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

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REMARKS

BY

H.E. MR. HAILEMARIAM DESSALEGN

**PRIME MINISTER OF THE FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA**

AT

**THE 71ST SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE UNITED NATIONS**

21 September 2016

New York

Mr. President,

Let me, at the outset, congratulate you on your assumption of this high office to preside over the 71st session of the United Nations General Assembly. I wish to take this opportunity to assure you of our support in the effective discharge of your responsibilities. I would also like to express appreciation to your predecessor H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft who steered the work of the historic 70th session.

Since this is the last time that the Secretary-General has addressed this Assembly, allow me, Mr. President, to express on behalf of the people and government of Ethiopia and that of my own, sincere appreciation to Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his tireless service to our organization over the past decade. We cherish his friendship with Ethiopia and Africa as a whole and we wish him all the very best in his future endeavors.

Mr. President,

The past one year was indeed historic in many ways than one. It was the time when we reflected on our journey over the past 70 years and took decisive steps towards ensuring the peace and

prosperity of our peoples and the protection of our environment. We saw what the United Nations can deliver as a unique intergovernmental platform for a common and collective response to the myriad of challenges facing humanity as a whole. It was testament to the fact that we can indeed achieve concrete results if we set aside, or at least, manage our differences, and act for the common good.

Now is, of course, the time for action so that the transformative decisions that we took last year will have real meaning in the lives of our people. We recognize the small but encouraging steps taken towards implementation in many of the domains. On our part, for instance, not only have we integrated the SDGs into our national development plans but also embarked on implementing them. The ratification of the Paris Climate Agreement is also a major priority and we will expedite the process as soon as our parliament opens its session at the end of this month.

Mr. President,

That the world is currently confronting unprecedented challenges would be an understatement. This has no doubt

enormous implications for the implementation of the ambitious and transformative agendas that we have set out last year. International peace and stability is facing greater risks with the rise of geo-political tensions and the growing threats posed by all shades of terrorist groups and other transnational criminal networks. The world economy has not yet come out of its crisis mood and increasing inequality is creating a lot of frustration paving the way for the resurgence of populism.

As much as social media is offering a digital platform to improve exchange of information and enhance popular participation, its attendant negative impacts cannot simply be ignored. In fact, we are seeing how misinformation could easily go viral via social media and mislead many people specially the youth who are our future. Social media has certainly empowered populists and other extremists to exploit people's genuine concerns and spread their message of hate and bigotry without any inhibition.

We would be the first to admit that countries need to own their problems. Externalizing the sources of setbacks and seeking external causes for one's national shortcomings is an approach to problem-

solving whose result can only be pregnant with danger. But it is critical to underline one critical matter which is usually given short shrift, both by the media and others. It is simply hypocritical to deny that some of our countries have been targets for destabilization activities carried out with no accountability by people and groups who have been given shelters by states with whom we have absolutely no problems. The abuse of the opportunities created by the social media, and other media outlets financed by friendly governments, has become so blatant that it is downright foolish to deny that this has no implications for the respect of the human rights of our people and that it does not undermine our capacity to ensure that a high standard is maintained by us in this regard.

On the other hand, the fragile nature of our environment has also been evident as the El-Nino induced drought affected the livelihood of millions of people across the world including our own. This is happening at a time when humanitarian needs have become extremely enormous because of other emergency situations. In addition, the large movement of refugees and migrants has become a

major crisis and this is a matter that we discussed at length over the last few days.

Mr. President,

It is under these challenging circumstances that we are striving to implement our transformational agenda and, obviously, there are no easy solutions to these complex challenges. The situation is much more pronounced specially for least developed countries like us which are making every possible effort to make a dent on poverty.

We are trying to escape from the poverty trap and take our country on the path of sustainable growth and there are bound to be twists and turns in our efforts. This is only natural as the successful development experiences of others have shown in the past. What we need is to have the policy space to make mistakes and learn from them. We believe our vision is right and we are determined to get there. Whatever challenges and shortcomings we may have, we don't have difficulty owning up to them and we will make every possible effort to deal with them in close consultation, cooperation and participation of our people. There is no better testimony for the

resolve we have in this regard than the way we handled the El-Nino caused tragedy.

This notwithstanding, however, we know that we are not living in isolation and we need a favorable external environment to realize our development aspirations. We cannot simply wish away these challenges that I have tried to explain above. They need the collective and coordinated responses of all of us and we on our part are always ready and willing to continue to contribute positively in close partnership with others in our region and beyond in tackling these challenges.

In this context, Peace and security in the Horn of Africa is extremely critical for us and we are doing everything we can together with others in the region to tackle the conflicts afflicting our neighbors. In this regard, we have been exerting tremendous efforts to assist South Sudan in resolving its internal problems. What happened in July was indeed a serious setback in the implementation of the peace agreement that the South Sudanese parties signed under the auspices of IGAD Plus.

We in the IGAD region met on a number of occasions at various levels to address this issue and made concrete proposal on the way forward, which was subsequently supported by the African Union and the United Nations. We hope the south Sudanese parties will heed the call of the region and the international community and restore peace for the sake of their people who have suffered so much as well as for the security and stability of the region.

In addition, we have also been exerting efforts to fight terrorism and pacify Somalia. In spite of so many challenges that still persist, Somalia has indeed come a long way. The symbolic significance of the IGAD extraordinary Summit held in Mogadishu recently cannot be overemphasized. Who would have thought that this would be possible only few years ago but Somalia has defied the odds. We hope that a smooth conduct of the elections in the coming months will consolidate the gains made in recent years and lay the foundation for a peaceful and stable Somalia. We in the region are ready to support and accompany this process together with the African Union, the United Nations and other international partners.

Mr. President,

Ethiopia is indeed honored to be elected as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the term 2017/18. Let me take this opportunity to express our profound appreciation to all the members of the United Nations for their support and confidence. I would like to conclude my remarks by reaffirming our commitment to effectively discharge our responsibilities and uphold the principles and purposes of the United Nations charter.

I thank you.