



# Security Council

Seventy-sixth year

**8812**<sup>th</sup> meeting  
Friday, 2 July 2021, 3 p.m.  
New York

*Provisional*

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<i>President:</i>	Mr. De Rivière . . . . .	(France)
<i>Members:</i>	China . . . . .	Mr. Dai Bing
	Estonia . . . . .	Mr. Jürgenson
	India . . . . .	Mr. Tirumurti
	Ireland . . . . .	Ms. Byrne Nason
	Kenya . . . . .	Mr. Kimani
	Mexico . . . . .	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
	Niger . . . . .	Mr. Maman Sani
	Norway . . . . .	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines . . . . .	Ms. King
	Tunisia . . . . .	Mr. Ladeb
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Lord Ahmad
	United States of America . . . . .	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield
	Viet Nam . . . . .	Mr. Dang

## Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

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21-17867 (E)



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

### **Expression of thanks to the outgoing President**

**The President** (*spoke in French*): As this is the first public meeting of the Security Council for the month of July, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Mr. Sven Jürgenson, Permanent Representative of Estonia, for his service as President of the Security Council for the month of June. I am sure I speak for all the members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Jürgenson and his team for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **Peace and security in Africa**

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, Acting Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. DiCarlo.

**Ms. DiCarlo:** Ethiopia is at a critical juncture. Recent developments demonstrate the need to address issues plaguing the country in a comprehensive and sustainable way. The consequences of not doing so could be disastrous.

After almost eight months of conflict, the Federal Government of Ethiopia announced, on 28 June, a unilateral ceasefire in Tigray, citing the need to address the humanitarian crisis in the region. Subsequent to the announcement, the Ethiopian National Defence Forces and the provisional Tigray administration withdrew from Tigray's capital, Mekelle. On 27 and 28 June, the Tigray Defence Forces (TDF), entered major towns and

cities of Tigray, including Adwa, Aksum, Shire and Humera. The TDF are now in Mekelle.

The situation in Mekelle is reportedly calm, and the TDF appear to be in control of the city. Reports indicate that leaders of the previous Tigray regional administration, including its former president, have returned to Mekelle. As of today, the TDF has yet to agree to a ceasefire.

While there have been no reports of serious incidents, basic services to support humanitarian delivery are absent. Mekelle has no electrical power or Internet. Key infrastructure has been destroyed, and there are no flights entering or leaving the area. Elsewhere in Tigray, the Eritrean Defence Forces have withdrawn to areas adjacent to the border, while in the west of Tigray, the Amhara regional forces remain in place despite advances by the TDF. On 29 June, the Amhara branch of the ruling Prosperity Party issued a statement warning that Amhara regional forces would oppose any attempts by the TDF to take the territory in western Tigray that was seized during the conflict. In short, there is potential for more confrontations and a swift deterioration in the security situation, which is extremely concerning.

The ceasefire announcement provides an opportunity that all parties to the conflict, including the Tigray People's Liberation Front, must seize and build upon. In this regard, we urge the TDF to endorse the ceasefire immediately and completely.

As the Acting Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator will outline, our immediate concern is focused on those in urgent need of assistance in Tigray. Food insecurity has continued only to worsen in recent days. We must scale up the response.

All parties must ensure the safe passage of humanitarian workers for the continued delivery of supplies. The destruction of the Tekezé bridge on 1 July effectively cut off central Tigray from western Tigray, closing a vital artery for humanitarian assistance.

A ceasefire observed by all parties would not only facilitate the provision of humanitarian aid, but it would also be a starting point for the necessary political efforts to chart a way out of the crisis. The conflict in Tigray is a result of deep-rooted political grievances that can only be resolved through dialogue and a credible political process.

This morning, in a briefing to the diplomatic core in Addis Ababa, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister said that once the election results were announced and a new Government formed, the Government would take steps to hold an all-inclusive dialogue process. This is a welcome development. Such a process could be part of a broader effort to address the country's structural challenges, encourage reconciliation and foster consensus on the way forward for Ethiopia's transition.

Once again, and predictably, civilians have paid the heaviest price in an armed conflict. An estimated 1.7 million people have been displaced, with more than 60,000 refugees crossing into the Sudan. I call on the parties to make the protection and well-being of civilians a matter of paramount concern. That requires strict respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law.

I also call on the parties to offer all necessary assistance to the ongoing joint investigation by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. There must be accountability for the grievous human rights violations committed during the conflict, including acts of sexual violence against children and adults, and mass killings. This morning, the Federal Government of Ethiopia reiterated its commitment to the joint investigation and to accountability. We look forward to seeing the concrete results of that undertaking.

Furthermore, Ethiopia's neighbours can play a constructive role in supporting the country's transition while respecting its sovereignty. The withdrawal of Eritrean forces from Tigray must be fully implemented.

The 2018 rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea and the reforms introduced by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed raised hopes for a new era of stability and peace in the Horn of Africa. The wide-ranging transition has proved to be both challenging and hopeful. It has brought to the fore disagreements around fundamental issues such as the federal structure of the State and the role and status of ethnicity, as well as how such disputes should be addressed.

The recent national elections were an important milestone in that regard. They were, by many accounts, an improvement on previous polls in the country and were held in a generally peaceful manner. They were, however, affected by insecurity and technical

problems. Some opposition groups did not participate. It is my hope that the electoral process can be concluded in a peaceful and secure environment and that any disputes are addressed in accordance with the laws and constitution of Ethiopia.

But elections are just one part of the democratic process. I urge the Federal Government to deepen efforts to open the political space and facilitate the meaningful participation in public life of all Ethiopians, including women, youth and civil society.

Many of the political parties that chose not to participate in the recent polls cited the need for something more than the ballot box to heal the deep divisions in Ethiopia's body politic and society. Many asked for a national dialogue as a space or platform where Ethiopians could reflect about reconciling the many competing visions of the future of the country's political system.

In its recent ceasefire announcement, the Government stated, referring to the elections:

"Ethiopians from all walks of life have sent a strong signal that they are ready to work together to build a stronger, united and democratic Ethiopia, removing the seeds of discord and division sown within the Ethiopian body politic".

I encourage the Government to follow through on today's announcement and harness those sentiments. In that regard, I offer the full expertise and support of the United Nations, including assistance to domestically driven, inclusive and comprehensive mediation and dialogue processes. We hope that such a dialogue would include discussions at the federal member state level encouraging as many sectors of the population as possible to have an input into the consolidation of the reform process and the future of the country.

The promise of the Ethiopian transition remains real and can be fulfilled with the necessary political will. Peace and stability in the country, the cornerstone of the Horn region, may well depend on it.

Allow me to offer some areas of concerted international support to Ethiopia as it traverses the current crisis.

The international community must continue to call for a permanent ceasefire to be honoured by all parties. We should urge Ethiopia's leaders to work swiftly to restore national unity through a process of inclusive

dialogue and reconciliation. Again, the Government's recent indication of its intent to do so is positive.

As the delivery of humanitarian services to those who have suffered this tragic conflict is vital, I urge Member States to generously support those efforts.

Finally, the Federal Government of Ethiopia has committed to not allowing impunity, as that would severely harm the cause of justice and sustainable peace. That is an important commitment to ensuring accountability for the crimes and atrocities committed during this conflict. The international community must encourage the Government and the TDF to live up to that commitment.

The United Nations will continue to stand alongside Ethiopia. We are ready to extend all the means of support at our disposal to help put the country back on track.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. DiCarlo for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Rajasingham.

**Mr. Rajasingham**: Just over two weeks ago, on 15 June, we briefed the Council on famine in Tigray, with more than 350,000 people in catastrophe conditions — the worst famine situation we have seen in decades. In the short space of time since then, the situation has worsened dramatically.

The Council has just heard from Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo about the political and security dynamics in Tigray and Ethiopia. What I would like to speak about is the humanitarian situation. This, I am afraid, is more alarming than when the Council was briefed two and a half weeks ago. Two million people are still displaced, and close to 5.2 million people still require humanitarian assistance — the great majority of them women and children.

One of the most distressing trends is an alarming rise in food insecurity and hunger due to conflict. More than 400,000 people are estimated to have crossed the threshold into famine, and another 1.8 million people are on the brink of famine. Some are suggesting that the numbers are even higher. Indeed, 33,000 children are severely malnourished. Moreover, the food insecurity crisis will continue to worsen during the impending rainy season, as food supplies are exhausted and the risk of flooding and water-borne diseases, including cholera, increases. Considering where we already are,

that means that more people will certainly die if we do not reach them with humanitarian assistance.

Let me also emphasize that what we are seeing in Tigray is a protection crisis. On 22 June, an air strike on a busy market in Togoga killed and injured dozens of civilians. That is just one of many times when civilians have been killed in the eight months of conflict in Tigray.

As has been widely reported by senior United Nations officials, civil society and others, we have multiple credible and widely corroborated cases of serious sexual and gender-based violence. More than 1,200 cases have been reported, with more continuing to emerge. That is likely, we fear, only a fraction of the actual cases, as stigma, shame and fear of reprisals as well as the lack of health and psychosocial services lead to underreporting.

All parties to the conflict must respect their obligations under international humanitarian law. Attacks directed against civilians and indiscriminate attacks are prohibited. Allegations of serious violations must be thoroughly and independently investigated by the State, and the perpetrators must be prosecuted regardless of who they are.

To recall what should be already obvious to all of us, humanitarian workers must never be a target. Still, last week three humanitarian colleagues from Médecins sans Frontières were brutally and deliberately murdered in Tigray, this only weeks after aid workers from the Relief Society of Tigray and the International Committee for the Development of Peoples were killed, on 29 May and 28 April, respectively. Twelve humanitarian workers have now been killed since the start of the conflict.

Despite the challenges, humanitarian actors continue to work to reach people in desperate need. In the last two months 3.7 million people have received emergency assistance; 167,000 displaced persons have received non-food items; and 630,000 people have been reached by water trucks. However, it is estimated that more than 2.5 million people in rural Tigray have not had access to essential services over the last six months. That includes many of the people facing famine and is also part of the reason that they face famine.

The lives of many of those people depend on our ability to reach them with food, medicine, nutrition supplies and other humanitarian assistance. We need to

reach them now; not next week — now. As the Council has heard us say before, to do so we need timely, unimpeded, safe and sustained access. International humanitarian law requires all parties to a conflict to facilitate this. Let me explain what this looks like and be clear about what exactly we are asking for.

Over the past few days our colleagues in Mekelle have been able to move towards Abd Adi and Samra and from Shire teams have reached Selekleka and have travelled from Axum to Adwa. That is positive, and we now plan to dispatch convoys with humanitarian supplies to many of the areas that have been difficult for us to reach before.

But we can do so for only as long as we have something to deliver. Today the World Food Programme has enough food for only 1 million people for the next month in Mekelle. That is a fraction of what we need for the 5.2 million people who need food aid. However, we have also almost run out of health, water, sanitation and other non-food items kits. Food alone does not avert a famine. Water sanitation and nutrition supplies are essential in such a response. We also desperately need to prevent a cholera outbreak or people dying from other communicable diseases.

Earlier this week, the Government of Ethiopia announced a humanitarian ceasefire. We wholeheartedly welcome this and look forward to its implementation throughout the conflict area. It is imperative that all parties to the conflict, whoever they are and wherever they are, ensure no further escalation in conflict. We cannot afford to fail in this endeavour. The affected populations in Tigray on the brink of starvation deserve no less. All groups must stop fighting to allow humanitarian aid to get through unimpeded and to protect civilians. There is no other way to achieve this.

While inside Tigray, we may now be able to reach areas that were difficult to reach before; it is essential that we act fast and without any further obstruction. What we need first and foremost is for all armed and security actors to provide guarantees for safe road access for humanitarian workers and supplies to and from Tigray, as well as to and from the most remote parts of the region. This means not stopping us from getting through checkpoints, but rapidly letting us proceed in all directions. As we speak, there are five UNICEF trucks loaded with life-saving water and sanitation supplies blocked in Afar. Earlier this week a convoy of World Food Programme trucks was prevented

from entering Tigray from Gondar. All these trucks must immediately be allowed to proceed.

Secondly, we must be allowed to use the fastest and most effective route to get humanitarian supplies to the people in need. We need immediate, unhindered and sustained access from both Kombolcha and Semera to Mekelle, and from Gondar to Shire. I am deeply alarmed by yesterday's destruction of the Tekezé River bridge and the reported damage to two other bridges, which has cut off our main supply route from Gondar to Shire, which we use to bring in food and other life-saving supplies. We call on the Government of Ethiopia to immediately repair these bridges and, by doing, so help prevent the spread of famine.

Thirdly, we must also be able to use the fastest and most effective modality to deliver supplies and transport humanitarian staff. This means that we need to be able to fly, and I welcome the information received today that the Government of Ethiopia has approved our request for an United Nations Humanitarian Air Service flight to Mekelle tomorrow. We hope that this will not be a one-off but will continue and be extended to all airports in Tigray. I also call on all parties to provide security assurances for these humanitarian air operations.

Fourth, we need to be able to bring in and use all appropriate communication equipment, such as very-small-aperture terminals, very-high-frequency radios and satellite phones, for humanitarian purposes. These are critical for the safety and security of humanitarian workers. We use these all over the world. We ask that the Government of Ethiopia fast track all requests made by humanitarian organizations. We also call on the Government to see to the immediate return of the communications equipment confiscated from the offices of humanitarian organizations by the Ethiopia National Defense Forces. Trucks commandeered from humanitarian organizations must also be returned by those responsible.

We also urge the Government of Ethiopia to restore and maintain electricity, communication networks and banking services in Tigray, without which we cannot effectively reach populations, as well as to allow the free flow of essential commercial goods, including fuel at scale. Without fuel we cannot transport food and people will starve. We cannot run water pumps providing clean water and prevent cholera, which kills. Hospitals cannot operate and people will suffer. In

short, without fuel, humanitarian operations will not be possible and lives will be lost.

We have repeatedly said that the only way to stop the humanitarian situation from further deteriorating is peace. The welcomed announcement, as I mentioned, by the Government of Ethiopia of a ceasefire must be the beginning of this peace — for the sake of millions of innocent civilians. The conflict has already caused enormous suffering to the civilian population. It must stop now. The ceasefire has raised expectation amongst the population, and we now need to reach people throughout Tigray with humanitarian assistance to prevent a spread of famine and, as I mentioned before, an outbreak of cholera. But humanitarian assistance alone is not enough. We are not the solution. Unless civilians can return to normality and farmers can access their fields, famine will take an even tighter grip on Tigray.

We welcome the Government's announcement today of the formation of a high-level mechanism to solve access problems and challenges in real-time, and we look forward to working together to make sure that we immediately reach people. There can be no reason for the ceasefire to fail and humanitarian convoys to be blocked. We hope that this mechanism can be operational within next 48 hours so as not to waste any more time and lose any more lives.

I conclude by asking the Security Council and all those with influence to help us save lives and prevent famine and further suffering by ensuring these fundamental requests are fulfilled.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Rajasingham for his briefing.

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

**Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield** (United States of America): Let me start by thanking our colleague from Estonia for presiding last month in such an extraordinarily successful way.

I would also like to thank all the briefers for their comprehensive briefings on the ongoing crisis in Tigray. The United States deeply appreciates the work they and their teams have done and that they continue to do. I also want to thank my colleagues on the Council for participating in today's open briefing.

In recent months, the Council has been briefed and discussed the situation in Tigray privately half a dozen times. We have from non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies about vast displacements, countless human rights abuses, hundreds of thousands of people facing famine, the bombing of civilians, the killing and intimidation of humanitarian workers, the systematic rape of women and girls and unspeakable acts of sexual violence, the purposeful obstruction of humanitarian aid and the deliberate destruction of United Nations communications equipment. Tragically, these stories remain pervasive.

As the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) told us recently, tragedies of historic proportions are taking place in Tigray, and that is why we called for this meeting today. It is important for the people of the region to hear our voices and to know that they have not been forgotten, and for the parties to the conflict to know that we are watching. We know that millions of civilians in the region are desperately suffering, and we called for today's briefing because the conflict needs to end. We need to marshal more funding and scale up the United Nations response, we need to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and humanitarian access, and we need public accountability for the atrocities that have been committed.

This week, the Government unilaterally announced a ceasefire, stating that it was doing so for humanitarian purposes. The Government must now demonstrate that it truly intends to use the ceasefire to address the humanitarian catastrophe in Tigray. In fact, Ethiopian forces looted the offices of humanitarian aid organizations and destroyed communications equipment as they retreated from Mekelle. This is beyond unacceptable. All equipment looted must be returned.

We have also since learned that one or more bridges were destroyed along critical access routes to Tigray. Access by road and by air — which, along with electricity, telecommunications, banking activity and fuel supplies is essential to enabling aid delivery — are being denied, as we heard that today from OCHA. Humanitarian workers are reporting that it is more difficult to reach desperate people in Tigray now than it was just a week ago. Such acts, if verified, are an indication not of a humanitarian ceasefire, but of a siege. The Ethiopian Government can and should prove this analysis wrong by providing unhindered movement of humanitarian supplies, commodities and personnel

into and throughout Tigray. If they do not, we believe that hundreds of thousands of people could starve to death.

Once again — we need access, we need aid and we need to end the conflict. Instead of further escalation, we need all parties to negotiate a true ceasefire, and then to honour that ceasefire. To be clear, this includes the Tigrayan forces, the Tigray Defense Forces, which must also demonstrate that they will abide by international humanitarian law and work peacefully and within legal frameworks toward a peaceful solution. And there is more we need to know about the actions of other forces in the region. For the time being, with the Government's ceasefire declaration in place, we have a precious opportunity. Now is the time to secure peace — right now.

The members of the Council can help translate this ceasefire declaration, first, into a sustainable peace and, then, into dialogue, reconciliation and healing. If the parties to the conflict fail to seize this moment, the consequences for the people of Ethiopia will be devastating — more fighting, more famine, more abuses, more suffering by ordinary Ethiopians and a far more destabilized Horn of Africa.

Further fighting poses a risk to the integrity of the Ethiopian State and to the stability of the entire region. A meaningful ceasefire deal would affirm the redeployment of forces and the complete withdrawal of Eritrean troops and Amhara regional forces. It would facilitate unhindered humanitarian access. It would affirm that neither the internal nor the external borders of Ethiopia will be changed by force, in contravention of the Constitution, and it should lay the groundwork for discussions towards political solutions to the crisis.

We must also recognize the wider political context in which this context has unfolded. That includes both last month's national election and the extraordinary transition that began several years ago, but remains very much unfinished. The United States commends those Ethiopians who exercised their right to vote last month. Elections alone, however, cannot revoke the escalating polarization that has plagued the country. The next step is to move towards genuine political reform. Ethiopians must come together to confront the country's growing divisions and preserve the future of the rich and dynamic society.

If this dialogue is to succeed, either in the short term or in breaking long-term cycles of violence, all

Ethiopians must be able to call it their own. Equally important will be credible and independent mechanisms for justice and accountability for the atrocities committed. To that end, we welcome the ongoing investigation by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, and we strongly support the African Commission on Human and People's Rights Commission of Inquiry as it fully and independently investigates violations, abuses and atrocities taking place in Ethiopia. That includes last week's senseless killing of three Doctors Without Borders workers, which we condemn in the strongest terms.

In recent days, I have been deeply disturbed to hear from non-governmental organizations on the ground about other ways their personnel are being deliberately targeted for harassment and violence. This must stop and the perpetrators must be held to account.

The United States stands ready to assist Ethiopia in solidifying and implementing a ceasefire, providing life-saving humanitarian aid and resolving this devastating conflict. We also stand ready to support the wider, necessary dialogue across Ethiopia and promote democratic renewal, national unity and peace. The Security Council should also step up to address these tasks. We must use this opportunity to protect and save the lives of the people in Tigray as they continue to face famine, displacement and violence, and we must do everything in our power to bring all Ethiopians together for the future security, stability and prosperity of their country.

**Lord Ahmad** (United Kingdom): I would like to begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Acting Under-Secretary-General Rajasingham for their expert insights and briefings today.

Today is an important opportunity. It is right that the Security Council consider how to help end this devastating conflict and support all of the people of Ethiopia. I will not repeat the picture of suffering outlined by our briefers — it is stark and it is real. But after eight months of conflict, we remain deeply concerned by all that we have heard and seen.

Instead, I want to briefly discuss three key issues — the immediate humanitarian situation, human rights concerns and the need for conflict resolution — so that Ethiopia can move on from this most tragic of conflicts.

But before I go any further, I want to pay tribute to the 12 humanitarian workers — and I am sure that I speak for every member of the Council — who have been killed since the conflict began. The protection of humanitarian workers, their offices and their equipment is a central tenet of international humanitarian law. Their work is especially vital in Tigray, where — as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has outlined and the Integrated Phase Classification data shows — at least 353,000 people are now in famine conditions. People have died from hunger, people are dying from hunger and people will continue to die unless they get the help they need now. This is a human-made famine and we need to act.

In that regard, the United Kingdom welcomes the unilateral ceasefire declared by the Government of Ethiopia. All sides — the Federal Government of Ethiopia, the Tigray Defense Forces, the Amhara militias and the Eritrean Defence Forces have an opportunity to end the cycle of violence and suffering. We urge them to take it, and we call on the Eritrean forces to withdraw, as requested by the Ethiopian Government.

Our immediate priority has to be for humanitarian assistance to get through to those who require it. The restoration of basic infrastructure, including electricity, communications and banking services, and ensuring food and other needed goods can reach Tigray is essential to prevent further loss of life. Enabling humanitarian agencies to get visas for their staff and import communications equipment so they can operate effectively is imperative. Indeed, we have heard that today. Denial of humanitarian access is a direct violation of international humanitarian law.

At the same time, we, the international community and United Nations agencies, must be ready to respond. The response to date, frankly, has been insufficient. The ceasefire gives us the opportunity to address this and urgently increase the amount of aid reaching the starving people of Tigray. In that regard, the United Kingdom has already allocated £47.7 million. A full and sustained ceasefire will give all parties time and space to address the root causes of this conflict through both dialogue and, importantly, reconciliation and to initiate an inclusive political process.

The United Kingdom welcomes and endorses the call of Chairperson Faki of the African Union Commission for all parties to uphold their responsibilities under international law to protect civilians. He is, of course,

right that a comprehensive and all-encompassing permanent ceasefire is absolutely necessary to pave the way for sustainable peace in Tigray. We will support the African Union in its efforts in pursuit of peace and stability in Tigray, Ethiopia and the wider region. Further, we encourage the United Nations system to consider how it can also assist as the situation develops, as part of a joined-up process and coherent strategy.

Finally, Special Representative Patten and High Commissioner Bachelet have highlighted serious allegations of human rights abuses and violations. They have also described systematic sexual violence, which, as the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, I have been particularly moved by. The United Kingdom is supporting the International Committee of the Red Cross and United Nations agencies to provide essential services to survivors of sexual violence, and an extra £16.7 million in funds were announced in June, which will support and drive accountability. In addition, this week we deployed an expert to advise on support for the safe collection and preservation of evidence — and this is vital and imperative — in order to bring the perpetrators of sexual violence to justice at the appropriate time.

The United Kingdom welcomes the proposed inquiry of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and it fully supports the ongoing joint investigation between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. We will also co-sponsor a draft resolution on Tigray at the Human Rights Council in Geneva this month.

Transparency and accountability will be vital if Ethiopia is truly to move past this most tragic of conflicts. We collectively owe that to the victims. We owe it to the survivors. Our message is clear: it is time for all sides to put down their weapons; it is time to allow unrestricted access for humanitarian aid; and it is time now to put the interests of Ethiopian people first. I hope that the Council can now work constructively with the African Union and partners to ensure progress on these most critical of issues and turn around the situation for the sake of the people of Tigray and for the sake of all Ethiopians.

**Ms. Byrne Nason** (Ireland): I thank Rosemary DiCarlo and Ramesh Rajasingham for their insightful, yet deeply troubling, briefings today.



Ethiopia is a long-standing and important partner for Ireland. For that reason, the deteriorating crisis in the Tigray region and its severe humanitarian consequences are of genuine and deep concern to us. It is a situation that we have consistently raised and sought to have the Security Council address since we joined the Council in January.

The Council's voice matters on this issue. Today, finally, we meet publicly and all Council members have an opportunity to send a clear message to the parties on the ground: this conflict must end. Humanitarian needs must be urgently addressed.

We called for today's meeting because it is clear that a humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding in Tigray. It is clear that the threat of famine looms and that hundreds of thousands of people could already be starving. It is clear that, without further and immediate scaled-up action, many more will die. We all have a responsibility to act immediately to save lives. Indeed, our action is overdue.

The prospect of a large-scale famine in Ethiopia today is real. The evidence that we heard today is indisputable. The consequences of inaction are chilling and all too predictable.

As the spectre of a large-scale famine again looms for the people of Ethiopia, the international community is ready to mobilize the necessary response. However, the political steps needed to facilitate that response lie with those who are party to this conflict. Leadership to forge a path towards a political solution is needed.

The declaration by the Ethiopian Government of a unilateral ceasefire is a welcome step. However, any ceasefire must include actions that serve to improve the humanitarian situation on the ground, not to create further obstacles to the humanitarian response. Reports that humanitarian access continues to be cut off, including through the destruction of key routes for humanitarian supplies, are deeply worrying and, frankly, shocking. We urge all parties to the conflict to cease hostilities, protect civilians and allow for immediate, unimpeded and safe humanitarian access to all parts of Tigray. We call on the Ethiopian authorities to demonstrate their commitment to the ceasefire that they declared by immediately facilitating humanitarian access. In that regard, the next few days are absolutely critical as the humanitarian response restarts. We also call on the Government to establish a functioning civil-military coordination mechanism, immediately

restore essential services and reopen airspace for humanitarian deliveries. Tigrayan forces must also refrain from any actions that encourage conflict or restrict humanitarian access.

Beyond the food security crisis, we are deeply concerned about the wider humanitarian and human rights situation. Reports last week of the air strike on the village market of Togoga in northern Tigray, killing and injuring hundreds of civilians, many of them children, are alarming. We call on the Ethiopian authorities to conduct an independent investigation into the incident. Last week's brutal murder of three staff of Médecins sans Frontières underlines the dangers faced by humanitarians. Humanitarian workers must never be targets. Such outrageous attacks must cease. I pay tribute to the efforts and the courage of humanitarian workers in highly dangerous circumstances. We condemn reports that international non-governmental organizations and United Nations vehicles and their equipment have been destroyed or appropriated in violation of international humanitarian law. Humanitarian actors' rights under international humanitarian law need to be respected in accordance with the obligations of all parties to the conflict.

We remain horrified by the conflict-related sexual violence and atrocities described by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Patten. It is clear that systematic abuses are being perpetrated by armed actors in the conflict. The Council has demanded that those and other violations end immediately. We strongly support the work of High Commissioner Bachelet Jeria and her Office and attach great importance to the joint investigation with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. Accountability must be ensured for all violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law to counter impunity, prevent further future violations and provide justice for victims and survivors.

I began today by saying that we have an opportunity to send a clear message to the parties on the ground. Three months ago, Ireland said the same thing behind closed doors and has repeated it since. Today I believe that message should be threefold.

First, the Council should urge all parties to the conflict to cease hostilities, protect civilians and allow for immediate and safe humanitarian access to all parts of Tigray. We also urge the Ethiopian authorities to demonstrate their commitment to the

ceasefire by facilitating unimpeded humanitarian access immediately.

Secondly, all parties to the conflict must fully respect international humanitarian law and human rights law. Sexual violence and atrocities against civilians and humanitarian workers must end. Humanitarians must be allowed to do their job without interference.

Finally, and crucially, we need all Ethiopian stakeholders to commit to a process of national dialogue that promotes reconciliation and the unity of Ethiopia. Ireland stands ready to support in any way that we can. We look forward to seeing today's announcement in that regard followed through on and delivered quickly and in full.

This is a critical moment for Ethiopia. The world is watching. We urge all parties to recognize and to meet their responsibilities, forging a way forward for all Ethiopians. The Council, too, must step up and play its part.

**Mr. Kimani** (Kenya): Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would also like to congratulate Estonia on guiding the Council so ably last month.

We make this statement united as 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. We are united in the protection of the peace and security of Africa and the interests of African peoples and States to be upheld in the Security Council.

We take note of the briefings by Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo and Acting Under-Secretary-General Ramesh Rajasingham. We also welcome the participation of Ethiopia and thank them for their upcoming update to the Council on the developments since we last met about two weeks ago for an informal interactive dialogue.

We have been pained by the suffering that has been experienced by our brothers and sisters in Ethiopia, because each life matters and is sacrosanct. We send our condolences to all the families that have lost members to violence, including aid workers. We are outraged and saddened by the pain of all the women and girls who have suffered sexual violence. We condemn without reservation the targeting of unarmed civilians. In doing so, we call for all parties with the means to cause harm

to cease any attacks on or threats to unarmed civilians. We demand that the parties respect international law, including humanitarian principles and the moral codes that are at the core of Africa's cultures and religions.

Throughout the past few months, while division and violence have been experienced in Tigray, we have argued for expanded and robust humanitarian access. We have welcomed the Government's resourcing of a significant proportion of the humanitarian needs in Tigray. We have urged the international humanitarian community to move with speed and to scale up assistance. We have applauded it and also been disappointed by the continuing shortfalls in its response. We call again for all States, international institutions, organizations and individuals of good will to redouble their efforts in Tigray.

We support the democratic aspirations of the Ethiopian people. As such, we have argued that the international community and the Security Council should give the country space to undertake its most recent elections. We have been gratified by the interim reports, especially that of the African Union Election Observation Mission, asserting that:

"Despite some operational, logistical, security, political and coronavirus disease-related challenges, overall the pre-election and election day processes were conducted in an orderly, peaceful and credible manner."

We hope that the election becomes the foundation of a robust national conversation on peace, cohesion, development and the celebration of diversity and pluralism.

Today, the situation in Tigray remains of concern, but there are clear opportunities for peace to emerge. Behind closed doors, we have urged the Council to take careful and responsible actions that will encourage humanitarian outreach to suffering people, and not to imperil the situation in Tigray. We again reiterate that strong and sincere call.

We welcome the unilateral humanitarian ceasefire by the Government of Ethiopia and stress that the Council and the international community should appreciate that decision by the Government as an opportunity that must be capitalized on. We hope that it can be translated into a permanent, comprehensive and lasting ceasefire in order to extend humanitarian care

to every man, woman and child who needs it, in every part of Tigray.

That ceasefire must be heeded and implemented. We are particularly concerned about the potential implications of the recent destruction of the bridge over the Tekezé river, connecting Shire and Gondar. It is indicative of a callous attitude to the needs of civilians in crisis and that there are parties not observing a ceasefire. We condemn the deliberate destruction of civilian objects that are vital to the delivery of humanitarian aid.

Those actions must be halted if we are to truly implement the Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020 initiative, which Africans have set out in our Agenda 2063, and to work as a region on ending all wars, civil conflicts, gender-based violence and violent conflicts and on preventing genocide.

We now call for all armed parties presently in Tigray, or neighbouring it, to heed the voice of Africa that calls for the silencing of the guns. We call on all parties that have not pronounced on the cessation of hostilities to do so without delay and to act accordingly by ceasing all armed operations. They should allow full humanitarian access to every part of Tigray. We further call for the withdrawal of any and all non-Ethiopian forces from Tigray and the standing down of all militias from neighbouring federal states.

The silencing of the guns serves our continental will and would allow Tigray's farmers and traders to return to their farms and shops so that they may recover their livelihoods and reduce their dependency on the outstretched hand of the humanitarians. We insist on a ceasefire by all parties because we know from experience that doing so will allow the deployment of the tools available in Africa's peace and security architecture to help Ethiopia be at peace with itself.

The people and the Government of Ethiopia appreciate the power of the instruments of dialogue and reconciliation forged by Africans over the past few decades. After all, most of the agreements that built our peace and security architecture were forged in Addis Ababa by our Heads of State and Government, with Ethiopia's constructive involvement. We now recommend its tools to Ethiopia, to make use of them as many of us have done. Doing so will show our peoples and the world that we have processes and skills that can indeed deliver African solutions to African challenges.

The A3+1 therefore calls on all Ethiopian parties in conflict in Tigray to cease hostilities and undertake inclusive dialogue as a path to national reconciliation. In our view, dialogue is strength. It is also at the core of the African identity. We call on all Ethiopian parties to embrace it and save the precious lives of the people of Tigray, protect their national peace and once again be an anchor of regional security.

As we have done in closed meetings, we reiterate once again that the Council should always listen to Africa when it comes to African issues. The Council should also allow the continent the space to resolve its challenges with the support of the international community. We do not make that assertion because we are infallible; rather, it is because Africa today has a realizable vision of itself growing into a peaceful, united, independent and prosperous community of nations. We suffer the most from our challenges and gain the most from solving them.

It is therefore critical that the Security Council as a whole and its members understand that this debate should encourage and support African solutions, meaning, in this instance, Ethiopian solutions starting in the order of ceasefire, humanitarian delivery, dialogue, reconciliation and responsibility. Among the tools Africa has built is an African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. We note the launch of a commission of inquiry on Tigray on 17 June. We look forward to its thorough investigations, which will allow for the perpetrators of atrocities to be held to account. We also look forward to its findings supporting the cause of the Ethiopian people, establishing the truth of what has happened in Tigray and using that truth to build a stronger Ethiopia.

We as Africa will not agree now or in the future for this debate to be turned into a platform that undermines the people and State of Ethiopia. Now is the time for careful diplomacy, the rapid scale-up of the humanitarian response, prioritizing people, appreciation of regional stability and the curbing of misinformation and disinformation.

We recall the heights of greatness that the civilization of Ethiopia, like others in Africa, has achieved. We know that disruptions and destruction have occurred in our history. We suffer our challenges today, as Ethiopia is presently doing, but our spiritual yearning for reconciliation and unity is unquenchable.

In saying that, we, the A3+1, conclude by reaffirming our respect for and commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ethiopia. We stand in solidarity with the Government and the people of Ethiopia at this defining moment in their pursuit of sustainable peace that is conducive to nation-building and prosperity.

**Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first meeting of the Security Council under the presidency of France for July, I convey to you, Sir, the full support of the delegation of Mexico in carrying out this month's work. I am also grateful to Estonia for all its work during the month of June. Mexico also expresses its thanks to the presidency for convening this afternoon's meeting and appreciates the briefings by Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Acting Under-Secretary-General Rajasingham. We welcome the presence of Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for the Commonwealth, the United Nations and South Asia, and the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia.

After eight months of clashes, the situation in Tigray is undoubtedly complex. The humanitarian consequences are cause for great concern. The conflict has already left thousands of people dead, displaced millions and forced hundreds of thousands to flee, some to the Sudan, and placed increased pressure on that country, which is going through a fragile transitional phase.

Tigray and other parts of Ethiopia are undergoing the effects of the triple threat of climate shock, a plague of locusts and the coronavirus disease pandemic. With the conflict, we are at a crossroads. Continued hostilities, leading to a second disruption of the harvest season, together with the persistent hindrance to humanitarian access, would greatly increase the likelihood of widespread famine. The weakened hospital infrastructure is at risk of collapse, thereby increasing the danger of the spread of communicable and preventable diseases. Ethnic and intercommunal tensions could be exacerbated, and conflict could spread not only to other parts of Ethiopia, but to the rest of the Horn of Africa.

Mexico is concerned about and, as a country, condemns all attacks on civilians and humanitarian personnel. The attacks in Togoga, which resulted in dozens of civilian casualties and more than 180 wounded, as well as attacks on personnel of Doctors

Without Borders, are simply unacceptable, as is the reported blockade of medical personnel seeking to provide assistance to the wounded. Let us be frank and clear — that represents an unacceptable violation of international humanitarian law. It is as simple as that.

Given the many demands on the ground, it is particularly outrageous that those whose role is to assist the population are being targeted, which includes entering offices and confiscating the telecommunications equipment of United Nations agencies. It is therefore crucial that there be accountability for what has happened in the context of the conflict, especially concerning the multiple allegations of violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. An immediate, impartial and independent investigation is crucial to determining the facts and providing justice.

Mexico welcomes the 28 June announcement by the Government of Ethiopia of a humanitarian ceasefire in Tigray, and urges all other parties to the conflict to cease all hostilities, guarantee unrestricted humanitarian access regardless of ethnicity or political affiliations and refrain from interfering with or damaging critical infrastructure, such as communication facilities, bridges and roads, which would cut off the area and undermine the delivery of supplies. Mexico, my country, calls for the withdrawal of Eritrean forces from Ethiopia.

The parties to the conflict must think about the consequences of their actions during the past months and acknowledge that there is no military solution. Mexico calls on all parties to seek a settlement through inclusive dialogue, with a view to beginning the process of national reconciliation and reconstruction.

Lastly, it is also essential to ensure continued regional and subregional involvement and mediation, as well as the support of the Security Council for all activities promoting political dialogue.

**Mr. Dai Bing** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I congratulate France on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month, and I would like to thank Estonia for having successfully presided over the Council last month. I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Acting Under-Secretary-General Rajasingham for their briefings. I welcome the presence at this meeting of the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia, Ambassador Taye Atskeselassie Amde.

Ethiopia is an anchor of stability in the Horn of Africa and is vital to regional peace and security. A

peaceful and stable Ethiopia is the shared aspiration of all Ethiopians, and other African countries and the international community at large desire nothing less. China has been closely following with concern the situation in the Tigray region. The Government of Ethiopia recently announced a unilateral ceasefire in the state of Tigray to restore normalcy in farming and humanitarian operations in the region, which China welcomes.

We look forward to a comprehensive ceasefire in Tigray and support the parties concerned to resolve their differences through political dialogue so that all people in Ethiopia, including those in the state of Tigray, can enjoy peace and stability on their path towards development and prosperity. China supports the African Union's continued constructive role and welcomes the assistance extended to Ethiopia by the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat.

For some time, the Government of Ethiopia has been actively responding to the humanitarian needs in Tigray, offering relief to the population in distress, reopening the local economy, returning life to normal and providing full humanitarian access with positive results. Humanitarian operations in Tigray are dogged by dire shortages of resources, which makes it imperative for the international community to scale up its emergency humanitarian assistance. In this process, the humanitarian principles of the United Nations must be fully respected.

The Chinese Government's food aid will soon be arriving, and coronavirus disease vaccines donated by China to Ethiopia are also benefiting the Tigrayans. China appreciates the tremendous amount of work done by international humanitarian agencies to alleviate the plight of the local population, strongly condemns the attacks against humanitarian workers and notes that the Government of Ethiopia has launched an investigation into those attacks. Currently, Ethiopia's effort to keep peace and development on track continues to be challenged in many ways.

China is also closely following the developments in Tigray. However, the Tigray issue is by and large an internal affair of Ethiopia, and we believe in the wisdom and ability of the Ethiopian people to find an appropriate solution. The international community, while providing assistance, must fully respect the sovereignty and leadership of Ethiopia, as the purpose

of such assistance is to work together to help the country overcome its difficulties and maintain peace and stability in both Ethiopia and the region. When dealing with this issue, the Security Council should carefully and prudently calibrate the timing and approach taken to ensure that whatever action the Council takes contributes to improving the situation in Tigray, rather than having the opposite effect. China stands ready to work with the rest of the international community to that end.

**Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia):** I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Acting Under-Secretary-General Rajasingham for their briefings. I welcome the timely holding of the first open Security Council on the situation in Tigray.

The declaration of a ceasefire by the Ethiopian Government is a welcome first step towards the resolution of the conflict in Tigray. It is essential that it be followed by the immediate cessation of hostilities and that all parties adhere to international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Urgent, safe and unhindered humanitarian access is needed and essential services such as electricity and telecommunications, must be restored to enable humanitarian workers to provide help.

The food insecurity situation in Tigray is deteriorating every day, and some regions already face famine. Food aid must be allowed to be delivered to those in need without delay. For a sustainable solution to food insecurity, the immediate cessation of hostilities is vital to allow farmers to plant crops.

We condemn the violence against humanitarian workers and their assets, as that is against international humanitarian law. The brutal killings of three representatives of Médecins Sans Frontières must be investigated immediately and the perpetrators brought to justice. There is also no justification for illegal entry into the premises of humanitarian agencies or for dismantling their communications equipment.

We are worried that the situation in Tigray continues to be volatile and that civilians bear the brunt of the conflict. We were reminded of that again last week when an air strike near Mekelle killed approximately 80 civilians and injured approximately 200. Targeting civilians and blocking medical aid are completely unacceptable. We call for an urgent and independent investigation into the incident.

Reports of continued violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including widespread sexual and gender-based violence, are deeply worrisome. The commitment of the Government of Ethiopia to engage with United Nations mechanisms in investigating alleged violations and abuses is welcome. We urge all parties to ensure unfettered access to investigators.

We are concerned about numerous violations committed by Eritrean troops and call for their immediate withdrawal. The clearly destabilizing role of Eritrean troops, including by obstructing humanitarian aid, has been widely reported.

It is important that the end of fighting not be temporary, but followed by a comprehensive, inclusive and credible political process, with the aim of national reconciliation.

Finally, it is clear that the ongoing conflict in Tigray constitutes a threat to international peace and security, which is why it is vital that the issue remain a priority on the Security Council's agenda.

**Mr. Tirumurti** (India): I thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo and Acting Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Ramesh Rajasingham for their briefings on recent developments in the Tigray region in Ethiopia. I also welcome the presence of His Excellency Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon and of the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia at this meeting.

The people of the Tigray region in Ethiopia have suffered during the eight-month-long fighting. The announcement of a humanitarian ceasefire in the Tigray region is therefore a welcome development. We commend the Government of Ethiopia for taking that decision and welcome the measures it has taken to address the humanitarian situation. That positive step should help ease tensions and the suffering of the people. We hope that today's meeting will help de-escalate the situation on the ground and bring about reconciliation and peace in the region.

We also believe that the presence of external armed actors in the Tigray region militates against a return to peace, and we call for an end to it. It is important that all stakeholders respect the ceasefire, allow humanitarian aid to reach all those in need and allow for regular farming activities to take place. The ceasefire period must be used for scaling up humanitarian aid

immediately, which must reach those areas where access has been difficult due to the violence. We continue to urge all humanitarian agencies and the authorities to scale up and coordinate to bridge the gaps on the ground, especially since a cumulative set of factors has made the situation worse.

We appreciate the fact that Ethiopian authorities have not only provided humanitarian assistance but have also granted humanitarian access to a majority of areas under stress. We encourage them to continue on that path. We also underscore the importance of adhering to the United Nations guiding principles for humanitarian assistance. We also call for the protection of all humanitarian workers.

India calls for restraint and engagement by all stakeholders in a spirit of dialogue and reconciliation. We urge that the space provided by the humanitarian ceasefire be used to open channels of communication, pursue dialogue and find a peaceful and sustainable solution. All stakeholders must desist from rhetoric and threats, spreading misinformation and raising tensions during the ceasefire. Instead, steps must be taken by all stakeholders to disengage and reduce tensions and work towards the restoration of normalcy in the lives of the people in the affected region.

We call on the Ethiopian Government to sustain the ceasefire and find a way to address the conflict in a manner that serves the interests of all of its people, in line with the federal constitutional provisions. We also encourage the Government of Ethiopia to follow up on its commitment to investigate all allegations of human rights violations and to persist in efforts to hold the perpetrators to account, in accordance with the law. We look forward to an early conclusion of the investigation by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

In conclusion, India reiterates its strong commitment to the unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ethiopia.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, we congratulate France on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of July and thank Estonia for its able leadership of the Council in June.

We listened closely to the briefings on the situation in Tigray, delivered by Under-Secretary General

DiCarlo and the Acting Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ramesh Rajasingham. We welcome Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon and the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia, Taye Atskeselassie Amde, to today's meeting.

At the outset, I would like to express our regret about the format of today's meeting and to caution our colleagues against using it to further destabilize an already complex situation in Tigray and weaken the political position of federal authorities. We believe that the topic being discussed today is an internal issue in Ethiopia. Let us not forget that.

We are closely following developments in the complex military and political situation. We believe that the unilateral decision taken by the federal Government of Ethiopia on 28 June to declare an immediate cessation of hostilities in Tigray was a step in the right direction. We hope that all opposing sides will demonstrate the necessary political will to help stop the bloodshed, improve the humanitarian situation and gradually restore socioeconomic stability. That would also allow crops to be planted and internally displaced persons to return home.

We call on all partners of Addis Ababa to support the steps taken by the Ethiopian Government to restore peace in the region and for life to return to normal. We also believe that, in order to resolve the conflict in Ethiopia, Ethiopians themselves must play a leading role — with assistance, first and foremost, from the African community.

New regional developments should not distract our attention from the serious socioeconomic issues in Tigray. In recent months, the Government of Ethiopia has made a substantial contribution to rebuilding infrastructure that was destroyed and to meeting humanitarian needs in the region. According to information available, the Government has spent more than \$2.5 billion on those efforts.

We call on the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and humanitarian agencies present in the region to build on those efforts, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182 and in strict compliance with the guiding principles for humanitarian assistance. We expect the humanitarian community to develop an objective assessment of the humanitarian situation in Tigray and define the real needs of the population in the region.

We are aware that a group of Western States put forward a draft resolution on the human rights situation in Tigray at the forty-seventh session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva. In our view, the draft resolution is too geared towards blaming the leadership of Ethiopia. While sharing the concern over the human rights issues caused by the conflict in Tigray, we believe that such a document should aim not at accusing and punishing, but rather at preventing and helping to overcome human rights violations, no matter what side may commit them.

In conclusion, let me say that Russia is ready to continue promoting normalization in Tigray. We are convinced that politicizing this issue is unacceptable. The situation in Tigray must remain an internal affair of Ethiopia's. Interference by the Security Council in resolving the issue would be counterproductive.

**Mr. Dang** (Viet Nam): I congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month, and I thank Estonia for an excellency presidency last month.

I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo and Acting Under-Secretary-General Ramesh Rajasingham for their insightful briefings. I welcome the Minister of State of the United Kingdom and Ambassador Amde, the representative of Ethiopia, to our meeting today.

The situation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia has witnessed complicated developments over the past months. It has resulted in multifaceted hardship for millions of people. We share the concerns of the international community, including those expressed by the Secretary-General, about the alarming levels of violence and killing of civilians, including women, children and humanitarian workers, as well as the destruction of civilian infrastructure indispensable to the civilian population in Tigray. Those acts of violence are totally unacceptable and run counter to international humanitarian law. We call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, the upholding of responsibilities under international humanitarian law and ensuring the protection of civilians, especially women and children, with a view to quickly addressing the mounting difficulties that the people have to face after months of hostilities.

The ongoing humanitarian situation in Tigray is of great concern. We welcome the efforts by the Government of Ethiopia to help alleviate those

difficulties. The conflict is resulting in other systemic issues that may lead to further deterioration, especially the high risk of famine. Children are suffering the most. UNICEF projects that 56,000 children under the age of 5 in Tigray will need treatment this year for severe acute malnutrition. In inaccessible parts of Tigray, 33,000 children will face imminent death unless they are given immediate help.

In the face of such dangers, we call on all parties to fulfil their obligations under humanitarian law to prevent a famine from occurring. It is now important to ensure the safe, effective and efficient delivery of, and access to, humanitarian assistance in the Tigray region and bordering areas. In that process, the needs assessment and the delivery of humanitarian assistance should take into account local specificities and take place in consultation with the Government of Ethiopia.

While responding to humanitarian needs is an urgent task, it is equally important to earnestly strive for the peaceful resolution of differences among the parties concerned. The current crisis is rooted in complicated political, historical, ethnic and cultural reasons. That background requires that the relevant parties patiently engage in dialogue and reconciliation rather than further hatred and differences.

It is high time for a compromise to be made towards a comprehensive solution for Ethiopia's sustained stability and development, on the basis of the principles of the international law and the Charter of the United Nations. We call on Ethiopian authorities and all other parties concerned to give the highest priority to the interests of their people. The international community, including the Security Council, should support all efforts to that end, in full respect of the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Ethiopia.

In that connection, we welcome the recent ceasefire declaration by the Government of Ethiopia and expect all parties to make it a long-term and comprehensive one. Furthermore, we call on all parties concerned to take advantage of this opportunity to engage in constructive dialogue and refrain from further bloodshed and confrontational rhetoric that might drive the parties further apart. We believe that is the only viable path for finding common ground and a peaceful way out of the current crisis in Ethiopia.

The conflict and situation in Tigray have had certain impacts on the region that require the relevant parties to exercise self-restraint. Under the circumstances, the

principles of non-interference in the internal affairs of States and the settlement of disputes by peaceful means should always be upheld. In that regard, we support the constructive engagement of neighbouring countries and regional organizations, especially the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, in supporting the parties concerned to promote dialogue, build trust and provide humanitarian assistance for Ethiopia so as to help its people return to normal life.

The efforts so far by various humanitarian agencies, including those of the United Nations, are highly commendable. We call on the international community to continue to support the Ethiopian people in their pursuit of peace, reconciliation and the reconstruction of their country.

**Ms. Juul** (Norway): I too thank the briefers.

Eight months into the armed conflict in Tigray, the situation remains critical and highly unpredictable. Humanitarian needs are overwhelming. Up to 900,000 people are likely suffering from near-famine conditions, with millions more at risk. Critical aid is being blocked, and humanitarians are prevented from saving lives. The current situation is extremely fluid, and information is difficult to obtain. I would like to address four key points in my intervention today.

First, we reiterate our call for unrestricted and unconditional humanitarian access into and within all parts of Tigray. We welcome the federal Government's declaration of a unilateral ceasefire on humanitarian grounds and call on all parties to move towards a permanent ceasefire. However, despite that positive step, we have received credible reports from several border crossings that humanitarian actors are still being denied access. Let me be clear: the primary responsibility for the protection of its citizens rests with the State. The central Government of Ethiopia must ensure humanitarian access into Tigray. Humanitarian actors must immediately be allowed to cross the front lines with personnel and supplies. The restoration of basic infrastructure — electricity, banking, telecommunications and access to fuel and the Internet — is critical to scale up the humanitarian response. All parties must comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, respect the protected status of aid workers and civilians and refrain from unacceptable destruction or removal of objects that are indispensable for the survival of the population.



Secondly, impunity cannot be tolerated. We condemn in the strongest terms the reported killings of civilians and the widespread and systematic acts of sexual and gender-based violence. All violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law should be documented and verified, with a view to the future investigation and prosecution of those responsible. Accountability for crimes and gross violations, including individual accountability under criminal law, must be ensured. That will be key to reinstate public trust in justice and security institutions and to lay the foundation for reconciliation and sustainable peace. In that regard, 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 independent commission of inquiry of the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights, into alleged atrocities in Tigray. We expect that all findings will be used to ensure accountability.

Thirdly, the conflict in Tigray threatens regional stability. We call on neighbouring States to refrain from aggravating the situation. The continued presence of Eritrean troops in Tigray is a threat to regional peace and security and must end. We call for their immediate withdrawal.

Fourthly, the conflict in Tigray cannot be resolved by military means. The recent elections in Ethiopia took place in very challenging conditions. But, as we can see in this situation, elections alone cannot bring about a democratic transition or resolve the political challenges currently being faced. A meaningful, inclusive national dialogue is needed to enable Ethiopia's democratic development and to reduce conflict across the country.

We strongly urge all actors in Tigray to work across divides and prepare the ground for a possible dialogue. A political solution is the only way to sustainable peace in Tigray — and in Ethiopia as a whole.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of France.

I thank Ms. DiCarlo and Mr. Rajasingham for their briefings. I would like to stress four points.

After eight months of conflict, the retaking of Mekelle by Tigray forces shows that there will be no military solution to the crisis. The announcement of a ceasefire could be a major development if it is rapidly

consolidated. We call upon all parties to act responsibly by expressing without delay their commitment to a permanent cessation of hostilities and all forms of violence against the population. Eritrean forces must immediately leave Ethiopian territory, in accordance with the request made by Ethiopian authorities last March. We take note of the information regarding the redeployment of those forces to the border, which must be quickly verified.

Secondly, it is urgent to ensure humanitarian access. As the situation in Tigray grows more alarming by the day, it is essential to address the immense needs and restore electricity, communications and banking services. We call for the lifting of all impediments, particularly by reopening the Mekelle airport, the granting of long-term visas to humanitarian personnel and the authorization of satellite communications. Vital infrastructure for the delivery of aid must be preserved.

France renews its condemnation of the deadly attacks on Médecins Sans Frontières teams. At least 12 humanitarian workers have lost their lives since the beginning of the conflict. Those crimes must not go unpunished. The protection of humanitarian and medical personnel is an obligation that applies to all the parties.

Thirdly, preserving the unity and territorial integrity of Ethiopia is a priority. The launching of a national dialogue including representatives of all parties and all regions must contribute to that. We call on all political and military forces in Ethiopia to refrain from any action that could add to instability.

Reconciliation also requires the fight against impunity. It is imperative that the joint investigation by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission into the serious human rights violations committed in Tigray continue. It is important that credible judicial proceedings be conducted in full transparency.

Finally, France is concerned at the impact of the crisis on regional stability. We call upon countries in the region to resolve their differences through dialogue and to respond constructively to the mediation efforts of the African Union.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Ethiopia.

**Mr. Amde** (Ethiopia): Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of July. I assure you of my delegation's full support.

My country, Ethiopia, is undergoing a significant transformation that requires delicate and context-driven handling of its domestic affairs. In our bilateral meetings with members of the Council and the informal dialogue we had last month, we exchanged views and concerns — all of which the Government of Ethiopia approached and acted upon in a constructive manner. Therefore, I am surprised by the rationale in calling for this open meeting. We are fully cognizant of the responsibility of the Council to work towards international peace and security. The very first requisite for that onerous responsibility is to encourage dialogue and prevent escalation through constructive engagement and the reinforcement of achievements.

This meeting has been called at a time when the Government has taken bold measures and political decisions to meet the needs and well-being of its people affected by the law enforcement operation in Tigray. That measure should have encouraged our friends to give support and de-escalate the unhelpful pressure. Equally, we wish to express our appreciation to everyone for recognizing our resolve for peace behind the difficult initiative we have taken.

Since the Council held the informal interactive dialogue on the humanitarian situation in Ethiopia, there are critical developments that deserve the Council's recognition and constructive outlook.

On 28 June, the Government of Ethiopia decided to cease the active military engagement of the Ethiopian National Defense Force in the Tigray region. That decision for a humanitarian ceasefire was reached after a concerted deliberation with various stakeholders and partners. We hope that magnanimous and far-sighted decision will not be wasted by the irresponsible conduct of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) group, which the Government of Ethiopia opted to tolerate for the sake of the people of Tigray and to alleviate the humanitarian situation in the region.

The decision to cease military operations is hoped to create a conducive environment for humanitarian operations in Tigray. It will also pave the way for an inclusive national dialogue. The TPLF group that we were pursuing continued its belligerence to protect a few individuals. In furtherance of its agenda, it began

conscripting young and elderly civilians, women and men, to fight highly trained and armed men of their country. That exposed people in Tigray to a military confrontation they were not prepared for. Furthermore, it posed a risk for disruption to the agricultural season. The group's ethnically charged tactics of pitting the people against the Government have also been found to be detrimental to our innate social fabric.

As a result, the Government of Ethiopia, as the bearer of the primary responsibility to protect its people, made a difficult political decision to suspend active military operations in favour of safeguarding the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Ethiopian State.

We believe we have now created a space for unfettered humanitarian assistance and the proper conduct of the agricultural planting season. In addition, we will augment humanitarian efforts in the region, including the distribution of food and non-food items from warehouses across Tigray. The National Disaster Risk Management Commission and the five humanitarian agencies deployed in all woredas of the region are set to resume functioning. Furthermore, we are in the process of adapting the humanitarian assistance guidelines and coordination mechanism to the new developments. Public services will also resume once we create a situation for the safe operation of the infrastructure and its operators.

Ethiopia faced the inevitable journey of addressing the political underpinnings of what we had experienced last November when our defense forces were attacked from within. The immediate need lies in creating an environment for the delivery of much-needed humanitarian assistance. In that regard, the Government will continue to exert maximum efforts and allocate the available resources to that end.

We welcome and appreciate the concern expressed by Council members for our compatriots in Tigray who have regrettably sustained the burden of the law enforcement operation due to the cowardly tactics of the TPLF group.

It is important to underline that the wounding and suffering of any Ethiopian is unacceptable. The shortcomings in preventing that suffering are not something that the Government belittles. In the same vein, we take our responsibility to ensure accountability and remedy those problems with maximum seriousness. For absolute clarity, I would

like to reaffirm my Government's firm commitment to those core responsibilities of the State.

There certainly are internal as well as external factors that play into the security challenges we are facing. The external security threats against us — through no fault of provocation on our part — are complicating our internal political dynamics and distracting us from key national priorities. I wish to implore the Council to act with full awareness of the external challenges Ethiopia is facing.

Following the organization of peaceful and successful national elections this month, efforts are now geared towards building a strong, united and democratic country. In that connection, the Ethiopian Government is developing a road map for inclusive dialogue to ensure lasting peace and stability.

I want to reaffirm my Government's resolve to ensuring accountability for human rights abuses and crimes committed in the Tigray region. We will make sure that impunity is not tolerated. We remain committed to working with all bilateral and multilateral partners through genuine partnership and an understanding that the Government of Ethiopia is more than capable of overcoming those challenges. We encourage Council members to play a constructive role in supporting the Ethiopian Government in the implementation of the humanitarian ceasefire. We again thank Council members that have welcomed that positive gesture.

In contrast, I would like to make it clear that the political pressure and hasty bilateral coercive measures against Ethiopia are unacceptable and violate basic

tenets of international law. Excessive pressure will push this ancient country of 110 million people to the precipice and deprive it of any possibility of recovery. The people of Ethiopia are indeed watching and should not perceive that our pronouncements are pushing them to the abyss and endless political division. For Ethiopia, this is a moment of introspection, a genuine revisiting of our successes and challenges.

The main issue is how to heal our wounds. There is unfinished grieving and mourning, such as with regard to the Mai Kadra massacre by the TPLF youth group and the suffering of the people of Wollega in Tigray, who have been evicted from their ancestral land over the past 30 years. Therefore, there needs to be proper closure. The political culture of impunity should have closure. We know that overcoming our own challenges is what exalts us as a nation. What would alleviate us as a nation is our commitment and the commitment of our people to stand for peace. We might be poor, but we also have hope. We are people with cherished values. For Ethiopia, hope is still alive.

In conclusion, I hope the Council will look at the situation in my country in the right perspective, understand the magnitude of the challenges we face and recognize the important step we have taken in that regard. What we really need at the moment is the support, understanding and solidarity of the international community. That is why I want to conclude by appealing to international partners and friends of our country to continue scaling up humanitarian support to meet humanitarian needs across Ethiopia.

*The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.*