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### **STATEMENT BY UNICEF OFFICER-IN-CHARGE ABDELMAJID TIBOUTI “POVERTY REDUCTION AND YOUTH” THIRD MEETING OF THE ETHIOPIAN TEENAGERS’ FORUM**

Ermias Tenkirew, of the Welfare Monitoring Unit for Poverty Reduction at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development,

Honoured guests, colleagues and the media,

Boys and girls,

I am honoured once again to be addressing this third meeting of the Ethiopian Teenagers’ Forum, examining “Poverty Reduction and Youth,” an extremely timely and important topic.

Despite unprecedented global prosperity, a staggering 40 per cent of all children in developing countries – over half a billion – are struggling to survive on less than \$1 per day. Poverty is the main underlying cause of millions of preventable child deaths each year. It is the cause of tens of millions of children going hungry, missing out of school or being forced into child labour. Poverty causes lifelong damage to children’s minds and bodies, perpetuating the cycle of poverty across generations.

This is why poverty reduction must begin with the protection and realization of the human rights of children. Investments in children are the best guarantee for achieving equitable and sustainable human development here in Ethiopia.

As many of you may know, the first millennium development goal is to “eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.” We at UNICEF are trying to help create a world fit for children by promoting healthy lives and providing quality education. We are working with the Ethiopian Government, Donors, sister UN agencies, NGOs, and young people, like you, to ensure that every girl and boy has a good start in life; an expanded set of immunisations and basic health care; a quality primary education; the knowledge, skill and support they need to fight HIV/AIDS, and protection from violence, abuse, exploitation and discrimination.

Young people like you are a positive force for change and a key resource for poverty eradication. Ethiopia can go a long way in fighting poverty by ensuring full participation of young people in the development process.

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I look forward to hearing the results of your deliberations on this important issue. I'm sure that all of us adults will gain fresh insights and perspectives on your analysis on how to alleviate poverty and fortify the youth of Ethiopia. After all, the youth of today are the leaders of the country tomorrow.

My thanks to you all for your dedication and hard work.