

Statement

By

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Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, and Permanent Representative of

Ethiopia

At

The adoption of Ethiopia's UPR WG Report

27th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council

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Mr. President

I take this opportunity to thank the large number of delegations which took part during the Second Cycle Universal Periodic Review of Ethiopia at the 19th Session of the Human Rights Council UPR Working Group for their active and constructive engagement.

I would also like to thank the troika delegations of the Czech Republic, Kazakhstan and Namibia for facilitating the second cycle review of Ethiopia. I extend my appreciation to you, Mr. President, for the excellent manner in which you presided over the review. The UPR Secretariat of the Human Rights Council has also done an excellent work in preparing this report.

Mr. President,

It gives me a great pleasure to inform the Human Rights Council that the Government of Ethiopia has accepted 188 recommendations out of the 252 recommendations made to the delegation during the Review.

The high level delegation that participated at the Review was led by His Excellency Ambassador Berhane Gebrekirstos, the State Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. The delegation included State Ministers of Justice, Federal Affairs, the Office of Government Communications Affairs and Women, Children and Youth Affairs as well as other senior officials. This high level representation is a clear demonstration of the importance Ethiopia attaches to the UPR process. This high level commitment would help in expediting the implementation and follow-up of the accepted recommendations.

The inter-ministerial institutional framework at the Federal and Regional States levels established by the National Human Rights Action Plan of Ethiopia will undertake the implementation of these recommendations. The Ministry of Justice will have a central role in following up the implementation of the accepted recommendations as it is mandated by the Parliament through the National Human Rights Action Plan to follow-up the implementation of recommendations from human rights bodies. The integrated reporting mechanisms established at the Ministry of Justice, in the regional and City Administrations Justice Bureaus as well as the annual Inter-Federal-Regional review conferences are also expected to facilitate the implementation of the accepted recommendations. This robust follow up system will be complemented by the human rights oriented development plan of the country, which based itself on the active and broad-based participation of the community at the grass-root levels.

This process will further be complemented by the active participation of the public, and the relevant national human rights institutions such as the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, the Institution of the Ombudsman, civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders through the identification of the achievements, shortcomings and challenges encountered during the implementation of the accepted recommendations and the way forward to further consolidate the efforts of the Government to fully implement its human rights obligations.

Mr. President,

The Government is determined to intensify its efforts to sustain the socio-economic development, capacity building, awareness raising at the grass-root levels, provide continuous human rights education for law enforcement organs and further strengthen further judicial and administrative review mechanisms in the country.

Ethiopia has registered progress in meeting the human rights obligations of the country through an integrated approach in the ongoing five-year the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) aimed at ensuring high level, broad based, equitable and participatory growth and further entrenchment of democracy, good governance and human rights in Ethiopia. Ethiopia has also adopted the first National Human Rights Action Plan for the year 2013-2015 aimed at developing a comprehensive framework for the fulfillment of human and democratic rights in the country.

The Government of Ethiopia is committed to build on the achievements and remarkable advances registered in meeting many of the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. President

We were not able to accept some of the recommendations as they were forwarded without the proper understanding of the policy and legal framework and the situation in Ethiopia or due to capacity limitation or lack of clarity.

The recommendations questioning the content and objectives of the Charities and Societies Proclamation No. 621/2009 are not based on objective assessment. The law and its implementation are aimed at ensuring the right to freedom of association as enshrined in the Ethiopian Constitution. It was drafted with extensive public discussions and stakeholders engagement. It is in line with the human rights obligations of Ethiopia. The law has provided a predictable and transparent system for the establishment, registration and regulation of charities

and societies in Ethiopia. It has also provided a conducive environment for the growth of grass root, members-based and members driven advocacy, humanitarian and development civil society groups that work to promote the interests of their members and the society at large. It ensures accountability of all charities and societies while guaranteeing them independence and due process of law.

The requirement of the Proclamation for charities and societies to use 70 percent of resources they have mobilized to operations and not more than 30 percent for administrative purposes has enabled them to promote the interests of their members, to use substantial amount of resources they have mobilized to the attainment of their objectives.

The requirement for charities and societies working on political issues to raise 90 per cent of their funds from local resources does not affect charities and societies working on development and humanitarian issues. The Proclamation has provided ways to raise resources in the country through non-profit activities to those working on political issues. The Government of Ethiopia has also signed bilateral agreements with some charities and societies based on the exception provided under Article 3 of the Proclamation to enable them participate in these activities.

The Government of Ethiopia has set a consultative forum composed of relevant Government organs and charities and societies operating in Ethiopia to assess the implementation of the Proclamation, challenges and a way forward. The Government is committed to further consolidate the forum with a view to addressing challenges that may arise in the implementation of the Proclamation.

There are now 3078 charities and societies operating in the country. It is thus clear that the recommendations to review, amend or repeal this law are misplaced and would derail the proper functioning system for the establishment, registration and operation of charities and societies in the country.

Similarly, the recommendations relating to Anti-Terrorism Proclamation are not acceptable. The law is aimed at fighting terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Terrorism is a threat to our national security. Ethiopians have suffered from various terrorist acts. The Anti-Terrorism Proclamation ensures the protection of the rights to life, peace and security of Ethiopians consistent with the Constitution of Ethiopia, Ethiopia's human rights obligations and United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1267 and 1373.

The Proclamation is not used to target political opposition. The Government of Ethiopia should not be asked to release people convicted of terrorist acts or interfere with court proceedings whatever their profession. For these reasons, recommendations related to the amendment, review or repeal of the Proclamation or recommendations to release persons imprisoned for attempting to commit or committing terrorist acts are rejected.

The Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation No. 590/2008 is aimed at guaranteeing freedom of expression and of the mass media; nurturing the indispensable role of a free, independent and diverse mass media in building a democratic system in the country; and making the mass media accountable for its activities. It prohibits any form of censorship in line with the Constitution of Ethiopia and the human rights obligations of the country.

The Government has established a national task force, chaired by the Institution of the Ombudsman and composed of the relevant Government offices, to oversee the effective implementation of the Proclamation and ensure compliance with the Constitution, and the human rights obligations of the country. The Proclamation has enabled people to advocate their views either in support or critic of Government policies and measures taken without fear. It has also enabled freedom of expression to further flourish in Ethiopia. For this reason, the recommendations to amend or repeal the Proclamations were rejected.

Ethiopia will consider invitation to special procedures of the Human Rights Council on a case-by- case basis.

Ethiopia will continue working closely with civil society organizations, grass roots associations, and professional associations to implement the accepted recommendations of the Human Rights Council. The Government will redouble its efforts to ensure the implementation of the constitutionally guaranteed rights and fundamental freedoms for all Ethiopians. We will also continue to pursue the policy of active cooperation with the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms. We shall also further strengthen our engagement with OHCHR in Geneva and through the Eastern African Regional Office based in Addis Ababa.

I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm the commitment of the Government of Ethiopia to uphold the highest standards of human rights and continue our active engagement at the Human Rights Council. **I thank you**