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meeting

Wednesday, 6 October 2021, 3 p.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Kimani	(Kenya)
<i>Members:</i>	China	Mr. Zhang Jun
	Estonia	Mr. Lipand
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	India	Mr. Tirumurti
	Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
	Mexico	Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco
	Niger	Mr. Abarry
	Norway	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. King
	Tunisia	Mr. Ladeb
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield
	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 welcome this opportunity to brief the Security Council concerning the situation in Ethiopia.

In August, I warned the Council that a humanitarian catastrophe was unfolding before our eyes in Ethiopia (see S/PV.8843). Since then, the crisis has worsened. Up to 7 million people in Tigray, Amhara and Afar are now in need of food assistance and other emergency support. That includes more than 5 million people in Tigray, where an estimated 400,000 people are living in famine-like conditions.

Humanitarian aid is still not reaching the area at anywhere close to the levels needed. The only option for road transportation into Tigray is along the Afar corridor, where movements are being severely restricted by official and unofficial checkpoints, insecurity and other obstacles and challenges. Some minor improvements — which are welcome — did not change the fundamental nature of the problem.

Vital fuel supplies continue to be blocked, as are essential medicines and equipment. Humanitarian organizations continue to lack the cash they need to operate and to pay their staff. Access to electricity remains precarious. Millions of people are cut off from communications networks and vital services, such as health care. And fighting in Amhara is another serious impediment to humanitarian access. As a result of all those facts, life-saving humanitarian operations are being crippled.

Our colleagues on the ground are sharing increasingly alarming eyewitness testimony of the suffering, including growing accounts of hunger-

related deaths. And in locations where screening has been possible, we are seeing acute malnutrition rates that remind us of the onset of the 2011 Somalia famine.

We are also seeing deeply worrisome reports of violations and human rights abuses perpetrated by all sides. I am particularly concerned about chilling accounts of violence against women and children, including sexual and gender-based violence.

The United Nations is also actively engaged in humanitarian support to other regions of Ethiopia with pressing needs. The country is facing an immense humanitarian crisis that demands immediate attention.

All efforts should be squarely focused on saving lives and avoiding a massive human tragedy. That makes last Thursday's announcement by the Government of Ethiopia to expel seven senior United Nations officials — most of them humanitarian staff — particularly disturbing. That unprecedented expulsion should be a matter of deep concern for us all, as it relates to the core of relations between the United Nations and Member States.

As expressed in the note verbale to the Mission of Ethiopia from the Office of Legal Affairs, which was shared with the Council a few days ago:

“A declaration by a State that an official of the United Nations is persona non grata accompanied by a request or demand that the Secretary-General consequently relocate that official out of its territory is not consistent with the Charter obligation and is inconsistent with the fundamental principles of the international civil service enshrined in the Charter.”

The procedure on such matters is clear. As the note verbale states, if the Government has any specific issues concerning any individuals, the relevant information should be brought to the attention of the United Nations to enable the Secretary-General to make a decision as to whether any appropriate actions should be taken. In other words, there is a proper, formal procedure — and that procedure was not followed.

The United Nations will continue to play its mandated role and work with the Government of Ethiopia and with local and international partners to support millions of people in need of humanitarian assistance in Tigray, Amhara and Afar and across the country, in full accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and General Assembly resolution 46/182.

I now call on the Ethiopian authorities to allow us to do that without hindrance and to facilitate and enable our work with the urgency that the situation demands. That means ensuring that visas for incoming personnel from United Nations entities and from our partners are issued quickly so that we can augment our capacity. The delays we have witnessed in the recent past are another obstacle to effective humanitarian aid. It also means that personnel inside the country be treated with dignity and respect as they carry out their vital work.

Our focus remains on ensuring humanitarian assistance to every Ethiopian who needs it. We must save lives and restore livelihoods. I urge the Government to allow the unrestricted movement of desperately needed fuel, cash, communications equipment and humanitarian supplies into all regions in need. I appeal to all members of the Security Council to do all they can to support those calls and to unify behind the efforts of the United Nations and its partners in Ethiopia.

In August, here in the Council, I called for action on several fronts. As I said then,

“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.” (*S/PV.8843, p. 3*).

That appeal is even more pressing today. Any further escalation of the conflict would only make the situation more tragic.

Important political events have taken place in Ethiopia since my most recent Security Council briefing in August. Just two days ago, a new Government of Ethiopia, led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, was inaugurated. The mandate conferred by the election carries a responsibility to unite all Ethiopians, to focus on the future and to return Ethiopia to its place as a strong, unified, stable leader among the nations of the world. I encourage the newly inaugurated Government to use that mandate and work with renewed determination to be a Government for all.

I welcome the Prime Minister's inauguration remarks prioritizing an inclusive political dialogue involving all segments of the community to resolve the ongoing challenges facing the country. I also note the many messages from African Heads of State

emphasizing the need for harmony, national unity, development and peace. I urge all sides to grasp the peace initiative from the African Union and its High Representative for the Horn of Africa, His Excellency Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo.

Without peace, the challenges facing Ethiopia will intensify and further destabilize the broader Horn of Africa region and beyond. We have an obligation to avoid such a dire outcome at all costs. Dialogue is the foundation for peace, and peace is the foundation for a stable and prosperous future. Let us all work to help secure that future for all Ethiopians and the peoples of the region.

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

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

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his important and timely briefing today.

Ireland joined others in calling for this meeting because we believe that the recent expulsion of United Nations leadership from Ethiopia should be addressed publicly by the Security Council. That expulsion is particularly egregious in the context of the continuing deterioration of the humanitarian situation in northern Ethiopia, which cannot be excused or ignored.

In a closed meeting on Friday, Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths told us that 5.2 million people require humanitarian assistance and 400,000 are living in famine-like conditions in Tigray. Eighty per cent of pregnant and lactating women are acutely malnourished. Perhaps most worrisome, child malnutrition rates are similar to those recorded at the onset of the Somalia famine in 2011.

Let us be clear about what that means. Ethiopian children are starving. People are dying because they cannot access food, water or basic health care. That is not a situation caused by natural disaster. It is caused by those who continue to choose the path of war. The ongoing effective blockade of Tigray, including systematic efforts to prevent medicines and medical supplies from reaching the region, is costing lives. As the conflict spills over into the neighbouring Amhara and Afar regions, the humanitarian crisis is spreading. In those circumstances, we need a fully operational, unimpeded and proportionate humanitarian response

that reaches all those in need of assistance and protection in northern Ethiopia and across the country.

The decision of the Ethiopian Government to expel senior United Nations staff undermines its working relationship with the United Nations when it needs it most. As outlined by the European Union High Representative on Monday, it risks the further weakening of efforts to bring relief to millions of Ethiopians in need at a moment when aid organizations already face serious impediments in carrying out their mandates.

Unfounded allegations and consistent targeting of humanitarian workers put all humanitarian work in the country at risk and are unacceptable. Safeguarding the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence ensures that aid can arrive where and when it is needed the most. As other members of the Council have previously done, I call on all parties to the conflict to depoliticize humanitarian aid.

The Secretary-General made it clear to us when we last met (see S/PV.8843) and in his recent letter to the Council that the conflict in Ethiopia is spiralling out of control. We were warned of that months ago. Ireland, a long-standing friend of Ethiopia, has been drawing attention to the situation and its inevitable consequences for the people of Ethiopia since we joined the Council. We ended our last meeting with the Secretary-General in agreement that quiet diplomacy should be given a chance. Despite such efforts, we continue to receive reports of inflammatory and dehumanizing language. As the Secretary-General said today, any further escalation of the conflict would only make the situation more tragic.

We continue to receive reports of conflict-related sexual violence and atrocities, denial of access to humanitarian aid and attacks on humanitarian workers, which may amount to war crimes. Those who commit such violations must be held accountable. Before we see the tragedy worsen even further and see more young people needlessly lose their lives to the war, all sides must accept that there can be no military solution to the crisis.

Let me reiterate the three key asks of many of us here in the Council.

First, we are asking all parties to the conflict to immediately ensure full, unimpeded and safe

humanitarian access, as required in accordance with international humanitarian law. The blockade on Tigray must end now, and basic services must be restored. Food, medicines and fuel cannot be restricted to just a fraction of what is required. Without immediate and scaled-up action, the horror of mass mortality caused by political decisions will once again tragically overwhelm parts of Ethiopia.

Secondly, we all want to see an immediate cessation of hostilities between all parties to the conflict, and for them to come to the table to negotiate a lasting ceasefire. Eritrean forces also need to withdraw from Ethiopia.

Thirdly, we need a political solution to the crisis in Tigray, as well as an Ethiopian-led inclusive national dialogue that promotes the unity of Ethiopia.

The African Union (AU) has a crucial role to play in engaging with all sides, supporting mediation efforts and ultimately assisting Ethiopia in finding a solution to the crisis. Ireland looks forward to hearing an update from the AU High Representative for the Horn of Africa, Mr. Obasanjo, at the next available opportunity.

In conclusion, Ethiopia's Government has a historic opportunity, and indeed a new mandate, to turn the tide towards peace and steer the country back onto the hopeful path of just a few years ago. We are approaching the one-year anniversary of the conflict. It must end. It is time for Ethiopia's leaders to deliver the peace, unity and prosperity that all Ethiopian people deserve. The alternative is a catastrophic, prolonged and expanding conflict that threatens to destroy Ethiopia's ambition for a prosperous and peaceful future. We simply cannot afford to miss this opportunity.

Mr. Lipand (Estonia): I thank Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing. We wholeheartedly support the statements he made today and last Thursday (SG/SM/20944) and the letter he sent to the Security Council on this matter.

Estonia strongly condemns the decision by the Government of Ethiopia to expel seven United Nations officials, including humanitarian and human rights officials. Those personnel members were responsible for the invaluable and difficult work of delivering life-saving aid to Ethiopia and helping the Ethiopian people to cope with the unfolding man-made humanitarian catastrophe. It is essential that United Nations humanitarian operations be immediately allowed to resume in full capacity in Ethiopia.

United Nations humanitarian operations are guided by the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence, and they have our full confidence. Any accusations against United Nations workers and humanitarian personnel of breaches of those principles should be accompanied by clear evidence. There is a process for handling any such concerns, and that has not been followed. The expulsion of the United Nations officials from Ethiopia undermines the efforts to alleviate the dire humanitarian situation and further endangers the work of humanitarian aid workers in northern Ethiopia, where they are already facing violence and harassment.

All parties to the conflict have an obligation to facilitate safe and unhindered humanitarian access to all areas affected by the conflict and ensure the protection of humanitarian workers, in line with international humanitarian law. We urge the Government of Ethiopia to take further steps to ensure sustained access for aid convoys to Tigray, restore public services in the region and allow fuel, food and medical supplies to enter. Only 11 per cent of needed aid entering the region is unacceptable.

At the same time, we call on the Tigray forces to stop their offensive in the neighbouring Amhara and Afar regions and facilitate humanitarian assistance to hundreds of thousands of displaced people. Furthermore, we underline the importance of concluding the joint investigation into the allegations of human rights violations and abuses, in particular against human rights workers. The continued reports of such violations and abuse of international humanitarian law and international human rights law are deeply worrisome, and accountability for such violations must be ensured.

Lastly, I reiterate that there is no military solution in Tigray. The newly appointed Cabinet in Ethiopia has a mandate from the people and an obligation to bring about a prompt and peaceful solution to the conflict and also ensure that the people of Ethiopia do not die of hunger. I urge the parties to immediately cease hostilities, ensure the protection of civilians and minimize the humanitarian consequences of the ongoing conflict. That should be followed by an inclusive and credible political process, with the aim of national reconciliation. In that context, we also reiterate the role of the African Union and encourage its continued engagement in this crisis.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I thank the Secretary-General for his presence among us today and his briefing. I commend the commitment of the United Nations personnel deployed in Ethiopia.

In view of the humanitarian emergency, France expects that the Ethiopian authorities will cooperate fully with the United Nations and all international partners. France condemns the Ethiopian Government's decision to declare seven United Nations officials as *personae non gratae* France and the European Union will continue to support the civilian populations that have been hard hit by the conflict, as attested to by their financial contributions to the humanitarian response in the north of the country as well as the Humanitarian Air Bridge, set up by the European Union, France and Italy.

Such support means that United Nations and all humanitarian personnel will be able to work in complete safety while compliance with humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law is fully respected. France calls on the Ethiopian authorities to ensure full humanitarian access for all humanitarian personnel and uphold their own commitments. We will not tolerate any form of intimidation or violence against humanitarian personnel. Lifting the current blockade is a prerequisite for any resolution to the conflict under way.

In this case as in others, only a political solution will allow the crisis to end. France fully supports the three points recalled today by the Secretary-General. A ceasefire is crucial to responding to the emergency and creating the necessary conditions for a settlement. France calls once again for the verifiable and controlled withdrawal of Eritrean forces from Ethiopian territory, in particular from western Tigray. In return, we call on the Tigrayan forces to make goodwill gestures and withdraw to within the regional boundaries of Tigray. A compromise must finally be reached with the Amhara forces on the border dispute between the two regions within the framework of the Constitution.

Reconciliation cannot be achieved without combating impunity. France is looking forward to the report of the joint investigation by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, scheduled for publication on 1 November. We take note of the Ethiopian Government's pledge to identify and prosecute the perpetrators of human rights violations.

Lastly, France will support all efforts for dialogue aimed at preserving the unity and territorial integrity of Ethiopia. France takes note of the commitment by the Prime Minister to organize an inclusive national dialogue, and we call on him to initiate it as soon as possible. France also supports the efforts of President Obasanjo, who will be received tomorrow in Paris. We encourage all international actors, beginning with the United Nations, to provide all the support necessary for his success.

Ms. Juul (Norway): On Friday, we were shocked by Ethiopia's expulsion of seven United Nations officials, and we are profoundly dismayed today by Ethiopia's failure to reverse that untenable decision. The man-made humanitarian crisis in Ethiopia is getting worse by the day, and famine most probably has already taken hold. In that context, the expulsion of essential United Nations officials — key humanitarian leaders — is deeply disturbing.

It is unacceptable that Ethiopia chooses to obstruct the important work of crucial United Nations organizations. The United Nations is delivering life-saving aid to people in desperate need — impartially and in all parts of Ethiopia. The United Nations is not a party to the conflict in Ethiopia. On the contrary, Norway firmly believes in the impartiality and professionalism of the United Nations and its personnel. We are steadfast in our support of the United Nations, and we wish to reiterate our request that Ethiopia immediately reverse the expulsion of the seven staff members.

To end the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Tigray, the Federal Ethiopian authorities, the Tigray People's Liberation Front and other armed actors must ensure the rapid, safe and unimpeded access of humanitarian aid to the region. They must do their utmost to facilitate the work of humanitarian organizations and their personnel and fully respect international humanitarian law by providing security for humanitarian workers.

We deplore the ongoing vilifying comments made regarding humanitarian actors. Such hateful rhetoric is dangerous and is putting lives at risk. Such a situation hits those who are already vulnerable the hardest, including those facing famine, the displaced and, more often than not, women and children. Indeed, the denial of humanitarian access during conflict is one of the six grave violations against children. There must be a response to that.

Norway also condemns in the strongest terms the reported killings of civilians and the widespread and systematic use of sexual and gender-based violence. All alleged atrocities and violations by all sides must be documented and investigated. Accountability for such acts is critical to prevention, deterrence and justice for victims and survivors.

Norway strongly supports the appointment of former President Obasanjo as the African Union High Representative for the Horn of Africa, and we ask the parties to actively engage with the High Representative. At a bare minimum, the Security Council should be clear in support of his endeavours and unified in its support for the United Nations, its humanitarian agencies and its staff. If we cannot do that, we have failed.

We must urgently, and with one voice, speak out in support of that, together with an immediate ceasefire, a political dialogue, unimpeded humanitarian access to all those in need and an immediate reversal of the expulsion of the seven United Nations officials.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I start by paying tribute to the United Nations staff around the world who work tirelessly to deliver humanitarian aid, assessing and addressing needs on a neutral, impartial basis. I think that we all agree that their life-saving activities should not be politicized and that Member States should make every effort to support and facilitate their work.

That is why the United Kingdom, like many of Ethiopia's partners, was deeply disappointed by the Government of Ethiopia's decision to expel seven United Nations officials. The strength of international concern over that is apparent in the fact that more than 40 countries quickly joined a joint statement delivered by the United Kingdom at the Human Rights Council in Geneva on 4 October.

As we have heard and seen, the humanitarian situation in Ethiopia is critical. The United Nations personnel who were expelled were dealing with the increasingly acute needs of those in the north of Ethiopia. The United Kingdom Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs visited Tigray and Amhara last week and saw first-hand the United Nations efforts to respond to that emergency. The removal of key United Nations personnel will

have a direct impact on the ability of the international community to deliver vital humanitarian assistance.

Unfortunately, that is not the only obstacle to delivering aid in northern Ethiopia. I want to reiterate our urgent call for the Tigray People's Liberation Front to cease its military campaign and act in the best interests of ordinary people in Tigray. Likewise, I reiterate our call on the Federal Government to work with the United Nations and other international partners to eliminate all barriers to humanitarian access.

As we have heard before, that needs to include urgent action to restore telecommunications and banking services in Tigray, enable deliveries of food and fuel and expedite the issuing of visas for humanitarian response staff. Time is of the essence. Thousands of truckloads of food and medicine and millions of litres of fuel need to move into Tigray in order to avert deaths on a catastrophic scale before the end of this year.

Finally, we know that there will be no military solution to this conflict. It is past time to stop fighting and, as the Secretary-General urged, it is time to start talking. We welcomed the African Union's decision to appoint former President His Excellency Mr. Obasanjo as an envoy in August. I reiterate our full support for him, the African Union and the United Nations as they work to end this tragic conflict and to help those in need.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I thank Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing to us this afternoon.

First and foremost, I want to offer solidarity and support to the United Nations during this trying time as they work to save lives. We called for this urgent meeting today given the events that have transpired over the past week. The Ethiopian Government's reckless expulsion of seven key United Nations officials, including the Head of UNICEF, the Head of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and a senior official from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, is an affront to the Security Council, the United Nations and all Member States, as well as our shared humanitarian principles.

There is no justification for the Government of Ethiopia's action — none at all. Neither did the Government of Ethiopia follow the proper process for calling attention to its concerns, as we heard

from the Secretary-General today. What could be the justification for expelling the United Nations focal point responsible for ensuring that food and humanitarian assistance reach those who need it? What could be the justification for expelling the United Nations focal point for the well-being of children in Ethiopia? There is none. As the Secretary-General made clear, United Nations personnel cannot be declared *personae non gratae*.

The United Nations is impartial. The United Nations is neutral. In Ethiopia, it is delivering life-saving aid, including food, medicine, water and sanitation supplies, to all those in desperate need. It is conducting important human rights investigations, in conjunction with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. The United Nations personnel barred from Ethiopia must be allowed to return immediately. Their work is urgent, and some of those dedicated public servants are trying to stop a famine before it is too late.

The unprecedented expulsion of those United Nations officials follows a pattern of escalating obstruction. In July, an Inter-Agency Standing Committee Emergency Directors Group from Headquarters was detained while trying to conduct an assessment mission in Tigray. Three non-governmental organizations were suspended shortly thereafter. Those actions are calculated to intimidate and silence. However, they do not accomplish that goal; instead, they push starving people to the brink. The conditions in Ethiopia today rival those in Somalia in 2011 during the onset of the famine. We remember that famine with horror. More than 250,000 people died despite the warnings. That did not have to happen. Starvation should never happen, and the famine does not have to happen.

The Government of Ethiopia can choose to reverse its course on the expulsion of the United Nations personnel, and all parties to the conflict can immediately facilitate the full and unimpeded access of humanitarian aid.

If these calls for humanitarian access continue to go unheard, then the Security Council must act. We can ensure that the United Nations is allowed to deliver impartially. We should immediately consider all tools at our disposal, including a Security Council resolution, to facilitate this — to save lives and promote international peace and security.

Our concerns about the situation in Ethiopia go beyond this immediate humanitarian crisis. Three years ago, we were talking about Ethiopia as one of the fastest growing countries in Africa, full of promise and on the cusp of a major economic and political transformation. Less than one year ago, the current situation was going to be a two-week law-enforcement action. Now we are hearing countless horrific accounts of rape being used as a weapon of war, of violence against civilians, of hunger being used as a tool of war, of famine looming and of United Nations staff being expelled, with Ethiopians killing Ethiopians by the thousands by the day.

The conflict is spilling over into the Amhara and Afar regions, creating even more instability and humanitarian need. As the Secretary-General said in his letter to us this week, this conflict is spiralling out of control. This is a path Ethiopia's leaders are choosing: to join the club of the most isolated countries in the international community and to let their own people down.

The United States has repeatedly called for the Ethiopian Government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front — as well as associated regional militias — to end the fighting now, allow humanitarian access and move towards a negotiated ceasefire immediately and without preconditions. The Council should fully support these efforts too.

There is still hope. It is not too late to stop this descent. The United States believes that there must be a political solution to this conflict. We are investing heavily in diplomatic efforts, in partnership with the African Union and the region, to address this crisis and end the carnage. We also believe that there will be no lasting peace in Ethiopia — and the country's broader project of democratic and economic renewal will not be realized — until there is a wider dialogue, one that includes all Ethiopians, on the future of their State.

Today's meeting therefore represents an important step towards addressing the immediate and wider crisis in Ethiopia, but it cannot be the last. Make no mistake: the Security Council's credibility is at stake in this regard. We must take appropriate actions — we must take all appropriate actions — to keep civilians safe, promote accountability for human rights violations and abuses and deliver humanitarian relief to Ethiopians in dire need. We must all call on the Government of Ethiopia to reverse the expulsion immediately.

Time is of the essence. Lives are on the line. If ever there was a moment to step up and do our duty, it is now.

Mr. Ladeb (Tunisia): I speak on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council — Kenya, the Niger and Tunisia — as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (A3+1) on this important crisis in Africa.

I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia.

We meet today in response to the decision by the Federal Government of Ethiopia to declare seven United Nations officials working in Ethiopia as *personae non gratae*. In the light of the previous concerns, we have expressed in calling for maximum access to enable humanitarian aid to reach Ethiopians in need, we noted the *personae non gratae* notice with concern. We say this with the full understanding of the duties and obligations that all humanitarian actors must respect in the conduct of their work.

Nevertheless, the risks of a large-scale famine, which, to a great extent, is being prevented by the aid delivered by the organizations to which the expelled individuals belong, raises serious concerns. Even within their sovereign rights, Governments should observe their domestic and international humanitarian law obligations. The rights of the Ethiopian people to receive aid in this dire emergency are of the highest moral and legal character.

We strongly urge the Government and the United Nations to undertake every effort to resolve any differences and get back to ensuring that aid is delivered to Ethiopians in desperate need. Concerns regarding the expelled individuals should be thoroughly considered on the basis of substantiated evidence and within a frank and genuine dialogue between the Ethiopian Government and the United Nations. Discussing these issues publicly may not be constructive in the current circumstances, nor will it alleviate the suffering of the populations affected by the conflict in northern Ethiopia.

The efforts of quiet diplomacy, undertaken through constructive dialogue between the United Nations and Ethiopia, are our best option for addressing this issue. In the meantime, we believe that priority must be given to the continuity of unfettered humanitarian assistance to needy people in northern Ethiopia. We welcome the renewed commitments of both sides in this regard.

With a newly established Government in Ethiopia, we reiterate that peaceful dialogue and democracy are the best mechanisms for the resolution of serious political differences. Today, we cannot help but return to this position, noticing, with pain as fellow Africans, the suffering of our Ethiopian brothers and sisters in Tigray and elsewhere in the country.

The highest priority at this stage, therefore, is to declare an immediate ceasefire to allow for unrestricted humanitarian access to the affected population and for the re-establishment of public services in all the conflict areas. We recognize and welcome the Government's extensive efforts deployed since the beginning of the conflict to deliver humanitarian aid and enhance humanitarian access. We emphasize the need to continue efforts towards the unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance and strongly encourage the Ethiopian authorities to fulfil all their commitments in ensuring humanitarian outreach to the people in need.

The A3+1 recognizes the important role of United Nations humanitarian agencies and all humanitarian actors, which should be supported. In this context, we call on all parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law. They should also ensure the respect and protection of all humanitarian personnel and United Nations and associated personnel, as reiterated in resolutions 1502 (2003) and 2175 (2014).

At the same time, we underline the obligation of all humanitarian personnel, United Nations personnel and associated personnel to observe and respect the laws of the country in which they are operating, in accordance with international law, including the principle of non-interference. Further, we stress the importance of humanitarian organizations upholding the core principles of neutrality, impartiality and humanity in their humanitarian activities, in full respect of the sovereignty, political independence, territorial integrity and national unity of the host State, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

The humanitarian situation in northern Ethiopia is part of a much bigger and complex crisis that is unfolding, with a potential regional spillover effect that may threaten peace and security in Ethiopia and beyond. With the hostilities expanding to the Amhara and Afar regions, it is clear that there could be no military solution to this crisis and that taking up guns will only protract the conflict.

The A3+1 therefore calls on all Ethiopian parties to cease hostilities and engage in discussion with a view to concluding a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire that would pave the way for an inclusive Ethiopian-led dialogue and to national reconciliation.

We also strongly call for the withdrawal of all non-Ethiopian forces from Tigray and the standing down of all militias from neighbouring federal states. The African Union has a major role to play to help Ethiopians in their reconciliation efforts so that they can protect their unity and territorial integrity and recover Ethiopia's status as an anchor of regional peace and stability.

In that regard, we support the active engagement of His Excellency President Obasanjo, African Union High Representative for the Horn of Africa, in promoting peace and security in the region through political dialogue, particularly in Ethiopia. We call on all stakeholders and international partners to extend every possible support to the High Representative and to allow the continent the necessary space to resolve its challenges with the support of the international community.

In conclusion, we, the A3+1, reaffirm our respect for, and commitment to, the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Ethiopia. We stand in solidarity with our sister nation at this trying moment in its pursuit of peace and stability. We hope that the new Government effectively lays the foundations of a new beginning, especially by carrying forward the robust national dialogue on peace, cohesion, development and unity in diversity.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing. I welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia, Ambassador Taye Atskeselassie Amde, at today's meeting.

At present, the humanitarian needs in the Tigray region continue to grow. Food insecurity and displacement remain acute problems. United Nations humanitarian workers have overcome various challenges and delivered much-needed humanitarian supplies to many Ethiopians. China appreciates those efforts.

The United Nations and other international humanitarian agencies should follow humanitarian relief guidelines, help Ethiopia increase its humanitarian response capabilities, expand the scale of relief efforts and prevent the deterioration of the situation. We call

on the international community to provide a steady stream of resources to the Ethiopian Government in order to fill the humanitarian gap as soon as possible and ensure that aid reaches all people in need.

The armed conflict poses enormous challenges to humanitarian operations. We have noticed that the Ethiopian Government is earnestly assuming the primary responsibility for humanitarian assistance and has proactively launched its own relief operations. The Government is also actively responding to the concerns of international humanitarian agencies. Tremendous efforts have been made in that regard. At the request of humanitarian agencies, the Ethiopian Government simplified administrative procedures on multiple occasions, reduced the number of checkpoints, scaled up land and air transportation and allowed humanitarian agencies to bring communication equipment into conflict areas. Those measures have contributed to expanding humanitarian access and ensuring the delivery of relief supplies, and those efforts should be acknowledged.

China regrets the disagreements regarding the seven United Nations humanitarian personnel and noted the respective positions and concerns expressed by the Ethiopian Government and the United Nations. We believe that a solution can be found only through dialogue and consultation. The priority now is to engage in quiet diplomacy in order to prevent a deadlock. We encourage both sides to maintain contact, fully exchange information, work together to seek a solution and avoid undermining mutual trust and cooperation. The international community should create a favourable atmosphere for a settlement through dialogue.

A new Government has just been inaugurated in Ethiopia. China expresses its welcome and support to the Ethiopian Government in its continued efforts to achieve and safeguard national unity, promote political dialogue and work collectively to build a brighter future for the country. The international community should continue to provide assistance to Ethiopia while respecting the country's sovereignty and ownership.

China supports African solutions to African problems and welcomes the good offices of former President Obasanjo, in his capacity as the African Union High Representative for the Horn of Africa. The United Nations and the African Union should strengthen collaboration and jointly play a constructive role in promoting peace and reconciliation across Ethiopia.

I also wish to point out that the unilateral sanctions imposed against Ethiopia and Eritrea by certain countries are in breach of international law and the basic norms governing international relations and will serve only to disrupt a political settlement. Such sanctions should therefore be lifted as soon as possible.

Mr. Tirumurti (India): I thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his briefing and for sharing his assessment on the humanitarian situation in Ethiopia. I also welcome the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia, Ambassador Taye Atskeselassie Amde, to today's briefing.

The humanitarian situation in northern Ethiopia has been adversely impacted by the continuing conflict that began in November 2020. Despite the unilateral ceasefire declared by the Ethiopian Government to facilitate humanitarian aid to the affected population, during recent months the fighting has continued and expanded to the neighbouring regions of Tigray. The Ethiopian population, particularly women, children and the elderly, continue to suffer from the ongoing conflict. In this difficult situation, the efforts of humanitarian agencies, led by the United Nations, have provided relief to the population. The northern part of Ethiopia will continue to need a steady stream of supplies for humanitarian relief in the coming months.

In that regard, we note with appreciation the work of humanitarian workers and agencies. The unfortunate expulsion of senior United Nations officials coordinating the humanitarian assistance, however, could adversely impact the humanitarian situation. It is therefore important to de-escalate the situation through engagement and dialogue.

While we are not aware of the circumstances that led to the recent developments, we are of the view that the founding principles of humanitarian assistance — humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence — should always guide humanitarian action. Humanitarian assistance and humanitarian workers should also be sensitive to the situation on the ground and adhere to those principles, especially when the host State is facing a complex politico-military situation internally.

We have noted the reports of diversion of humanitarian assistance by armed groups and others. Such incidents need to be investigated and corrective measures taken. It is imperative that the United Nations and its agencies continue to work closely with the

Government of Ethiopia to ensure that aid reaches the needy in a timely and satisfactory manner. They cannot work at cross-purposes. We hope that both the United Nations and the Ethiopian Government will make purposeful efforts to resolve expeditiously all issues in the interest of the affected population. We should eschew the politicization of the matter.

India has consistently underscored the importance of mutual trust, engagement, dialogue and reconciliation in addressing all issues related to the ongoing conflict in northern Ethiopia. In that context, we welcome the formation on 4 October of a new Government in Ethiopia, led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, and his announcement of an inclusive national dialogue. We urge all sides to exercise restraint and support the Ethiopian Government's call for opening channels of communication to build trust among themselves. We also welcome the voice of support for the Ethiopian Government by the African leaders who attended the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on 4 October. Work on the restoration of normalcy in the lives of the people in the affected regions must begin. To that end, we reiterate our call to find an amicable political solution in a manner that serves the interests of all the people of Ethiopia, in line with the provisions of its Constitution.

In conclusion, the political and economic stability of Ethiopia is paramount not only to the Horn of Africa but also to the entire African continent. The international community and the African Union need to support all efforts that are directed towards humanitarian assistance and an early resolution of the conflict. India reiterates its strong commitment to the unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ethiopia.

Mrs. Tra Phuong Nguyen (Viet Nam): I would like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his insightful briefing. I welcome the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to our meeting today.

We are all concerned about the deteriorated humanitarian situation in Tigray, especially its consequences for, and adverse impacts on, the daily lives of millions of people. As responding to such humanitarian needs in Ethiopia is the most urgent task that requires the international community's support, we emphasize the critical role of United Nations agencies, including UNICEF and the United Nations Office for

the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and other international partners in that regard.

We therefore regret the recent decision taken by the Government of Ethiopia to declare seven United Nations officials *personae non gratae*. We are concerned that the decision will affect the humanitarian operations in the country. In that context, we call for dialogue, trust-building and cooperation among the Government of Ethiopia, the United Nations and other parties to overcome those differences so as to restore humanitarian assistance.

We welcome some progress in the practical activities carried out by the United Nations, as well as humanitarian organizations and international and regional partners, for tens of thousands of Ethiopians, including people in Tigray, over the past few months. The first round of food distribution to people in the Afar and Amhara regions was recently completed by the World Food Programme.

However, we understand that access to, and the distribution of, humanitarian assistance still remains far from satisfying the needs of urgent assistance in many parts of Tigray. The conflict has resulted in other systemic issues that may lead to further deterioration. As Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths said, 5.2 million people are in need of food aid, including 400,000 people living in famine-like conditions.

In the face of such dangers, we call on all parties to fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law to prevent a famine from occurring. It is crucial to ensure the safe, effective and efficient delivery of, and access to, humanitarian assistance in the Tigray region and the bordering areas.

We also share the concerns of the international community, including those expressed by the Secretary-General, about the alarming levels of violence against, and killings of, civilians, including women, children and humanitarian workers, as well as the destruction of infrastructure indispensable to the civilian population in Tigray. Those acts of violence are unacceptable and run counter to international humanitarian law. We call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, upholding responsibilities under international humanitarian law and ensuring the protection of civilians, especially women and children.

The crisis in Tigray stems from complicated political, historical and ethnic reasons. That

background requires the relevant parties to engage in dialogue and reconciliation rather than further hatred, thereby creating favourable conditions for starting an Ethiopian-led political dialogue.

It is high time for a compromise to be reached towards a comprehensive solution for the sustained stability and development of Ethiopia, based on the basic principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

We call on the Ethiopian authorities and all other parties concerned to give the highest priority to the interests of their people. In that process, the international community, including the Security Council, should support all efforts to that end, in full respect for the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Ethiopia.

The conflict and the situation in Tigray have had certain impacts on the region that require the relevant parties to exercise self-restraint. In that connection, we support the constructive engagement of neighbouring countries and regional organizations for peace, security, national reconciliation, national unity and development in Ethiopia.

Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his briefing. We also welcome the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia among us.

We note with concern the Ethiopian Government's claims that led to the expulsion of the United Nations officials. We also heard the very clear and comprehensive position of the Secretary-General.

Before addressing the arguments put forward by the two sides, the first thing to note is that the Ethiopian Government's decision has a direct impact on the humanitarian work on the ground. We are a month away from marking a year of conflict that has already resulted in thousands of deaths and millions of displaced persons, in addition to the more than 5 million people in need of food assistance. The work of the Organization's agencies, funds and programmes can mean the difference between life and death for thousands of people.

In addition to the impediments to humanitarian work, we are concerned about the impact that the expulsion of a staff member of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights may have on the joint investigation being carried out with

the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, including on the planned 1 November deadline for the delivery of the final report.

Mexico remains firmly committed to the United Nations and is convinced that its humanitarian operations are at all times guided by the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence set out in General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 1991, which remains the framework defining the terms under which humanitarian assistance can be provided.

However, when a State or a party to a conflict consents and agrees to the provision of certain humanitarian assistance, the latter cannot be subject to discretionary decisions. On the basis of that consent, the parties concerned must allow and facilitate unrestricted access for humanitarian assistance. It should not be forgotten that it is the protection of the civilian population that is at stake.

The International Court of Justice, in its famous judgment on the Nicaragua case of 27 June 1986, found that the provision of strict humanitarian assistance in another country cannot be considered as undue intervention or in any way contrary to international law as long as it complies with the principles of the Red Cross, *inter alia*, that it be provided without discrimination.

It is worth recalling that, in discharging those humanitarian duties, United Nations agencies and their officials enjoy immunities under the 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, to which Ethiopia is a State party, precisely so that such officials can carry out their work without interruption and for the benefit of those most in need.

We therefore stress that any accusation against the Organization or its staff, under the Convention I have cited, must be supported by concrete facts and be followed by consultations with the Organization, as well as by an investigation that respects due process, including, *inter alia*, the presumption of innocence, which is a general principle of law.

Humanitarian access in Tigray is a necessity for millions of people, and the provision of humanitarian assistance must not be politicized. That is why we call on all parties in Ethiopia to ensure the unrestricted flow of food, medicine, fuel and other goods necessary to protecting civilians and meeting their basic needs.

We support the call for a humanitarian ceasefire and the withdrawal of actors outside Tigray and

neighbouring regions to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches all those in desperate conditions. It is time to put an end to the suffering of millions of people. We also support regional efforts to seek a solution to the conflict, and, in that regard, any progress on mediation, whether by the newly appointed African Union High Representative for the Horn of Africa or by some other actor, is particularly welcome.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Secretary-General António Guterres for the information he has provided on developments in Ethiopia. We also welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations, Mr. Taye Atskeselassie Amde.

First and foremost, we would like to congratulate all Ethiopians on forming a new Government on 4 October. The conclusion of the electoral process is confirmation that the Ethiopian political forces are ready for dialogue with a view to finding solutions to problems that the whole population of the country is facing, developing the State and promoting peace and well-being. The Russian Federation will continue to support the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of friendly Ethiopia.

We continue to follow very closely the development of the military and political situation in the north of the country. We still believe that the Tigray dossier is an internal Ethiopian affair and that the national capacity for reconciliation has not been exhausted. We also believe that it is within the power of Addis Ababa to solve its own problems with the support of international community, first and foremost, representatives of the region. In this regard, we support efforts by the recently appointed African Union High Representative for the Horn of Africa, Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, to find a resolution. We know that he has already assumed his duties and has established initial contacts with the Ethiopian capital. We are looking forward to concrete results from this work.

At the same time, we believe that deliberately ratcheting up international rhetoric as regards a situation in the north of the country and spiralling politicization of the humanitarian file only hinder pan-African organizations' mediation efforts. Bearing in mind the seriousness of the dispute and the complex historical context, this will not be a speedy process. Indeed, only coordinated efforts and diligent

diplomatic work, including through bilateral channels, can bear fruit. We are certain that pressure involving the Security Council, threats regarding the adoption of resolutions, the imposition of unlawful unilateral sanctions and the creation of a toxic atmosphere in the media is counterproductive.

With regard to the humanitarian situation in the north of Ethiopia, we fully share the concerns relating to the growing humanitarian needs there. The region, which was food insecure even before the crisis, is currently in particularly dire straits. The ongoing violence in Tigray and in the neighbouring regions of Amhara and Afar are seriously compounding the broader situation and provoking new flows of internally displaced persons and refugees.

There are also specific problems that require an urgent response and which, as we believe, can and must be resolved immediately. First and foremost, we refer to the situation surrounding the World Food Programme trucks stranded in Tigray. We believe it is unacceptable to block transport vehicles from United Nations humanitarian organizations, let alone use them for other purposes.

We have said on many occasions at the Security Council and in other forums that the media focusing exclusively on the humanitarian situation in Tigray leads to the politicization of this issue and creates further divides within Ethiopian society. We cannot diminish the hardships of people living in the Afar and Amhara regions who are affected by conflict and have not been suffering any less than those in Tigray, and neither can we ignore problems in other regions of the country.

Russia has always supported United Nations humanitarian efforts. We express our gratitude to humanitarian and medical workers who, in difficult and often dangerous conditions, provide urgent humanitarian assistance to all those who need it, in the most remote corners of the planet, including in Ethiopia. Every year we make financial contributions to the work of a host of related programmes and funds. We intend to continue that assistance and rely on our experience and expertise of the humanitarian wing of the United Nations.

We regret the decision made last week by Addis Ababa to expel United Nations officials. Of course, such action will not help resolve the severe humanitarian crisis in the country. At the same time, we would call

for not over-dramatizing what happened. We believe that through mutually respectful dialogue, Addis Ababa and the Secretariat will be able to re-establish trust and amicably solve the disagreement that has arisen, in the interests of the people who need assistance.

In that regard, there remain many questions, particularly with regard to steps that were or were not taken to prevent a negative turn of events. Accordingly, it is particularly important to tread carefully and learn from this incident, so similar incidents do not occur in future.

We insist, just as we do for other situations around the world, that humanitarian assistance be provided fully in line with General Assembly resolution 46/182 and the United Nations guiding principles of humanitarian assistance, as well as international law and national legislation. We must once again state the vital need for credible and constructive dialogue and close cooperation with the sovereign Ethiopian authorities, who continue to cover the lion's share of all humanitarian needs in Tigray and in neighbouring regions.

In conclusion, we would like to reaffirm Russia's readiness to continue to support the normalization of the situation in Ethiopia and in the Horn of Africa as a whole.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ethiopia.

Mr. Amde (Ethiopia): I congratulate Kenya on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October. Mr. President, I would like to convey Ethiopia's best wishes to you in the discharge of your responsibilities. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General.

I do not want to hide my surprise at the convening of today's Security Council meeting. We find it incomprehensible that this body would be discussing the decision of a sovereign State, which was exercised within the domain of international law and its sovereign prerogative. There have been several instances where Governments had expelled United Nations staff and other diplomatic envoys for so many disclosed and undisclosed reasons. Did the Council ever meet to challenge such a decision? To the best of our recollection, I think not. We truly hoped Council members would have the insight to leave this matter to the Government of Ethiopia and the United Nations.

At the outset, I would like to register our position that the Government of Ethiopia is not under any legal obligation to provide justifications or explanations for its decisions.

We are obliged to make reference to the basic norms of the United Nations and its humanitarian operations. The General Assembly resolution on the guiding principles for humanitarian assistance provides that,

“[t]he sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States must be fully respected in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.” (*General Assembly resolution 46/182, annex, para. 3*)

The most fundamental element of the sovereignty of States has to do with their prerogative to determine who enters, remains in and exits their territory. When we appeal for support from, or to work with, the United Nations or other humanitarian operators, we do not forgo that fundamental right.

Therefore, the Government will continue exercising its due right and responsibility on monitoring and screening all humanitarian operators in Ethiopia. Any suggestion to the contrary is unacceptable. As to the legality of the decision, leaving the details aside, the United Nations itself can be quoted for arguing that decisions regarding personae non gratae apply to the United Nations as well.

When it comes to the obligations of United Nations staff, the rules are unequivocal. Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter provides that all staff members employed by the United Nations must have the “highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity.” In the context of humanitarian operations, integrity entails adhering to the principles of neutrality, impartiality, humanity and independence. It also requires respect for the laws and police power of the host State.

Furthermore, they must respect the United Nations code of conduct, which provides the following, inter alia.

First, United Nations staff shall neither seek nor accept instructions from any Government or any other source external to the Organization.

Secondly, staff members shall not use their office or knowledge gained from their official functions for private gain, financial or otherwise, or for the private gain of any third party, including family, friends and those they favour.

Thirdly, staff members shall not communicate to any Government, entity, person or any other source any information known to them by reason of their official position.

Those cardinal principles, for the safeguard of which United Nations staff enter a solemn oath and swear on their conscience, mean that, in the presence of contradicting views, competing interests, political pressures and all forms of temptation, United Nations staff will remain neutral. In the presence of deceit, coercion and vested interest, they will preserve their independence and, in the existence of considerations that may appear to be reasonable bases for decisions, United Nations staff will be guided by humanity only.

The United Nations staff that Ethiopia expelled side-lined their oaths, the rules of professional conduct and the principles of humanitarian assistance. Let me cite a few examples, which we selected with great care and caution from that multitude of transgressions.

Needless to say, the misconduct of a few individuals does not speak to the professional and able United Nations team in Ethiopia, or anywhere else. Rather, it speaks to the serious ethical dilemma that has existed in the humanitarian operation in Ethiopia for the past eleven months. Those individuals executed the conspiracy created by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and its members to generate an image of extreme casualty that warrants so-called humanitarian intervention and rescues the criminal group. To use their own words, they were looking to create a Darfur-like situation.

Suddenly and overnight, they created 1 million victims of a health disaster. While the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in the country reported that 2.8 million people were in need of emergency health assistance, the main OCHA office was made to report 3.8 million, only because that level of inflation of misery was needed to elevate the crisis to a level 3.

They categorized the situation in Tigray under level 5 of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, based on data collected from a region with a population of 6 million by a single Food and Agriculture Organization staff member and interpreted by two United Nations staff members who were Ethiopian and open TPLF supporters based in Rome. They assisted in the fabrication of false allegations submitted to the Security Council as a white paper.

The white paper contained unfounded allegations, including the use of hunger as a weapon, and proffered the need to apply resolution 2417 (2018). The former Head of OCHA was made to report to the Council that 152 Ethiopians had died due to the food shortage, while such an incident had never occurred. They made up data and went to the extent of disinforming this global security organ. About two weeks ago, they reported that 12 individuals had died of hunger in an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp, while the organization running the IDP camp — itself an international organization — came out and stated that the allegations were simply false.

They implored United Nations agencies to conduct investigations outside of their mandate to meet the instructions of the TPLF to generate exhibits matching the false allegations released in the media and to supposedly substantiate a case before the International Criminal Court.

They did not even show mercy to victims of gender-based violence. First, in violation of the protection protocols for safe houses for victims of gender-based violence, they invited TPLF armed men and militia to the safe houses. In addition, they exposed the safe house before international media and invited interviewers and interrogators to safe houses to intimidate victims and elicit testimonies. That is happening in a city where close to 13,000 detainees and prisoners were released with absolute impunity and thousands of armed youths are roaming the streets, already creating terror for residents.

Those individuals recorded a United Nations staff meeting and gave a copy to the TPLF for the sake of providing it with material it could use to back up its false allegations. Those individuals openly celebrated and made other United Nations staff cheer for the so-called victory of the TPLF and the withdrawal of the National Defense Force from Tigray. They openly conducted activism in support of the TPLF — a group proscribed as terrorist — and made political statements to instigate violence and inflame the conscience of the Ethiopian public. They assisted in the syphoning of food, medicine, communication equipment and all other essential supplies and equipment and its transfer to the TPLF.

Right before their expulsion, they were facilitating the deportation of ethnically segregated groups of Ethiopian migrants from Saudi Arabia and their

resettlement in third countries in Africa for training and preparation before joining the TPLF in combat.

In effect, a parallel United Nations operation that completely side-lined the United Nations country office was created. Apart from the selfish interests of individuals, we have evidence that the entire endeavour was created by a higher and more sophisticated motivation that seeks to undermine the Ethiopian State and rescue the TPLF. Ethiopia deeply resents that experience.

Expulsion was not our primary course of action. On multiple occasions, we explained our concerns to United Nations officials. On 8 July, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of Ethiopia wrote a letter to the Secretariat explaining, in great detail, the misconduct by United Nations staff that required corrective measures. We also summoned some of those individuals and warned them to halt their misconduct. Nevertheless, the transgressions continued unabated.

We believe that United Nations agencies and their honourable roles are undermined by those few individuals. In that connection, we request that, first and foremost, the United Nations deploy new staff who are aware of, and will adhere to, their professional code of conduct. The overwhelming majority of United Nations staff fulfil that requirement and would distance themselves from political mercenaryism. The Government of Ethiopia stands ready to assist the expeditious deployment of the replacements.

More important, we request the United Nations to review all the reports, statements and assessments that were produced with regard to the situation in Ethiopia in the past year. The reports and the data and information that they contain must be verified. Such an audit is necessary for us to build and sustain trust and advance the exemplary cooperation between the Ethiopian Government and the United Nations.

The United Nations has been an invaluable development and humanitarian partner for Ethiopia for many years. I want to underscore the great value that we attach to the support of the Organization during this difficult time. We also believe that the majority of the United Nations staff with whom we have the privilege of working have the requisite integrity and decency.

I would like to reassure the Council that the new Ethiopian Government, established with the popular will and mandate of the Ethiopian people to herald

peace and prosperity, stands ready to work with the international community to address long-standing and current challenges. We welcome and value initiatives by leaders of our region and the African Union and the support of Secretary-General António Guterres towards sustaining peace and stability in Ethiopia. We assure the Council that we will facilitate the visa requests.

No one should doubt the Ethiopian tradition of hospitality. What we are asking for is respect, dignity, honesty and open and candid discussion. As we have in the past, we will always extend our hand to all those who treat us with dignity and equality. That is the story of Ethiopian life since the time of the League of Nations.

The President: I once again give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: If there is anything that I have cherished during this entire period, it has been maintaining a very effective and operational relationship with the Government of Ethiopia and its Prime Minister — to the extent that I received much criticism in the global media accusing me of being biased towards the Ethiopian Government. It is therefore in a spirit of complete ease that I would like to ask the representative of Ethiopia as to whether any written document has been provided by the Ethiopian Government to any United Nations entity concerning any of the eight United Nations staff members who were expelled? I would like to receive a copy of that document, because I have no knowledge of any. It would be very useful for me to determine if documents were provided to the United Nations without my knowledge. I would then have to investigate what happened within my Organization.

I therefore ask the representative of Ethiopia to provide me with the copy of any written documents by the Government of Ethiopia about any of the eight who were expelled by Ethiopia. In that regard, I recall that I told the Prime Minister twice that, if there were concerns about a lack of impartiality on the part of the United Nations staff, he should inform me of such situations so that I could investigate them. I asked the Prime Minister twice. To date, I have received no response to that request.

For us, the question is therefore very simple. We believe that Ethiopia does not have the right to expel those eight United Nations staff members. We believe that Ethiopia is violating international law in doing so, and we are ready to cooperate with the Government

of Ethiopia concerning any situation in which it feels that any staff member of the United Nations is not behaving in total impartiality and independence under humanitarian law and in accordance with established humanitarian principles.

I say to the representative of Ethiopia that we want to cooperate with the Government of Ethiopia because we have only one agenda in Ethiopia, and that agenda is the people of Ethiopia — Tigrayans, Amharans, Afaris and Somalis. The people of Ethiopia are suffering. We have no other interest but to help stop that suffering.

The President: The representative of Ethiopia has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Amde (Ethiopia): I hear the Secretary-General loud and clear. I fully understand and acknowledge the support that he has given to our people, and my Government as well. We know where his heart is. He has approached the issue concerning us with candidness and candour, and we highly respect that. As to the asks, I will definitely communicate with the appropriate authorities, and we will do so, of course, expeditiously. As I made clear in my statement earlier, this is an issue that has to be dealt within Ethiopia and the United Nations. Whatever documents are available will be submitted to the Office of the Secretary-General.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.