

# Opening Statement by Ermias Tenkirew of the Welfare Monitoring Unit for Poverty Reduction at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development

Welcome to this forum organized by the Ethiopian Teenagers' Forum, in collaboration with UNICEF, on the subject of poverty reduction and youth. I am very pleased to have been invited to make an opening statement at this forum.

Ethiopia is on the lowest rung among developing countries. Its economy is based upon agriculture and has one of the lowest per capita income rates. For this reason, poverty in Ethiopia is widespread and manifests itself in numerous ways.

In order for the effort being made by Government to bring about rapid and sustainable growth, the appropriate path is cast by the poverty reduction strategy paper. It is believed that the document lays a reliable foundation to bring about sustainable growth. This paper was finalized under the title "Sustainable Growth and Poverty Reduction" in July 2002 and was distributed to those responsible for implementing it.

As I have tried to mention above, the overall sustainable development and poverty reduction programme has resulted in Government formulating various policies and programmes. The next step is to put it in action and to make the effort to reduce poverty in our country. To bring about the desired change, each segment of the society must fulfill its responsibility. Youth are the main productive force in the economy, and it is believed that they can bring about a lot of change.

According to a study conducted by the Central Statistics Authority in 2000, 44.2 per cent of Ethiopians lived below the absolute poverty line. The study indicated that 45.4 per cent of the rural population and 36.9 per cent of the urban population live below the absolute poverty line.

I wish you a fruitful discussion during today's forum and expect that you will come up with new ideas and produce productive recommendations regarding the role of youth in efforts to bring about poverty reduction in our country and that you will work toward implementing your ideas.