Remarks at the General Debate of the Second Regular Session of the UNICEF Executive Board

By H.E. Ambassador Taye Atske Selassie
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Excellencies,

Distinguished Board Members,

At the outset, let me express my gratitude to the UNICEF Executive Board for organizing the second session. This is being convened six months after the first session. We stand in appreciation of holding sessions in such a predictable, periodic manner. This will help in creating the momentum needed to achieve the goals UNICEF has put forward in close consultation with Member States.

From a country perspective, I would also like to acknowledge UNICEF’s dedicated work to launch the Country Program for Ethiopia for 2020-2025. It was momentous as it happened just after the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic.
Before the advent of the pandemic, Ethiopia was riding on the back of successful stories in improving the lives of the child by measures of socio-economic indicators. School enrollment has increased significantly. Families were better off financially. Children in Ethiopia have more chance of survival today. The outlook has also improved for girls; child marriage has been declining for the last 10 years, the fastest rate among countries in Eastern and Southern Africa.

When we say COVID-19 is threatening the gains made over the past two decades, these are the achievements that risk becoming things of the past. The onset of the pandemic was compounded with other challenges including locust infestation and the conflict in Tigray.

The humanitarian implication of the conflict in Tigray is unfortunately regrettable. The government announced a unilateral ceasefire in June for the farming season to be uninhibited. Sadly, the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) rather went on to expand its aggression to neighboring regions. It continues to impede the delivery of humanitarian assistance and has been engaged in looting of humanitarian aid including from UNICEF warehouses.

Also, a recent report from Ethiopia’s Ministry of Education indicates that the aggression of the TPLF has damaged Seven Thousand (7,000) schools in Tigray, Amhara and Afar regions forcing about 1.4 million students to drop out of school.

All those challenges taken together mean that millions of children were out of school. The implication for girls is especially horrendous
because, sadly, not going to school increases their chances of being married off at young ages.

Finally, I would like to stress the importance of availing sufficient resources to curb these challenges. Catering for the needs of Ethiopians seeking humanitarian assistance requires the devotion of more resources. Also, the challenges are multiple and interlinked and these underline the need for agencies to work in tandem as well as to work in close proximity with the government.

**I thank you!**