Nam): At the outset, I would like to join other colleagues in expressing our deepest condolences to the families and Governments of the victims who lost their lives in the recent attacks in Kabul.

I would like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his insightful briefing. I also welcome the representative of Ethiopia to our meeting today.

The humanitarian situation in Tigray, especially its consequences and adverse impact on the daily life of millions of people, over the past three months, has been of deep concern for all of us. The situation is made worse by the lack of constructive dialogue, negotiations and reconciliation among the parties concerned, while tensions have increased. The longer the situation lasts, the more likely it is that a long-term and comprehensive solution will be out of reach, at the expense of peace and development in Ethiopia.

Against that background, we would like to stress the following points. First and foremost, the humanitarian situation in Tigray should be addressed in the most urgent manner. We welcome the Ethiopian Government's efforts to improve humanitarian access in the region. That process should be accelerated. We also welcome the practical activities carried out by the United Nations, humanitarian organizations and international and regional partners for tens of thousands of Ethiopians over the past few months, including people in Tigray. However, we understand that access to and distribution of humanitarian assistance remain far from satisfying the need for urgent assistance in many parts of Tigray. We call for the safe, effective and efficient delivery of humanitarian assistance and expanded access for the provision of much-needed aid in the Tigray region and bordering areas. We support the appeal for action on three fronts, as recently mentioned by the Secretary-General. All those elements are crucial to finding a way out of the current situation.

Violence, the killing of civilians, including women, children and humanitarian workers, and the destruction of infrastructure indispensable to the civilian population in Tigray must be condemned and prevented. Perpetrators must be brought to justice. It is now important that all parties comply with international law to protect civilians, including women, children and

thousands of Eritrean refugees currently trapped in refugee camps in the Tigray region.

The current conflict, which has complex political, historical and ethnic roots, has had certain impacts on the region. What needs to be done now is to stop fighting, start a dialogue and undertake a political process. We hope that all relevant parties will refrain from all acts that might send Ethiopia into chaos and jeopardize peace and security in the country and in the region.

The Ethiopian authorities and all other concerned parties should give the highest priority to the interests of its people, following the basic principles enshrined in international law and the Charter of the United Nations. In this process, the international community, including the Security Council, should support all efforts aimed at achieving this end, with full respect for the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Ethiopia. The principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of States and the settlement of disputes by peaceful means should also be constantly upheld.

Last but not least, we would like to express our support once again for the constructive engagement of neighbouring countries, international and regional organizations, especially the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, for the process of peace, security, national reconciliation, national unity and development in Ethiopia.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I cannot but echo the condolences to all victims and casualties of the terrible terrorist attacks in Kabul, which were clearly carried out by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

We thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his assessments of the developments in northern Ethiopia. We also welcome the participation in today's open briefing by the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations, Taye Atskeselassie Amde.

The Russian Federation is closely following the military and political developments in the region. We regret that the unilateral humanitarian ceasefire announced by Addis Ababa at the end of June has broken down. Units from the Tigray People's Liberation Front continue to fight and have taken control of several regions — not only in Tigray but also in the

neighbouring regions of Afar and Amhara, which had previously not been affected by the conflict. Of particular concern are the attempts by Tigrayan forces to cut off humanitarian assistance delivery routes, including their taking control of the strategic highway linking Ethiopia and Djibouti, which threatens to worsen an already complex humanitarian situation and increase the flow of refugees and internally displaced persons.

The humanitarian situation in the region indeed remains difficult. However, the Federal Government continues to make significant contributions to alleviating it. We welcome the efforts of the Ethiopian authorities in recently ensuring the passage of a humanitarian convoy of the World Food Programme in Semera. We also welcome the establishment in the region of an emergency coordination centre, which we hope will help to implement plans to deliver 100 truckloads of humanitarian assistance every day to Tigray and to resolve the situation of Eritrean refugees, who are in a particularly precarious situation.

We are convinced that in order to resolve the situation, it is necessary first and foremost to depoliticize the humanitarian file of northern Ethiopia. Providing humanitarian assistance in the context of the ongoing political confrontation and a toxic media atmosphere has little chance of success. Neither can we agree with the shift in the public focus to the work of humanitarian agencies in Tigray. It is important to pay attention to other regions, including Amhara, Oromia and Somali, which also have significant humanitarian needs owing to droughts, floods, locust infestations and problems with crop cultivation. General Assembly resolution 46/182 and the United Nations guiding principles of humanitarian emergency assistance should continue to serve as the basis for those efforts. We call on the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to pay particular attention to establishing trust-based constructive dialogue with the Federal Government.

We fully support the efforts of the Secretary-General to launch a political dialogue as soon as possible. We are convinced that this dialogue should be led by Ethiopians themselves with the support first and foremost of the African community. Any possible external assistance must be carried out with scrupulous respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the country. The general elections held in Ethiopia in June this year convincingly demonstrated the ability of the federal authorities to

unify Ethiopian society. We are convinced that they can independently find ways to normalize the situation and generally put the country back on the right path for development. African partners and the international community should simply support the efforts of the Ethiopian Government. In this regard, we also note the appointment of Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of Nigeria, as High Representative of the African Union for the Horn of Africa.

It is important to understand that attempts to undermine the situation and exert pressure on the democratically elected Government of Ethiopia, including through the adoption of unilateral sanctions, will only further escalate the conflict. It is also not possible to resolve the crisis through discussions in the Security Council. It would be more effective if each Council member made its own contribution to resolving the situation. We believe that emphasis should be placed on low-key diplomacy and bilateral channels of trust-based communication. The Russian Federation stands ready to contribute to that end.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing and welcome the presence of Ambassador Amde, Permanent Representative of Ethiopia, at this meeting.

At present, Ethiopia is facing many challenges. Maintaining peace and stability in the country and ensuring the peaceful coexistence of all ethnic groups is not only in the common interest of the Ethiopian people, but also vital to the peace and security of the Horn of Africa. It is also the goal of the international community in its joint efforts in that regard. We hope that all parties in Ethiopia will resolve conflicts and differences through political dialogue, ease the tensions and avoid a further escalation of conflict in order to create conditions for achieving peace and reconciliation.

The Ethiopian Government has made great efforts aimed at alleviating the humanitarian situation in Tigray and neighbouring areas. In the meantime, affected by conflict, the humanitarian situation in some Ethiopian states has become increasingly grave, and humanitarian needs in such states as Amhara and Afar have increased. We hope that all parties in Ethiopia will continue to make efforts to expand humanitarian access and ensure the timely delivery of humanitarian goods to its people.

China has provided emergency food assistance to the Tigray region, and it calls on the international community to step up the provision of humanitarian assistance. International humanitarian agencies should uphold the United Nations guiding principles of humanitarian assistance and respect the sovereignty of Ethiopia while carrying out their work. China firmly supports Ethiopia's efforts to safeguard national sovereignty and unity and will continue to support the Ethiopian people in their efforts to achieve peace, stability, development and prosperity in their country. We hope the international community will support the Ethiopian Government in achieving a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire and effectively promote national reconciliation.

China opposes interference by external forces in Ethiopia's internal affairs in the name of human rights and humanitarianism. We support the African Union (AU) and the countries in the region in resolving African issues in an African way. We welcome the appointment of Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of Nigeria, as the High Representative of the African Union for the Horn of Africa. We hope that the United Nations and the AU will strengthen their collaboration and jointly play a constructive role in promoting reconciliation among all Ethiopian parties through dialogue.

The unilateral sanctions imposed by a certain country on Ethiopia and Eritrea are inconsistent with international law and the basic norms of international relations. Instead of resolving conflict, they will only interfere with the political settlement. China believes that the Ethiopian Government has the ability and the wisdom to handle its internal affairs well and firmly believes that the Ethiopian people can overcome the difficulties and tackle the current challenges. China stands ready to work with the rest of the international community to support Ethiopia's commitment to ensuring national unity, restoring stability and achieving development.

Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Like other colleagues, I would like to start by expressing Mexico's deep condolences to the families of the victims who lost their lives in the recent attack in Kabul.

Mexico thanks Ireland, the United States of America, Estonia, France, Norway and the United Kingdom for having convened this meeting. We also thank the Secretary-General for his frank yet worrisome

briefing, and we appreciate his efforts and dedication to the situation in Ethiopia. We also welcome the representative of Ethiopia.

In a few months, it will be a year since the start of hostilities in Tigray. The conflict has resulted in thousands of civilian deaths; some 2 million people have been displaced; hundreds of thousands more are in famine conditions; and more than 90 per cent of the population are in need of some kind of humanitarian assistance.

In that context, of particular concern are reports that the fighting has spread to the Afar and Amhara regions, increasing the number of internally displaced persons and the need for additional assistance. In addition, the conflict has involved other actors, at both the national and regional levels. Ethiopia, a friend of Mexico with which we have historical and fraternal ties, has played a key role in the stability of the Horn of Africa for decades. In addition to hosting the African Union, it is a major contributor to peacekeeping forces. That is why a prolongation of the conflict not only will have disastrous consequences for millions of Ethiopians, but also represents a high risk of destabilization for the region. Once again, Mexico reiterates its call to all parties to the conflict for an immediate ceasefire. We also advocate the withdrawal of all non-Ethiopian forces from Tigray, as well as the presence of militias from outside the neighbouring federal States.

We call on the Ethiopian authorities to ensure the protection of its citizens, regardless of their ethnicity or political affiliations. Reports of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls, as well as grave violations against children, must be investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice. We look forward to the results of the ongoing joint investigation by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission.

Mexico welcomes the efforts of the United Nations and humanitarian actors to bring humanitarian assistance to Tigray. We regret that humanitarian activities continue to face challenges and, in particular, that humanitarian aid cannot reach certain regions.

Communications, fuel and banking disruptions are affecting the humanitarian community's ability to deliver assistance. We stress the need to restore those services and ensure unimpeded humanitarian access to prevent the critical situation of the population from further deteriorating. A lack of access to food can result

in mass starvation, as we heard here, while shortages of basic services and essential medicines and medical supplies exacerbate the risk of communicable and preventable diseases.

Moreover, Mexico emphatically calls on all parties to the conflict to respect the norms of international humanitarian law and human rights, in particular the protection of the civilian population and essential infrastructure, as well as humanitarian workers. We also reiterate the need to investigate attacks against civilians and humanitarian workers to prevent impunity.

In conclusion, I would like to say that, if anything has become clear during this period, it is that there is no military solution to the conflict in Ethiopia, as we heard from many representatives. In that regard, we acknowledge the regional efforts to mediate and find a political solution. Mexico calls on all parties to the conflict to put the well-being of millions of people above their own interests and to immediately begin an inclusive dialogue, with a view to starting the process of national reconciliation and reconstruction. We therefore welcome the appointment of former President of Nigeria Obasanjo as the African Union High Representative for the Horn of Africa.

Mr. Kimani (Kenya): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council plus one (A3+1), namely, Kenya, the Niger and Tunisia, as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing on the latest developments in Ethiopia. We commend his engagement with the Ethiopian leadership, the African Union and regional leaders. We believe that his good offices can play an important role in facilitating a resolution of the current situation.

We heard the important information, insights and concerns expressed by our fellow members of the Security Council. We, indeed, share similar points of view with many of them.

The violence currently affecting the people and the country of Ethiopia is the product of conflicting views of the country's future. It erupted and has worsened because the country's conflict-prevention and resolution tools have, until now, been inadequate to the task.

The resolution to this crisis requires that we undertake a mediation of the deep divides as part of an Ethiopian-owned process, supported by the

available peace and security architecture and practices, especially those of the African Union.

As the A3+1, we observe that, on every side of the conflict, there is a growing perception of ethnic identity being the basis of conflict. The opposed sides give short shrift to each other's grievances and regard opposition to their own view as illegitimate. Those opposed constituencies, reflecting the present political character of Ethiopia, are organized along ethnic lines. That makes them uniquely dangerous because they easily conflate political opposition to a struggle between ethnicities.

We have witnessed with profound concern the resulting terrible harm that has befallen innocent civilians. If the present course is not changed, we fear that it may get far worse.

We condemned, and continue to condemn, the violence against civilians — the killing of boys and men not in uniform, the destruction of civilian objects and the confrontations that have led to the blocking of humanitarian aid being delivered to desperate families. In particular, we register our strongest protest against the horrific human rights violations and acts of sexual violence perpetrated against girls and women.

Our values as a continent, as captured with such gravity in the Constitutive Act of the African Union, demand respect for the sanctity of human life and the condemnation and rejection of impunity. To put an end to the violence, our values must inspire and drive practical action.

In our last statement on 2 July (see S/PV.8812), we welcomed the democratic aspirations of the Ethiopian people, as expressed in their last elections. We return to this important moment for Ethiopia to argue that democracy, above all, is a mechanism for the resolution of serious political differences. The democratic mandate awarded by the millions of voters must include every Ethiopian citizen, even, and perhaps especially, in Tigray and other parts of the country where the vote was not held due to insecurity. The democratic mandate will only fulfil its potential and fundamental requirement by helping resolve the greatest differences in Ethiopia.

It is not easy to move from violent confrontation to the negotiating table. That is why on 2 July we recommended use of the mechanisms available in Africa's peace and security architecture, underpinned

by our Constitutive Act. Foremost among those mechanisms and available to Ethiopia immediately is the right of member States to request intervention from the Union in order to restore peace and security.

We welcome the appointment by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission of former President Olusegun Obasanjo as the High Representative for the Horn of Africa. His mandate is to promote peace, security and stability on behalf of the region. We urge all regional leaders and the broad international community to lend him every assistance, particularly as he supports a peace process in Ethiopia. That process must promote and protect human and peoples' rights. It must be clear in ensuring the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ethiopia. It should be genuinely inclusive to promote unity, solidarity, cohesion and cooperation among the peoples of Ethiopia and the Ethiopian State.

To allow space for that process, we therefore urge the Government of Ethiopia to remove all legal, administrative and security barriers to a political dialogue. No matter what has come to pass, the Government needs to acknowledge the existence of legitimate grievances and to understand that they must be resolved peacefully.

We must also pronounce our concern and caution about the rallying of the civilian population to the conflict. Although it may be intended to marshal the patriotic spirit of the people, it could lead to an uncontrollable spiral of violence and bloodshed. There are those who will take it to be an invitation to acts of collective punishment against civilians. This is the time for leadership to urge calm and to inspire confidence that the country has the ability to overcome even this greatest of challenges with its growing democratic instincts.

To the armed actors in Tigray, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Tigray Defence Forces, we urge the withdrawal from neighbouring regions and a halt to the rallying of other armed actors. The further they advance outside Tigray, the greater the danger to the people on whose behalf they claim to be acting. Escalating political tensions in other parts of the country will not solve the crisis, it will only widen the divide. The TPLF must leave no lingering doubt that they will ever play any part in compromising the political independence and territorial integrity of

Ethiopia, which all members of the African Union are obliged to defend.

In addition, we recommend the spirit of the following steps to all Ethiopian leaders, understanding that they are not easy to implement.

First, they must make immediate announcements to all citizens and all militia and armed units that the targeting of civilians and women in particular is unacceptable and must stop now.

Secondly, they must de-conflict military movements in Tigray, Afar and Amhara in order to enable unfettered access to humanitarian aid before famine returns to any part of Ethiopia. It is important that lines of communication between military leaders be opened for that purpose.

Thirdly, they must announce a willingness to stop hostilities and to establish a ceasefire.

Fourthly, we would say to the Parliament just voted into office that peace cannot be made with a political movement that has been labelled a terrorist group. Parliament should prepare to lift that designation so as to allow for direct contact and negotiation with armed actors opposing the Government.

Fifthly, we tell the Government that it must tangibly demonstrate its embrace of the people of Tigray by resuming the provision of basic services to them.

Sixthly, the leaders must accept the good offices of the African Union, the region and the Secretary-General as bridges to mediation and peacebuilding.

We also make several recommendations to the Security Council and the international community. We call for the Government of Eritrea to withdraw its forces from Ethiopia and embrace the role of peacebuilding. We urge wealthy countries and organizations to provide adequate resources to the humanitarian campaigns in Ethiopia. We call for the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and all of Ethiopia's creditors to deliver an economic recovery package to be implemented the moment political mediation is under way. We urge caution in the use of any unilateral coercive sanction measures that may bring about Ethiopia's economic collapse. Their use will only worsen the humanitarian crisis.

To the African Union, we call for a re-energizing of the African Peace and Security Architecture. We

have seen that its powerful capabilities contribute to resolving many conflict situations in the continent, and we believe that they can be used in Ethiopia.

Allow us to conclude with a final caution. War is seductive. There are those who today in Ethiopia call for it to be given a chance. Such an attitude taps into a deep human desire for the clarity that enmity appears to offer. It promises simplicity instead of painful compromise, the annoying need to listen to the other and the frustration that comes from trying to appreciate complexity. The Ethiopia of old inspired and rallied us Africans. It had challenges; it had known war and subjugation among and between its peoples. But its successful resistance to colonialism, racism and fascism rallied our spirits.

As Africans, we are conscious that this is our historic moment to recover our march to prosperity, peace and independence from the actors who prefer us weak and divided. Ethiopia must not tap into its glorious history solely to grasp the grievances that lead to anger and hatred. Instead, Ethiopians must find in their past the prominent lessons of compromise, unity and peace. We appeal to the leaders and people of Ethiopia to understand that they cannot break each other's spirits and succeed in building a united and prosperous country.

The President: I would now like to make a statement in my capacity as the representative of India.

I join others in thanking the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing and insights into the issue, and I welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia in today's meeting.

Let me begin by strongly condemning the terrorist attack in Kabul today. We extend our heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims of that terrorist attack. Today's attack reinforced the need for the world to stand united against terrorism and all those who provide sanctuaries to terrorists.

Today's meeting, under the agenda item "Peace and security in Africa", was made necessary by the humanitarian situation in Tigray, northern Ethiopia, which is witnessing continuing fighting between the Ethiopian National Defence Forces and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). In recent weeks, the conflict has intensified and now been spread by one side, the TPLF, to the neighbouring regions of Amhara and Afar. The conflict is having a severe impact on the

civilian population, particularly women, children and the elderly, and has resulted in the killing of innocent civilians, human rights violations and the use of child soldiers.

The unilateral ceasefire announced by the Government of Ethiopia in June was an important step aimed at improving the worsening humanitarian situation. Unfortunately, the opportunity provided by the ceasefire seems not to have been grasped, with the continuing aggression and belligerence of one side and the spread of fighting beyond the Tigray region. Unfortunately, the humanitarian cost and suffering due to the conflict is mounting. This development has the potential to destabilize the larger Horn of Africa region. In our view, today's meeting should strengthen efforts towards the ceasefire, which is the need of the hour.

In that context, we take note of the efforts of the Government of Ethiopia and its leadership in addressing the situation. The Government has been working with humanitarian partners, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the World Food Programme (WFP) and other agencies to alleviate the suffering of the people. We deeply appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General in that connection.

Humanitarian access has been improving progressively, with more convoys reaching the areas in need. That is demonstrated by the statistics provided by OCHA and WFP. The communication and coordination between the Ethiopian authorities and humanitarian agencies has improved significantly in recent weeks.

We welcomed the establishment of the Regional Emergency Coordination Centre in Semera, comprising federal institutions, regional counterparts, the World Food Programme and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, to facilitate the movement of trucks along Afar routes to Tigray and coordinate emergency assistance to displaced people. We urge sustained close coordination between humanitarian agencies and the Ethiopian authorities to bridge the remaining gaps.

At the same time, there is an urgent need to scale up efforts consistent with the United Nations guiding principles for humanitarian assistance. At this juncture, Ethiopia needs all the support it can get from the international community. The international community should come together, treat the emerging situation with sensitivity and seriousness and extend all possible

humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia. The humanitarian agencies also need to take measures to prevent the diversion of humanitarian aid.

The Government has undertaken investigations into cases of serious human rights violations, including through joint investigations with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We strongly denounce and condemn all atrocities committed by armed groups against civilians, including children. Those responsible for the human rights violations and sexual violence perpetrated in Tigray should be prosecuted.

For decades, Ethiopia has been an engine of economic growth in the Horn of Africa region. Today Ethiopia needs support from the international community, including from the African Union and the United Nations, to address issues related to the conflict. The solution to the conflict must be Ethiopian-led and within the country's constitutional framework. India continues to underscore the importance of mutual trust, engagement, dialogue and reconciliation for lasting peace and stability. India reiterates its strong commitment to the unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ethiopia.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Ethiopia.

Mr. Amde (Ethiopia): I thank you, Mr. President, for allowing my country's participation in this meeting. I also thank the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for his briefing, and I acknowledge the presence of Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths.

On World Humanitarian Day last week, the Secretary-General emphasized the situation in my country. The Government of Ethiopia appreciates the Secretary-General's good-faith engagement. We appreciate his call for ending the suffering of the Ethiopian people. The same objective will continue to drive the efforts of the Government of Ethiopia, as has been the case in the past nine months following the treasonous and unforgettable attack against the northern command of the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF) by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF).

In a previous discussion (see S/PV.8812) on the situation of my country, I tried to give members of the Security Council a broader perspective on the

problem that we are facing. The current state of affairs in Ethiopia did not transpire overnight. It was in the making long before the TPLF unleashed its attack on the ENDF northern command in the dark hours of 4 November.

The genesis of the current conflict dates back at least three decades. Since 1991, the TPLF has maintained hegemonic control over the political, security and economic life of the Ethiopian people. During that time, the TPLF has faced resistance at every turn in all corners of Ethiopia. We must recall that it was the sustained popular protests that dislodged the TPLF from political power in 2018, ushering in a period of promise for transition,

The TPLF was dislodged not only from power but also from the hearts and minds of the Ethiopian people, owing to the non-evolving and destructive ideology that it seeks to preserve in the Ethiopian body politic. The people of Ethiopia transcended those political elites that stand for division over unity, oligarchy over equal opportunity and favouritism over merit. When it lost power, the TPLF retreated to Tigray, taking our people there hostage. For, as the saying goes: “For those accustomed to privilege, equality feels like oppression”.

Nevertheless, despite numerous provocations, the Ethiopian Government had exercised maximum restraint until the group attacked and looted military barracks. Over the past nine months, as the Government had sought to uphold the constitutional order, the TPLF refused to disarm and surrender to law-enforcement authorities, doubling down on its destructive agenda.

The unilateral humanitarian ceasefire declared in June and the subsequent withdrawal of the National Defence Forces from Tigray were supposed to bring calm to the region and its people and provide space for the TPLF leadership to reconsider its ruinous course. Our plan was to allow for a peaceful farming season in Tigray. It was supposed to pave the way for the uninhibited flow of humanitarian assistance for people in need.

If it had gone according to the plan we envisioned, the ceasefire would have allowed us to embark on rebuilding and reconstruction in the region and repair and reconnect the infrastructure and economic apparatuses disrupted by the TPLF. In addition, the children in Tigray would have already begun preparations for the school year for 2014, according

to the Ethiopian Calendar — 2021 in the Gregorian calendar — which is set to begin in September.

We would have also liked to see the members of the TPLF, who had signalled their willingness for peace, successfully advance their position and convince their peers to abide by the law and follow the path of peace. The Government’s commitment for peace was disregarded by the TPLF, which called the ceasefire a joke, as well as members of the international community that tolerated, enabled and condoned the group in following its destructive path.

The repeated plea for a ceasefire was ignored, and we now have Ethiopian children in Tigray subjected to forced recruitment to serve as cannon fodder. We are also seeing the distribution of aid predicated on the condition that parents give away their children to fight in war. Not only farmers in the Tigray region but also others in the adjacent Afar and Amhara regions are currently unable to farm their land, exposing them to the indignity of receiving aid to sustain their family. Hundreds of thousands in the Afar and Amhara regions have been displaced and have sustained irreparable damage to their well-being.

With absolute disregard for the well-being of people and in greedy pursuit of whatever is there to be acquired by creating mayhem for the very people it purports to stand for, the TPLF has blocked humanitarian aid. The group has also engaged in the formalization of fronts between internal and external actors bent on destabilizing the great nation of Ethiopia. In that regard, we see clear coordination between those internal treasonous elements and external actors, from near and far, that have opened a multidimensional offensive aimed at obstructing Ethiopia’s right to use its natural resources.

As to humanitarian assistance, the Government of Ethiopia is fully cognizant of its obligation to its citizens. The sensationalization and politicization of our situation does not inform our response. We will continue to deliver on our obligation, using all means and allocating all available resources.

In that regard, first, the Government of Ethiopia is committed to hastening the clearance of humanitarian convoys. In fact, we are committed to reducing the number of checkpoints and fast-tracking scanning processes. We are working with partners to introduce modern scanning technology. Secondly, we will continue to consider requests for humanitarian flights.

The World Food Programme and the National Disaster Risk Management Commission are administering their humanitarian flights unimpeded. Thirdly, we will continue to provide cash and manage it in a predictable and sustainable manner for all humanitarian agencies.

Similarly, the resumption of public services requires peace and the rule of law in Tigray. Those essential services cannot be reconnected so long as the group that to date has killed 33 infrastructure operators and engineers, looted and diverted aid and confiscated humanitarian convoys continues to persist on its destructive path of war.

Our goal is peace. Unfortunately, the Tigray People's Liberation Front is standing between Ethiopia and peace. The Tigray People's Liberation Front is not the victim, but the culprit. The people of Ethiopia, especially those in the Afar, Amhara and Tigray regions, are living in underserved and insufferable conditions. We are startled that all those who appeared to call for peace and pressure on the Government to suspend its law-enforcement operation later on tolerated and ratified, through their reticence, the expansion of violence and mayhem by the Tigray People's Liberation Front.

Our plea to all and our sincere wish is for help to realize peace, including by putting pressure on that lawless group to stop its criminal advances, abandon preparations for combat and abide by the laws of the country. The group must also irrefutably delink itself from internal and external sponsors and affiliates. As for the international community, we ask that it remove the actual or perceived support emanating from its side, off of which the group feeds. All it has to do is comply with the requirements set by the Government and free the people of Tigray from its egotistical grip. In the absence of compliance with the country's laws, the Government of Ethiopia will apply any means necessary to ensure law and order.

Regarding some of the unsubstantiated assertions we heard today, we call upon the members of the Council to be cautious regarding the so-called facts and misinformation that have dominated the scene. There is no discrimination based on any grounds, including ethnicity, religion or any other reason. We are not people of fewer morals; we are people of values. We have survived for centuries through social cohesion. We built unity while honouring differences. Ethiopian reform is all about how to strengthen our unity and live in harmony. The reform is not about learning to die on the hill of ethnic divisions, as has been professed, propagated and implemented by the Tigray People's Liberation Front for more than 30 years.

I would like to use this opportunity to express our gratitude to all those who have stood with us in our times of need. At the same time, we respectfully assert our sovereign integrity as an ancient, independent African country that is constantly striving to overcome its challenges. In that regard, I would like to underscore how harmful the saviour mentality that seeks to undermine the sovereign right and responsibility of States for their own security and the well-being of their people has proved to be in many instances. We can only hope that the right lessons are learned.

Evidently, Ethiopia is not a country that allows others to delegate the shape of its future. As the international community has witnessed, undue foreign pressure and interference is not appreciated by a single soul in my country. After-the-fact regret and the admission of failure in foreign policy will not help. Therefore, we call on everyone concerned to work with us. We are ready to work with all well-intentioned partners.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.