

**Statement**

**by**

**H.E. Ambassador Taye Aske-Selassie,**

**Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations at the**

**UNICEF Executive Board (First Regular Session)**

**Tuesday, 9 February 2021**

**Madam President,**

First of all, allow me, **Ms. President,** to join others in expressing my congratulations on your appointment as the president of the UNICEF Executive Board for the year 2021. I have full confidence that you will execute your responsibility successfully and as an incoming member of the board, you can rely on Ethiopia's full support during your tenure of presidency. I would also like to congratulate all the bureau members of the executive board for the successful convening of this session at this challenging time.

My permanent representative couldn't be here with us today due to urgent matters and he sends his regrets.

Ethiopia aliens itself with the statement delivered by the permanent representative of Morocco on behalf of the African members of the UNICEF executive board

**Madam President,**

As has been highlighted today in this session, the unprecedented impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic has taken unimaginable toll on the health, economic and social lives of all people, across the globe, without distinction of any sort. It has also endangered our hard won decades of developments in all spheres, as health systems are strained and national economies nosedive. Ethiopia being one of the most vulnerable to the pandemic's socio-economic impacts, have taken several policy and operational measures based on the global recommendations and local evidences but realities tell us that what we have been doing is just

not enough and we must redouble our efforts to match the continued Covid-19 induced pressures, especially on the most vulnerable segment of the society that are children.

The grim reality of this pandemic, which is still unfolding makes it imperative to accelerate our effort to implement the SDGs. This requires new and unprecedented methods to deliver our promises particularly at this challenging time. In this regard, we commend the various activities that are being undertaken by UNICEF in support of national efforts to alleviate the immeasurable damage that the pandemic has inflicted on the health, education, water and sanitation, economy and overall wellbeing of our children and society at large; and implement children related sustainable development goals.

**Madam President,**

Ethiopia fully understands the humanitarian situation around the world today, beyond covid19 that has overwhelmed our response capacities, which could further deter our collective aspiration of creating a world that is healthier, peaceful and resilient, a world worthy of being passed on to our children. My government, as has been, continues to commit itself to avoid intolerable costs of conflicts and prevent its people from enduring conflict related sufferings.

Ethiopia's government was compelled to take a law enforcement operation in tigray region because of the territorial integrity and the survival of the nation was endangered by an insurgent group that attacked the national force. About 60 thousands of our citizens fled to

Sudan due to the conflict, many of whom have expressed interest to return back to their country on voluntary basis.

On the humanitarian front, the Government of Ethiopia in collaboration with the UN Agencies, has made a joint assessment and is delivering essential humanitarian supplies to close to 1.8 million people by giving priorities to the most vulnerable groups, Children, women and disabled persons in the region.

Currently, 80 percent of Tigray region is accessible for humanitarian supplies with the exception of some pocket areas. The government is making tremendous effort to ensure safe and unfettered humanitarian accesses and distribution of humanitarian supplies in Tigray. As part of the normalization process, the Government has allocated budget to repair the damaged public infrastructures caused by the TPLF insurgent group. In this regard, we would like to take this opportunity to recognize the UN agencies particularly UNICEF for the tremendous role it has played through its country teams in providing humanitarian supplies to people in the country.

Ethiopia maintains an open door policy for refugee inflows and protection to those seeking asylum and currently hosts close to a million refugees from neighboring countries. It also has a track record in resettling its displaced citizens to their origins. With the same conviction, the government has plans to receive and reintegrate citizens that fled to neighboring Sudan back to the society, thereby alleviating humanitarian pressure our neighbors are under. This is of course

unthinkable without the understanding and unwavering support of our partners.

**Mm. President,**

Let me conclude by reiterating that we highly value our productive partnership with UNICEF since its inception. Its continuous and extended support has carried us through the worst of times, its untiring assistance has encouraged us to confront challenges pertaining to our children. To this we remain committed and ready to strengthen our partnership with the agency; to recommit to accelerate the implementation of SDGs with the ultimate mission of protecting the rights and wellbeing of our children.

At last, I would like to reassure the board my government's commitment to work constructively during its membership.

**I thank you Madam President**