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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE FEDERAL
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Statement

By

**H.E. Ambassador Negash Kebret, Director General for
International Organizations Directorate General in the
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic
Republic of Ethiopia**

On Agenda Item 28

Advancement of Women

At the 67th United Nations General Assembly

**New York
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Mr. Chairman,

Permit me, first and for most, to align my delegation with the statements made earlier by Algeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and Cameroon on behalf of the Africa Group. My delegation wishes to express its appreciation to the Secretary General for the set of reports submitted on the important agenda under discussion.

Mr. Chairman,

Women constitute half of Ethiopia's population which currently is estimated to be over 80 million. Recognizing their numerical strength, potential and vitality, the Ethiopian government, over the last two decades, has put in place a number of policies, strategies and laws that are designed to advance the empowerment of women in all spheres of society's life.

In 1993, the government devised and issued a National Policy on Women aimed at committing the government and its institutions to speed up and ensure gender equality in all political, social, economic life, property ownership and decision making, rural women's access to basic social services, and eliminating customary and other practices prejudicial to receiving equal treatments at all levels. Moreover, the government formulated National Action Plan (NAP) on Gender and Development and incorporated gender issues in different national policies and strategies including health, education and training, HIV/AIDS, population and other sector areas. The government also firmly believes that women play critical role in the national efforts to reduce poverty and accelerate economic growth.

Mr. Chairman,

The Ethiopian Constitution recognizes women's equal rights with men in the political, social, economic and cultural spheres. Accordingly, women have the right to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly and through freely elected representatives, the right to vote and to be elected to any level of government offices and to be a member of any political organization, labor union, trade organization or employers or professional association of their choice. As a result, the number of women in decision making and leadership roles has increased considerably.

Efforts were also undertaken to increase the representation of women in political processes in Ethiopia. In this respect, the number or seats held by women in the Ethiopian parliament has significantly improved and reached 22% in 2010 as compared to 2% in 1995. With regard to leadership and decision making, in the same year, women's representation reached 13% at Ministerial, 8.3% among State

Ministerial, 25% at Commissioner and 12.7% at Ambassador Level. Our on-going five-year Growth and Transformation Plan also aims to elevate 30% of women to higher leadership echelon and 50% to middle level decision-making stage.

Mr. Chairman,

In an effort to eliminate violence against women and ensure respect for their rights before the law, the Family Law and the Penal Code have been thoroughly revised. Accordingly, perpetrators of various forms of violence against women, such as rape and abductions, among others, receive rigorous punishment. In line with the revised Penal Code, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), rape, abduction and trafficking are considered as serious crimes that entail severe punishment.

The combat against human trafficking in Ethiopia is undertaken in line with the Prevention, Protection and Prosecution strategies as stipulated in the Ouagadougou Action Plan and AU.COMMIT campaign. Special police and prosecution units which deal with human trafficking including trafficking in Women have been established to provide effective protection to the rights of Women. The Federal Courts have also arranged special benches to try cases of trafficking in human, and particularly women. Weekly Radio program has also been launched by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs so as to create public awareness on human trafficking.

The Constitution accords special attention to women's equal economic right, equal acquisition and inheritance of property including ownership of land. According to the Federal Land Administration Law, each administrative region ensures that equal rights of women in holding, administering and transferring land. Moreover, in order for women to move forward their empowerment agenda, they are encouraged to be organized in associations and cooperation of their choice and interest, including in small, micro and cottage industries with credits being made available to them from banks.

Mr. Chairman,

We believe that women's access to education and health is vital for an overall development. In this regard, the government has implemented successive education and health sector programs strategy since 1997. As a result, the women literacy rate increased to 38% in 2011 as compared to 29% in 2005. The percentage of girls' enrolment at primary level increased to 90.2% in 2011 from 20% in 1993.

In the health sector, due to the expansion of services in all its aspects, maternal mortality rate has declined by 195/100,000 between the year 2000 and 2011 and contraceptive prevalence rate has also increased from 4% in 1999 to 32% in 2011.

Mr. Chairman,

The targets set out in our five-year Growth and Transformation Plan are also designed to build on what have already been accomplished and address harmful traditional practices, reducing the rate of abduction, early marriage and female genital mutilation that affect the active engagement and welfare of women in the society. Increasing the participation of women in decision making, management and entrepreneurship, beneficiaries of credit and saving services and entrepreneurs that graduate from operating in micro enterprises to small and medium scale businesses are also integral part of the target.

With regard to addressing Obstetric Fistula, the government, in collaboration with partners in the sector, has undertaken holistic care and treatment for victims. Services have been delivered to patients of Fistula cases by providing surgical treatment for 3,000 patients each year, preventing the occurrence of fistula through community awareness and health professionals' training including the Health Extension Workers, conducting research in Fistula related topics, and providing long term care to those who are not easily cured and need on-going medical attention. Currently, apart from a Fistula Hospital in Addis Ababa, five Obstetric fistula health centers which are run by highly qualified specialists different and professionals in five different regions of the country.

However, despite the various measures undertaken by the government of Ethiopia over the years, women continue to be one of the most marginalized and vulnerable groups in all aspects as compared to men. The Ethiopian government, despite these challenges, will continue to ensure their equality and empower them to be effective and vibrant members of our society.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, in view of the measures referred to above, and the targets set out to be met during the current five year plan, we are of the view that much have been be achieved to eliminate gender disparity and advance their empowerment. While we wish to express our gratitude to our development partners for the cooperation extended to us to implement our various policies and programs to promote gender equality, we would also like to seize this opportunity to request them to continue their support in providing adequate resources which will have a more positive impact on the conditions of the Ethiopian women.

I Thank You!