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Humanitarian Situation in Ethiopia
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Introduction

Chairman Meeks, Ranking Member McCaul, distinguished members of the Committee: thank you for this opportunity to discuss the humanitarian crisis in Ethiopia, how the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is providing life-saving assistance, and the ongoing challenges that impact our response efforts. I also want to thank the Committee for its attention to, and engagement on, this urgent crisis.

I note that Representative Karen Bass, Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, along with Committee Chairman Meeks, Committee Ranking Member McCaul, and Ranking Member of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa Chris Smith, introduced House Resolution 445 on May 28 focused on the crisis in Tigray. I welcome the clear signal this resolution sends to all parties involved in the conflict, condemning the violence and human rights abuses perpetrated in Tigray, and calling for, among other things: a cessation of hostilities, an end to human rights violations and atrocities, and unfettered humanitarian access to reach those most in need of assistance. I can assure this Committee that USAID, along with the Department of State and other parts of the U.S. Government (USG), is making every effort to bring an end to this crisis—as you will hear today.

Nearly eight months after the start of the conflict, the humanitarian crisis in Tigray has deteriorated to shocking levels, and the need for action has become ever more urgent. USAID believes that a famine may already be happening in Tigray, threatening the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. If the conflict doesn't end, and humanitarian access does not improve, this already devastating situation will get even worse.

We could see widespread famine occur in Ethiopia later this year—a situation the country has not faced since the 1980s.

Overview of Humanitarian Situation

Over the years, Ethiopia has struggled with a confluence of recurring acute shocks: drought, seasonal flooding, pest and disease outbreaks, and above-average food prices. These challenges

have led to chronic and sustained humanitarian needs, which are further exacerbated by ongoing conflict.

In this year alone, nearly 24 million Ethiopians will likely require humanitarian assistance—more than 20 percent of the country’s population—with 13 million needing emergency food assistance through the end of the calendar year due to ongoing conflict and displacement and the compounding effects of severe drought, desert locust infestations, and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

Tigray

While there is need throughout Ethiopia, the scale of humanitarian need in northern Ethiopia’s Tigray region is staggering, and on a different scale entirely. After nearly eight months of hostilities between multiple armed actors including the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF), and Amhara regional and irregular forces, approximately 5.2 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, out of a total population of around 6 million in Tigray. The food insecure population is spread over hundreds of rural communities across rugged terrain that is larger than the state of Maryland, with significant clusters of displaced people in and among towns and urban centers seeking assistance.

These are alarming, overwhelming numbers. But each one of those 5.2 million is an individual with a personal, lived experience of this shocking crisis. I want to take a moment to share some of their stories.

When conflict erupted in Tigray, Yonas (whose name has been changed) and his family were split up, fleeing in different directions as armed groups took over their community. Some of Yonas’ friends were shot and killed as they fled, but he couldn’t stop to help them. He reached Sudan with his father, but then returned to Tigray to find his 11-year-old sister and five-year-old brother. The three of them now live in an informal camp for displaced persons in Ethiopia, relying on the local community for food and clothing, while their father remains in Sudan and their mother is on the border of Sudan and Ethiopia. Yonas hopes for peace and stability, so he can reunite his family and go back to farming to support them. In the meantime, the memory of what happened stays with him and others in the camp, who are still afraid and feel vulnerable to attack. Yonas and his family are five of the more than two million people who have been displaced by the conflict in Tigray.

Displacement

Although some 45,000 people have fled across the border as refugees into Sudan, the majority of people forced from their homes and communities have moved to towns and cities over the nearly

eight months since conflict began, providing perhaps the most pronounced case of “hyper-urbanization” in the world over the past several years. With the Tigray region’s urban population increasing by nearly 90 percent, or 1.5 million people, since the conflict began, the crisis has become increasingly urban-focused, requiring new approaches and activities to provide shelter and other services to the displaced population. Many internally displaced people are relying on host communities for basic necessities like food and water, further straining already limited resources. At the same time, recent blockages by armed actors of key roads to main population centers are preventing relief actors from reaching displaced people in more urban areas. Individuals living at sites for internally displaced persons continue to express concerns around insecurity due to the presence of military actors and members of the police at those sites, a lack of food in rural sites, as well as overcrowded conditions that exacerbate the risks of gender-based violence (GBV) and the transmission of communicable diseases.

Earlier this month the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) began efforts to proceed with a phased return and relocation plan for internally displaced persons in various parts of the country ahead of the June-to-September rainy season. The UN and humanitarian actors have raised concerns regarding security and a lack of adequate services in some planned sites for relocation or return. The United States and others continue to call on the GoE to ensure all returns or relocations are safe, dignified, voluntary, and informed.

Agriculture and Livelihoods

In April, USAID completed a rapid agricultural livelihoods assessment and found that the conflict has severely impacted rural communities by eliminating many primary sources of food and income. The majority of poor households feed their families through at-home crop production, purchasing food at local markets, and the GoE’s Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP). However, our analysis shows that conflict is preventing people from accessing markets, farmland, and many services, which limits their ability to feed themselves and their families. Traditional casual labor opportunities that many people rely on for income, such as on farms or construction sites, are virtually non-existent. Income-generating activities, like the sale of crops, milk, and livestock, have been severely disrupted. The bottom line is that millions of Ethiopians cannot feed their families.

Additionally, because the ongoing conflict has had a devastating impact on the agriculture sector more broadly—including through the loss of animals for plowing and destruction of nurseries for seeds and stores for agricultural inputs—we fear those families will be without food for years to come. We are coming to the end of the main planting season. However, many farmers have not been able to obtain seeds and tools, have reportedly had their seeds and tools stolen and livestock killed by soldiers, or have been driven from their land and will not be able to plant before the rains come. If the main harvest is lost, the 5.2 million people currently in need of food assistance

will need help until the October 2022 harvest. Providing this life-saving food assistance could cost the humanitarian community upwards of one billion dollars.

Famine

At the start of my testimony, you heard me say that USAID believes that famine may already be happening in Tigray. An updated Ethiopia Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis made public on June 10 states that nearly 353,000 people are experiencing Catastrophe—IPC 5—levels of acute food insecurity at the household level. This IPC analysis was made public against the wishes of the Ethiopian government, and USAID analysis indicates that the IPC analysis actually understates the severity of acute food insecurity and malnutrition in Tigray. USAID estimates that 3.5 to 4.5 million people across Tigray are currently in Crisis—IPC 3—or worse levels of acute food insecurity, and are in need of urgent humanitarian food assistance. Of this population, USAID estimates that 1.5 to 2 million are currently in Emergency—IPC 4—conditions, and more than double the published number—we estimate 700,000 to 900,000 people—are currently experiencing Catastrophe—IPC 5—conditions.

To put this in perspective: the five-phase IPC scale ranges from Minimal—IPC 1—to Catastrophe/Famine—IPC 5. When a geographical area is classified in Crisis—IPC 3—or above, it is deemed in need of urgent humanitarian assistance to save lives and livelihoods. When an area is classified in Emergency—IPC 4—or above, populations are already beginning to experience excess mortality due to lack of food; and indeed we have been hearing confirmed reports of Tigrayans dying as a result of food insecurity, malnutrition, disease, and starvation. When an area is classified as Catastrophe—IPC 5—populations are facing an extreme deprivation of food, starvation, destitution, and death, which we believe is the situation for hundreds of thousands currently in Tigray.

Ethiopia has seen famine of disastrous proportions before. In the 1984–85 famine, an estimated one million people died of starvation. With the development progress that Ethiopia has made, the fact that famine may be occurring in Tigray now is tragic.

Unfortunately, the July-to-September period is the typical Tigray lean season, the period between harvests when household food stocks are lowest, and this year's lean season is further compounded by the adverse effects of conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic on food security, health, and nutrition conditions among vulnerable populations in Tigray. Moreover, the rainy season from June to September is likely to further complicate humanitarian access and delivery of assistance at scale in the coming months, even if impediments to access imposed by armed actors were to diminish.

This is a critical moment. Famine prevention and response requires the cessation of hostilities, granting of complete humanitarian access by the conflict parties, and a ramping-up of

humanitarian operations. Our assistance must be more than food assistance alone, it requires integrated public health, nutrition, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services. Without enough food, clean water, and access to basic health and nutrition services, malnourished bodies are not able to effectively use nutrients or fight disease. If the international response is to be effective against the threat of widespread famine, it must be multi-sectoral, it must be robust, and it must be scaled up now.

As I sit here with you today, people in Tigray do not have the life-sustaining resources they need. Due to the ongoing conflict and looting, Tigray's health system has collapsed; as of mid-May only around 16 percent of hospitals and health centers were functioning fully. The rest of Tigray's health facilities were looted or occupied by armed actors, denying people the basic care they need. This lack of health resources limits the ability of health officials to control the spread of infectious diseases, including COVID-19, and contributes to possible famine throughout the region by gravely impacting the ability of people in Tigray to receive treatment for illness.

In addition to the significant impact on the Tigrayan health infrastructure, the conflict has resulted in the destruction of critical safe water and community hygiene infrastructure. Many people are still unable to access clean water and adequate sanitation services. Relief actors report the need for WASH assistance for around 561,000 people at new internally displaced person sites across Tigray, the need for an additional 169 water trucks to fill the gap in water trucking, and delays in resuming WASH assistance in some urban centers due to looting and destruction of water utilities offices.

Gender-Based Violence

In addition to lack of food, medical care, and clean water, we have also heard horrifying reports of human rights abuses by armed actors across Tigray, including severe gender-based violence. As I have said publicly before, the severity of gender-based violence in particular is among the absolute worst I have seen in nearly two decades of humanitarian work. The reports not only speak to widespread incidents of rape and other GBV against women, but of systematic attempts to dismantle society and destroy families. For example, some perpetrators are targeting the wives of priests, abusing women in front of their families, or using a brutal level of violence.

One tragic story among many is that of Sara, a pseudonym for a mother of an 11-year-old boy and a six-year-old girl in a town in eastern Tigray, who fled when the conflict broke out in order to save the lives of her children and herself. After a month away, she ran out of food for her children and had to return to her town to collect what she could. While there, she was kidnapped and brutally assaulted. A violation that no person should ever have to face.

We at USAID condemn these atrocities to the strongest degree possible, and we are prioritizing support to survivors in our humanitarian response. While the full scale of abuses and GBV

incidents in Tigray may never be truly known, Ethiopian health officials recorded at least 1,288 cases of reported sexual assault in the region between February and April alone, while the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) projects that approximately 22,500 survivors of sexual violence in Tigray will seek clinical care in 2021. Unfortunately, the actual numbers are likely far higher than those recorded by health authorities due to persistent barriers to accurate reporting, including scarce health and legal services, limited staff capacity to dedicate to reporting, fear of stigmatization, and risk of further harm.

These terrible attacks and their long-lasting impacts underscore our particular concern about the negative effects of the conflict on women and children writ large. Women are facing increased safety risks, loss of livelihoods, and restrictions on their movement. As the number of female-headed households rises and social support networks break down due to the conflict, women are also facing increased childcare responsibilities. Children are also experiencing rising levels of violence and abuse as part of the conflict, suffering from higher rates of malnutrition and other health concerns, and more than 5,400 of them have been separated from their families.

Scaling Up the U.S. Government Response

USAID's longtime and robust presence in Ethiopia implementing one of the largest and most complex portfolios in Africa has enabled a swift response to this crisis. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2020, USAID provided a total of \$328 million in development assistance and global health programming to the people of Ethiopia across sectors like agriculture, education, health, and women's empowerment. USAID funding has supported programming to protect human rights; promote accountability; counter disinformation, misinformation, and hate speech; mitigate conflict in Tigray and other at-risk areas; prevent GBV, and promote inclusive governance and political processes. However, this crisis threatens the gains that Ethiopia has made across these sectors in the last 20 years.

In the face of staggering humanitarian need, the United States has responded with significant support and advocacy. In FY 2020, USAID provided more than \$650 million in humanitarian assistance in Ethiopia, and we anticipate that the FY 2021 figure may be more than \$1 billion due to needs stemming from the Tigray crisis and ongoing conflict within Ethiopia.

As soon as the conflict in Tigray started, USAID immediately began providing life-saving assistance. The United States is the largest humanitarian donor to the Tigray response, providing nearly \$488 million in humanitarian assistance since the crisis began, of which nearly \$344 million is for food assistance. We used our existing programs, including rapid response mechanisms, while also adapting to access and logistical constraints by pre-positioning in-kind commodities and working with our partners to pivot other resources as needed. However, the

sheer level of the needs and ongoing nature of the crisis necessitated a scale-up and additional resources.

On March 1, USAID deployed a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) to scale up the U.S. humanitarian response efforts to the conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray Region. This expert team has been building upon existing USAID humanitarian programs that were in place prior to the conflict, and rapidly scaled additional life-saving efforts to reach even more people. The DART works with other humanitarian organizations, international donors, and local community groups to assess needs and coordinate assistance to those who need it most. USAID's robust and holistic response is focused on seven priority sectors: food assistance; WASH; health; nutrition; protection; shelter and emergency supplies; and emergency agriculture and livestock interventions. The response also supports the humanitarian coordination and logistics support sectors.

In response to acute food needs across Tigray, USAID is supporting the Catholic Relief Services (CRS)-led Joint Emergency Operation (JEOP), the United Nations World Food Program (WFP), and other humanitarian partners to provide emergency food assistance—including U.S.-sourced agricultural products like cereals, pulses, and vegetable oil—and U.S.-made specialized nutritious foods to vulnerable people across the region. Combined, the JEOP and WFP programs have reached more than 3.9 million people across five of Tigray's six zones with food rations from late 2020 to June 2021. Recently announced USAID funding will also provide enough additional food to feed 3 million people for nearly two months.

As I noted earlier, the continued conflict impacts the children of Tigray in the most acute and heartbreaking ways. Since February, our partners' health facilities have treated more than 5,000 children suffering from wasting—a life-threatening form of malnutrition—with ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF) and medicines. Nearly a quarter of children and forty percent of pregnant and lactating women have been identified as malnourished.

In an environment of ongoing conflict that has devastated all basic resources and services, our response must utilize integrated, flexible, and mobile service delivery. Ten of our humanitarian health partners are supporting more than 50 mobile health and nutrition teams that can be deployed to accessible populations in need throughout Tigray. Additionally, partners are providing urgently required medical supplies, pharmaceuticals, and personal protective equipment throughout the region, and are supporting the operations and rehabilitation of more than 300 health facilities, many of which were damaged or looted during the conflict. We are also providing hygiene kits with soap, toilet paper, and sanitary products, and supporting hygiene promotion campaigns to help prevent the spread of diseases, including COVID-19.

Safe shelter and places for displaced families to live are also critical issues as the conflict continues. Our partners, such as CRS, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Samaritan’s Purse, and World Vision, are constructing emergency shelters for displaced people. On April 12, USAID airlifted 1,500 rolls of heavy-duty plastic sheeting from our warehouse in Dubai to contribute to emergency shelter efforts. This plastic sheeting can be used to create needed walls and roofs of temporary structures, keeping more than 18,000 people safe from the elements, rather than sleeping outside or in crowded community shelters. Partners are also distributing relief commodity kits—which include bed mats, blankets, and wash basins—to assist recently displaced individuals. However, these efforts, combined with the work of other humanitarian actors, have resulted in assistance to only 15 percent of the nearly 2.8 million people in need of shelter. Although planned activities could double the assistance level, reaching up to 30 percent, there will likely be a gap of 70 percent, or nearly 2 million people in nearly 400,000 households, still in need of shelter assistance, even with the onset of the rainy season. This gap in assistance is perhaps the largest gap in assistance of any humanitarian sector in Tigray.

GBV has been one of the most egregious weapons of this conflict. USAID has been attuned to this need and prioritized protection from the initial days of our response. Our current programs include funding for seven partners to implement protection programming in the region, including life-saving GBV prevention and response services for survivors and vulnerable women and girls. Among other activities, our funding is enabling partners to expand GBV case management support in the region, train social workers and community-based case workers, provide dignity kits—which contain items to address the specific needs of women and girls—to GBV survivors, and establish child-friendly spaces. We also support programming to address other protection needs brought on by the conflict, including community-level psychosocial support to address widespread distress and loss, family tracing and reunification for separated children, and support to first responders.

Despite the extensive assistance and resources provided to date, the ongoing fighting and access constraints mean that we cannot reach many areas where we know the needs are the greatest. When security conditions allow and armed actors withdraw, USAID is ready to respond to identified needs. Our decades of working in Ethiopia, experienced partners and staff on the ground, significant assets in the region, and deep relationships underpin our readiness and ability to respond. But, although the humanitarian response resources remain at the ready, the problems of unending conflict, proliferation of armed actors, and restricted access make the work incredibly difficult.

This crisis highlights the need to get ahead of the recurring humanitarian crises in Ethiopia—whether caused by conflict, climate, or disease outbreaks—which is why we work with our

partners on the ground to anticipate, plan for, mitigate, and respond to disasters, but also to address the grievances and triggers that can lead to violent conflict.

We recently saw the June 21 elections in Ethiopia, which took place against a backdrop of grave instability, including numerous inter-ethnic and inter-communal conflicts, and an electoral environment that was not free and fair. The period following these elections will be a critical moment for Ethiopians to come together to confront growing divisions. The United States is ready to assist in that effort.

Challenges Remain

In the last eight months, USAID has scaled up its response and reached millions with life-saving assistance. However, this expansion will not be enough to avert widespread famine if insecurity and access restrictions continue to significantly hinder our partners' ability to reach people in need and the ability of people in Tigray to resume the activities on which they rely for their livelihoods.

The USG and its partners recognize the severity of the situation. This is why pushing for a cessation of hostilities and unhindered humanitarian access to populations in need has been at the center of ongoing engagement from this Committee, your colleagues in the Senate including Senator Coons, Secretary Blinken, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Thomas-Greenfield, Special Envoy Feltman, and other Administration Leaders, as well as Ambassador Pasi's leadership in-country. It has also underpinned our discussions with the GoE, humanitarian partners, fellow donors, and other like-minded countries. However, many challenges remain.

Humanitarian Access

Currently, more than one million people in need of life-saving humanitarian assistance are inaccessible to humanitarians.

The biggest challenges to reaching people in need are the ongoing conflict between armed actors, and obstruction of humanitarian operations by armed actors, especially the EDF. Despite a declaration made by the Prime Minister's Office on March 3 granting "unfettered access through Tigray to humanitarian organizations", our implementing partners continue to report hostility toward humanitarian actors and varying documentation requirements at checkpoints run by EDF, ENDF, and Amhara regional forces.

In Tigray's North Western Zone, relief actors report ongoing movement restrictions by armed actors located along a critical supply route between May Tsebri and Shire towns. Earlier this month, six non-governmental organization (NGO) staff members returning from providing humanitarian services were detained at a military compound in Central Zone, interrogated, and

assaulted, according to a UN report. In a separate incident, an international NGO truck carrying food and relief supplies was seized by reported EDF elements, and its drivers were detained and abused by local police. During the month of May, the UN recorded 152 access-related incidents, 43 of which involved violence against aid workers.

These access restrictions are killing people. Many recent access-related incidents have occurred in the areas of Tigray facing the highest levels of acute food insecurity. Notably, nearly two-thirds of Tigray's population of 700,000–900,000 currently estimated to be facing Catastrophe levels of acute food insecurity—the equivalent of some 500,000 people—is currently located in Central and North Western Zones, significant proportions of which were classified by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) as hard-to-reach as of May 31.

By blocking food assistance deliveries and preventing farmers from accessing their agricultural land to plant and harvest, armed actors are actively increasing the likelihood of widespread famine in Tigray. The USG continues to call for an end to these abuses, unhindered humanitarian access, and the full withdrawal of Eritrean forces from the area. These incidents highlight the need for improved civil-military coordination across federal, regional, and local levels of Ethiopia, which is key to enabling the safe movement of humanitarian supplies and personnel on the frontlines—and getting life-saving aid to the people who need it most.

We remain concerned that the GoE's designation of the TPLF as a terrorist organization in early May is having a chilling effect on humanitarian response efforts. Increased risks for aid actors negotiating access and delivering life-saving assistance in areas with TPLF presence have been reported. This further hinders the ability of humanitarian organizations to provide critical assistance to prevent widespread famine throughout Tigray. We are urging the GoE to respect the neutrality of humanitarian assistance, and operationalize humanitarian carve outs to ensure unhindered access for aid organizations.

Other access constraints for scaling up the response have been the result of bureaucratic restrictions. Until recently, the GoE had only been granting one-month visas for humanitarian workers. This has been a major challenge because humanitarian staff require extended visas in order to serve in a sustained response scale-up. Earlier this month, the GoE announced that the visa period granted to international NGO staff had been extended from one to three months, with the possibility of extensions per individual requests from organizations. We welcome this renewed engagement from the GoE as an initial step in the right direction. The USAID DART is closely monitoring the implementation of the newly announced policy to determine whether requirements are transparently communicated and if requests are processed efficiently. We continue to advocate that the GoE allow full six-month visas for international relief personnel, but the new policy marks a positive step for the overall scale-up of humanitarian operations in

the region. According to the UN, as of June 3, there were 32 NGOs operating in Tigray, an increase from only 17 NGOs prior to the onset of the crisis.

Beyond having the necessary visas, when responding in rural and insecure environments, humanitarian operators require telecommunications equipment, including satellite phones and VSATs, to communicate with one another, establish distribution sites, or call for help in an emergency. Despite a significant shortage in-country, the GoE had, until recently, not permitted humanitarians to import their own equipment. In another welcome sign of progress, earlier this month, WFP received GoE approvals to import nearly 80 satellite phones, and another USAID NGO partner successfully received five satellite phones out of customs. The importation process remains opaque, and most partners continue to lack the necessary telecommunications equipment to safely expand operations into insecure and rural areas where humanitarian needs are likely to be the greatest. We welcome these recent actions to ease some of the bureaucratic restrictions on humanitarian assistance in Tigray, and we are keen to work with the GoE to expand on these actions in order to try to avert a widespread famine.

Funding

Despite growing humanitarian needs across sectors, the Tigray response continues to be underfunded by the international community. The United States is funding a majority of the humanitarian response in Tigray, but the UN projects a funding gap of over \$500 million for the response through the end of this year. On June 9, USAID Administrator Samantha Power announced more than \$181 million in additional USAID funding to respond to the critical needs of crisis-affected populations in Tigray. This new funding includes dedicated support for protection services, including case management for survivors of GBV, safe spaces, programs to reunite separated households, psychosocial support services for women and girls, and training for social workers and community case workers. As I noted earlier, this assistance will also help extend feeding for 3 million people for nearly two additional months. It will also provide specialized nutritious foods to prevent and treat wasting, fertilizers, seeds, and tools for farmers to replant crops intentionally destroyed by armed actors. Finally, this assistance will enable additional health, nutrition, and WASH support, critically needed to repair damaged or destroyed facilities and infrastructure and restore critical services.

USAID is working with the Department of State to urge other donors to scale up their assistance rapidly to support a multi-sector response to prevent widespread famine. In conjunction with the announcement of new USAID funding this month, USG leadership also held a series of Tigray-related events with the goal of driving action on Tigray among donors and the broader public—and continuing to increase pressure on parties to the conflict to bring an end to this crisis. On June 9, USAID Administrator Power held a series of high-level meetings on the humanitarian catastrophe in Tigray, convening humanitarian partners, diplomats, aid workers, donor countries, and USG officials for urgent discussions on famine and ongoing atrocities. On June 10

Administrator Power also co-hosted a U.S.–EU High-Level Roundtable, with the participation of Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield, and Special Envoy Feltman, to help galvanize a strong international position on Tigray.

UN Scale Up

UN leadership has been increasingly vocal about the scale of the humanitarian need in Tigray. Then UN Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock joined the June 10 High-Level Roundtable, and told participants that “there is now famine in Tigray.” USAID supports recent steps by the UN to scale up operations, and we are urging the UN to immediately take all additional actions necessary to give effect to that scale-up. We continue to advocate for the UN to expand across Tigray into areas beyond Mekele and Shire, and commit the additional expert staff needed to fill current gaps in protection, emergency shelter, camp coordination and camp management, and GBV response—which are particularly concerning given the depth and scale of need. We are urging donors to support the UN’s scale-up and response for Tigray.

Conclusion

I am honored to be here today to discuss our work and underscore that the United States remains committed to helping the people of Ethiopia. However, while our humanitarian assistance will help alleviate urgent needs, it will not address the root causes of the ongoing conflict and human rights violations and abuses in Ethiopia. In order to stop the suffering in Tigray, we need an immediate end to armed actors obstructing humanitarian access, a cessation of fighting, and an establishment of dialogue, reconciliation, and justice and accountability measures.

We owe this much to children like 13 year old Rahel (whose name has been changed), who had been an active student that enjoyed poetry and sports, before she was forced to flee with her sister and great uncle when conflict broke out suddenly in Western Tigray. Rahel now lives in an informal camp with limited access to food, where she has become withdrawn and anxious, and misses her mother.

Despite the continuing heroic efforts of international humanitarians and local communities, the trajectory of the crisis in Tigray is clear: already deadly levels of food insecurity and malnutrition **could turn into widespread famine within months**. But lives can still be saved with an immediate cessation of hostilities, an increase in humanitarian access, and the immediate scale-up of more life-saving humanitarian assistance. The people of Ethiopia can wait no longer for unhindered humanitarian access to people in need. It must happen immediately.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today, and I welcome your questions.

Drafter: TigrayRMT ORC [David Harrison-Smith](#)

Approved: AtA/BHA Sarah Charles 6/22/21

<u>Bureau Level Clearances</u>	<u>Clearance Status</u>	<u>Date</u>
AID/FO		
BHA/MD: DMutone-Smith	Clear	6/22/2021
TigrayRMT RM TMcRae	Clear	6/21/2021
TigrayRMT DMC SGenthon	Clear	6/21/2021
Tigray RMT DMP CDavison	Clear	6/21/2021
Tigray RMT PRO JRoss	Clear	6/21/2021
AFR/EA/Ethiopia Desk: RONEill	Clear	6/23/2021
AFR/EA/OD: JDworken	Info	6/23/2021
LPA/LEG: MO'Brien		
DDI	Info	6/21/2021
CPS/CVP: JDrude	Clear	6/22/2021
NSC		
OMB		
State/AF- Robert. F Godec	Clear	6/25/2021
State/PRM		