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Chair: Ms. Pazartzis

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant
(continued)

*Second periodic report of Ethiopia (continued) (CCPR/C/ETH/2;
CCPR/C/ETH/Q/2; CCPR/C/ETH/RQ/2)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Ethiopia joined the meeting.*
2. **The Chair** invited the delegation to resume replying to the questions raised by Committee members at the previous meeting.
3. **A representative of Ethiopia** said that the most recent state of emergency had been declared on 2 November 2021, following the escalation of conflict in the north of Ethiopia. The House of Peoples' Representatives had subsequently voted to lift the state of emergency within the initial six-month period; it had thus ended on 15 February 2022. The State party did not recognize a difference between *de facto* and *de jure* states of emergency in its Constitution, nor was such a difference recognized in the Covenant or in the Committee's general comment No. 29 (2001) on derogations from provisions of the Covenant during a state of emergency. There was currently no state of emergency declared in Ethiopia, and therefore no inquiry board.
4. **A representative of Ethiopia** said that the bill on the use of force was yet to be enacted due to the contentious and challenging context of the ongoing conflict, which had been the focus of the Government's attention in recent months. The Government was, however, committed to finalizing the bill and had pledged to engage in stakeholder consultations to solicit feedback on its content as soon as was practicable.
5. With regard to violence against women, in particular sexual violence perpetrated by security forces and prison officers, detention facilities were not immune to such crimes, and the Government was committed to taking complaints seriously. Any offences committed by security personnel were subject to serious administrative measures. The incidence of sexual violence had increased in the context of the conflict in Ethiopia. The Government had intensified criminal investigation measures to hold perpetrators to account and was committed to investigating all allegations of sexual violence, including gang rape, that the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission had found to have been committed in Tigray in the context of the conflict. The interministerial task force that had been established to investigate such allegations had found that 2,212 acts of rape, gang rape and sexual violence had been committed. Prosecution charges were currently being prepared. In 2021 and 2022, 13 of the 25 convictions handed down by the military court in cases of violations committed in Tigray had related to sexual violence.
6. Extrajudicial killings by law enforcement personnel were not systematic but rather represented isolated incidents. While the Government did not condone any human rights violations by representatives of its agencies, the recent rise in extrajudicial killings should be viewed in the context of the complex security situation. The cases mentioned by the Committee were at various phases in the criminal justice process. The Government made every effort to initiate criminal investigations promptly and to ensure that perpetrators of violations were brought to justice; it could not be considered to have encouraged the commission of those crimes.
7. **A representative of Ethiopia** said that all acts of gender-based and sexual violence were recognized as human rights violations and also as criminal offences; as such, they were prohibited under a variety of provisions of the Criminal Code and punishable by deprivation of liberty, which could amount to an extended life sentence if there were aggravating circumstances. The Government was committed to eliminating gender-based violence in all settings. In that regard, a series of legal and institutional reforms had been undertaken to boost transparency and accountability in detention centres, with a particular focus on human rights issues. The police had established disciplinary committees to receive complaints from persons in detention, and a mechanism was in place to bring police officers to account in the event that complaints were filed against them. To inspect prison conditions, a multidisciplinary council, comprising representatives of the Supreme Court, the police force

and the Federal Police Commission, had been established to address complaints and hold perpetrators of violations accountable. Steps were being taken to train police and prison officers on human rights issues, in particular prevention of sexual violence. While incidents of sexual violence did occur in prison settings, they were isolated cases committed by a small minority of personnel, the actions and behaviour of whom did not reflect the character and integrity of the majority. The Government would take all legal measures to follow up on any complaints. Perpetrators of sexual violence in any setting would not go unpunished.

8. Same-sex sexual activity and LGBTQ relationships were considered contrary to his country's values, moral decency and religious norms and were prohibited under the Criminal Code. Amending any law was a lengthy and complex process, requiring broad public consultations. Harassment, violence and attacks against any person were, however, prohibited by law, and the general equality clause of the Constitution was applicable to all, without discrimination.

9. **A representative of Ethiopia** said that arrests were conducted only with arrest warrants, unless in hot pursuit in flagrant cases. The courts regulated conditions of detention and received complaints of any violations of detainees' rights. Female detainees were accompanied by female police officers while in detention facilities. The well-being of those in custody was monitored while criminal investigations were ongoing; such safeguards made rape in detention unlikely. Should an incident involving sexual violence or rape occur, however, it would be investigated immediately as a violation of the right to health and bodily integrity of the victim. The Government condemned and was committed to investigating and prosecuting any such incidents. Although enactment of the bill on the use of force remained pending, officers of the law were held accountable under existing legislation.

10. **Mr. Muhumuza** said that the Committee had been informed of poor conditions in detention facilities, including lack of light, overcrowding, physical abuse by guards, lack of adequate food and water, lack of space to sleep, poor sanitation and poor medical care. It would therefore appreciate updated information on the progress made in constructing new detention facilities, including remand centres, in particular in Addis Ababa, where overcrowding was a significant challenge. He wished to know what measures had been taken to ensure adequate access to food, water and health care, including psychiatric care, for detainees, and whether prisoners with serious mental health conditions were granted timely access to treatment. He asked whether juvenile offenders were detained separately from adults, and whether representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross or other independent organizations had access to all places of detention.

11. On access to justice, the independence of the judiciary and the right to a fair trial, he asked what measures had been taken, in law and in practice, to ensure the full independence and impartiality of judges and prosecutors. The Committee would appreciate information on the procedures and criteria considered for the selection, appointment, suspension and removal of judges and prosecutors, and would be interested to hear the delegation comment on reports of political influence on the judiciary, particularly in the criminal courts. Information would also be welcome on the implementation of the recommendations of the Judicial Affairs Reform Task Force and on the status and outcome of the review of the Federal Judicial Administration Proclamation, in particular with regard to the selection and appointment of judges.

12. **Ms. Tigroudja** said that she would welcome statistics on forced labour, trafficking in persons and sexual exploitation of children prior to the conflict and on the steps taken to address those issues, such as awareness-raising measures, training programmes or the establishment of special tribunals; in addition, she would like to know, specifically, what punishments had been meted out in criminal cases for sexual exploitation. It would be useful to learn what measures had been taken to prevent forced labour and exploitation in the private sector and how many cases of trafficking in persons had targeted migrants. How was the State party tackling those challenges, which, according to the Committee's information, remained endemic?

13. Turning to the situation in the State party since November 2020, in particular in areas for which a state of emergency had been declared, she said that the Committee had received detailed reports on the systematic trafficking of children, including boys, into sexual slavery.

The Committee had been informed that nothing was being done to identify victims or perpetrators, grant access to justice or provide victim support, including medical care for women and girls who became pregnant as a result of sexual abuse. It therefore wished to know how the State party intended to remedy such large-scale, grave, systematic violations of human rights.

14. On children's rights, she said that United Nations special procedures and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had expressed serious concerns with regard to the lack of a specialized juvenile justice system and the fact that the age of criminal responsibility was 9 years. Children reportedly continued to be victims of female genital mutilation, forced marriage, corporal punishment, trafficking and sexual exploitation. In some rural areas, the practice of infanticide persisted. During the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, lockdowns and school closures had resulted in a dramatic increase in violence, including sexual violence, against children. The Committee had also received reports of abuse and ill-treatment of orphans and children with disabilities. She wished to know what specific, effective measures were being taken, based on the best interests of the child, to address those issues.

15. With regard to the situation of children in the context of the conflict, there were numerous credible reports of children being the targets of grave, massive and systematic violations of human rights committed by government forces and private armed groups, in particular in Tigray, Ahmara, Afar and Oromia. Children were kidnapped and separated from their families, forced into combat, tortured, subjected to sexual exploitation and slavery, forced marriage or forced labour. In those conflict areas, children had no access to education, nutrition or health care. How was the State party attempting to prevent such violations, protect children, provide rehabilitation for victims and ensure that perpetrators of the systematic ill-treatment of children were brought to justice?

16. **Mr. Furuya** said that the Committee welcomed the State party's strong commitment to the protection of refugees. Reports had been received, however, according to which Eritrean refugees were placed in danger by parties to the ongoing armed conflict in northern Ethiopia, and that two refugee camps in Tigray had ceased operation, triggering spontaneous movements of the refugee population to other areas, with no inadequate support. He therefore wished to know what measures the State party was taking to protect refugees in camps in Tigray and provide necessary assistance to those who had self-relocated to other areas. Further information would be appreciated on the revision to the refugee status determination procedure, especially in the light of reports that arrivals from Eritrea were no longer offered *prima facie* refugee status. It would be particularly useful to learn how many Eritrean asylum-seekers and refugees had been admitted before and after the procedure had been revised. He wished to know how the principle of the best interests of the child was applied in respect of children entering the State party as asylum-seekers. The Committee would appreciate information on the findings of the ongoing study on statelessness, and on any prevention and protection measures being taken in that regard by the Government.

17. In the light of reports that, in some regions, internally displaced persons faced severe food shortages and reduced access to services, he wished to know what measures had been taken to ensure that the needs of such persons were regularly assessed, that adequate resources were set aside for them and that international organizations had the necessary access to provide them with humanitarian aid, particularly in the north of the country. As the Government in some cases reportedly encouraged or even forced internally displaced persons to return to their place of origin, it would be useful to learn which authorities were involved in making decisions regarding such returns and what procedures existed for that process. It was unclear what measures had been taken to ensure that all such returns were truly voluntary and whether prior consultations were held with internally displaced persons, their representatives or other stakeholders, including aid agencies. He would appreciate additional information on the steps taken to implement the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), particularly with regard to the creation of satisfactory conditions for voluntary return, local integration or relocation on a sustainable basis and in circumstances of safety and dignity, and the designation of an authority or body responsible for coordinating activities aimed at protecting and assisting internally displaced persons.

18. **Mr. Zyberi** said that, with regard to freedom of peaceful assembly, some of the broad statements made in the State party's replies to the list of issues (CCPR/C/ETH/RQ/2), such as the assertion that demonstrations "should not interfere with the legal rights of third parties" (para. 124), were at variance with the Committee's general comment No. 37 (2020) on the right of peaceful assembly. He would like to know how the State party planned to ensure compliance with that general comment for all persons subject to its jurisdiction and what measures would be taken to protect that right for political opponents and others whose views were not aligned with those of the Government.

19. While the State party was to be commended on the increased representation of women in the parliament and on the adoption of measures to ensure the transparency of elections, the Committee wished to know what measures had been taken to stamp out practices that undermined free and fair elections, for example the use of violence against members and supporters of political parties and the arbitrary and unlawful detention of such persons. He failed to understand why a person could vote at the age of 18 years but could not stand for election before reaching the age of 21 years, and he wondered on what legal basis the most recent national election had been postponed by one year in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. He would appreciate information on plans to conduct a national census with a view to producing a reliable electoral map and data on the participation of internally displaced persons in elections. In view of the high proportion of polling stations and voter registration centres that were physically inaccessible to persons with disabilities, pregnant women and older persons, he wished to know how many such persons had received assistance to exercise their right to vote.

20. Given the impact of the current security situation on academics in the State party, in particular those affiliated with universities in the Tigray Region, he would appreciate it if the delegation would indicate what measures would be taken at universities to uphold the rights enshrined in the Covenant, including the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, and ensure that academics were able to cooperate with colleagues abroad.

21. **Mr. Bulkán** said that, with regard to freedom of expression, much of the information provided in the Committee's replies to the list of issues was very general in nature. It was difficult to imagine how the State party might justify the widespread harassment of journalists, political figures and human right defenders, including the practice of arresting and detaining them. He would like to know whether the State party intended to free journalists and human rights defenders who had been detained for an extended period and, if it did, what timeline had been set for that process and whether the State party would commit to ending its campaign of harassment against journalists and others critical of the Government and allow regulatory bodies to monitor the media instead of imposing criminal penalties for perceived violations.

22. He would be grateful if the delegation could explain the procedure by which telephone and Internet shutdowns could be imposed and under what law those measures could be taken. It was unclear whether the State party had an independent body to monitor such shutdowns and whether those in affected regions were informed in advance, including regarding the expected duration of the shutdown. He wondered whether the State party would consider reforming its hate speech and counter-terrorism legislation to ensure that the essential elements were clearly defined and that expression was prohibited only where the strict tests of necessity and proportionality set out in article 19 (3) of the Covenant were met.

23. In the light of reports that inter-ethnic relations had deteriorated in the State party, including reports that ethnic-based killings had become widespread since 2018, the Committee wished to know what measures were being taken to address such tensions and conflicts, for example measures to provide training for members of the security forces and law enforcement officials on the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, what accountability mechanisms were available to victims and survivors of the various massacres that had taken place, whether any of those massacres had been investigated and, if they had, what the outcome of those investigations had been. Had reparation been provided?

24. As many of the State party's regional States had constitutions and subsidiary laws that were discriminatory in favour of their dominant ethnic group, he wondered whether the State

party planned to amend the texts in question to ensure that they were consistent with the guarantees of equality enshrined in article 25 of the Constitution, which had supremacy over all other laws in the State party. Such legalized discrimination at the regional level reinforced the exclusion of minority groups and contributed to inter-ethnic tensions.

25. With regard to the rights of indigenous peoples, he would be grateful if the delegation could respond to the claim that as many as 15 million persons who depended on the land for their survival had been displaced as a result of the leasing of millions of hectares of land to foreign companies for oil and gas exploitation. He wondered what legislation existed to protect ancestral rights to land and, if there was no such legislation, what measures or policies were planned to protect indigenous peoples and peoples pursuing traditional lifestyles from such displacement. It would be useful to have a full account of any consultation process had taken place prior to the construction of the Gibe III hydroelectric dam and whether, as part of that process, stakeholders been provided with relevant and accessible information in a form that they could understand. What reparation had been provided to displaced communities and families?

26. The activities of the Lega Dembi gold mine had reportedly resulted in high rates of miscarriage and infant mortality, disabilities among newborns, debilitating illnesses and devastation of crops and wildlife. He would be grateful if the delegation could provide information on the consultations held with affected communities prior to the reopening of the mine in March 2011 and comment on reports that those consultations had been held long after the Government had announced its intention to reopen the mine and that the participants had been carefully selected. He wondered whether the associated environmental and social impact assessments had been made public and, if they had, where they could be found; what clean-up activities had taken place and what structural reforms had been carried out by the operating company prior to the reopening of the mine; on what basis operations had been resumed, since there had reportedly been no improvement with regard to the demarcation of hazardous areas, dust management, the mitigation of water contamination, and infrastructure; and what regulatory mechanisms were in place to monitor operations at the mine and prevent further contamination. Lastly, he would like to know whether affected persons had received compensation and, if they had, how much compensation had been paid and to how many persons; whether it was true that a fixed sum had been paid to each affected family, regardless of how large the family was; and whether other measures of reparation been made available.

The meeting was suspended at 11.10 a.m. and resumed at 11.30 a.m.

27. **A representative of Ethiopia**, referring to his Government's replies to the list of issues (paras. 81–105), said that there were currently 875,000 refugees and asylum-seekers in Ethiopia. The country's refugee and asylum policy served to cultivate close relationships with neighbouring countries to the betterment of the overall situation in the Horn of Africa and beyond. The communities living on either side of the border shared a common language, ethnic background and mindset.

28. The Agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs had developed a procedure that combined *prima facie* and individualized refugee status determination. Decisions as to which form of refugee status determination to apply were based not on nationality but on the situation in the country of origin and on the capacity of Ethiopia to receive additional refugees. For example, if a conflict resulted in thousands of arrivals from a single country, it would be futile to carry out individualized refugee status determinations. However, when the number of arrivals from a particular country was lower, and there was a general belief that the situation in that country was not likely to give rise to massive displacement, individualized refugee status determinations could be considered. The combined refugee status determination procedure predated the current conflict in the north of the country. Far from representing a policy change, it was provided for in Proclamation No. 1110/2019. In addition, the procedure was by no means discriminatory towards Eritreans; it was applied in respect of all nationalities.

29. There were currently more than 85,000 refugees living in Addis Ababa and more than 25,000 in other refugee-hosting towns and cities. The proportion of refugees living outside camps thus exceeded the 10 per cent target set in 2016. Refugees had been included in the national COVID-19 vaccination plan. The conflict in the north of the country had affected

three refugee camps in particular and had caused the displacement of more than 19,000 refugees. The Government had devised an emergency plan in response to the crisis. It had begun by taking steps to ensure that the provision of humanitarian assistance to the more accessible refugee camps in the region had resumed as quickly as possible. It had then relocated around 10,000 displaced refugees to camps where the provision of services had resumed. It had also issued out-of-camp status documents to thousands of refugees who were living in an irregular situation in Addis Ababa or other cities. Out-of-camp status was granted for a period of five years to refugees who had shown that they were self-sufficient, refugees who were suffering from an illness that required treatment from medical establishments in the capital and refugees who were planning to leave Ethiopia and needed access to the services provided by their embassy. Around 10,000 refugees had left the country legally, while others had crossed the border into a neighbouring country illegally. Over 15,000 refugees were living in the capital without out-of-camp status.

30. The second phase of the emergency plan had involved setting up a new refugee camp far away from the conflict zone, with a view to relocating refugees from the camps affected by the conflict. The building of the camp had begun in March 2021. Unfortunately, there had been a delay in the relocation of refugees owing to a lack of support from the international community. In the meantime, steps were being taken to raise awareness of the rights of refugees among security officers and host communities. Dedicated staff had been assigned to deal with any misunderstandings that might arise between refugees and security officers.

31. Ethiopian nationality was granted on the conditions set out in the Nationality Proclamation. For example, applicants must have reached the age of majority, must have a sufficient income and must be of good character. Ethiopian law did not provide for dual nationality. The minimum guarantees applicable to non-nationals in terms of access to education, health and other services were almost the same as those applicable to Ethiopian nationals. There were several laws establishing the rights of refugees, including their right to have access to civil registration services.

32. There were millions of internally displaced persons in Ethiopia owing to the conflict in the north of the country and other factors such as climate change. Many measures had been taken to protect the rights of internally displaced persons in response to the recommendations made by the joint investigation team of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. A steering committee composed of members of the Government and representatives of United Nations agencies had been set up to spearhead the incorporation of the Kampala Convention into domestic law. The committee was drafting two pieces of legislation: a national proclamation on the implementation of the Convention and a national strategy on internally displaced persons that set out measures in areas such as voluntary return and relocation. Federal and regional government bodies were working tirelessly to find solutions to the internal displacement crisis and would welcome assistance from the international community, especially given the significant costs involved.

33. **A representative of Ethiopia** said that focal points responsible for coordinating activities to combat trafficking in persons had been appointed at all levels of government. Disaggregated data on trafficking in persons were collected locally using specific tools and transmitted to the secretariat of the federal task force via the focal points. In 2021 and 2022, 495 cases of trafficking for the purpose of sexual or labour exploitation had been investigated. Of those, 387 had been prosecuted and 296 had resulted in a conviction. The verdict had been appealed in 26 cases and overturned in 8. The penalties imposed on the perpetrators included terms of imprisonment ranging from 5 to 20 years.

34. **A representative of Ethiopia** said that the Government had taken various legislative and administrative measures since 2019 to facilitate the exercise of freedom of expression. It had adopted several major laws, including the Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation. A bill that would amend the Computer Crimes Proclamation had been prepared and was the subject of consultations with stakeholders.

35. Before the adoption of the Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation, some acts of hate speech and disinformation had been classified as terrorist offences, while others had gone unpunished. The Proclamation had been

introduced to ensure that such acts were dealt with consistently and to combat the rise in hate speech and disinformation that had accompanied the Government's efforts to allow for greater freedom of expression. It was based on the principle that any restrictions on fundamental rights should be proportionate, narrowly tailored and prescribed by law. The Proclamation was not yet being strictly enforced, as the Government wished not only to give people time to familiarize themselves with it but also to promote community-based reconciliation and national dialogue.

36. The comprehensive Media Proclamation, which had been adopted in 2021, was designed to ensure the full enjoyment of freedom of expression while taking into account social, economic and technological advancements. Under the Proclamation, defamation against members of the Government had been decriminalized and an independent broadcasting authority had been established. That authority reported directly to the House of Peoples' Representatives and the members of its management board could not be affiliated to any political organization.

37. The Prevention and Suppression of Terrorism Crimes Proclamation had replaced the repressive counter-terrorism legislation of the previous regime. Under the new law, acts of non-violent protest, including strikes, were no longer punishable, hearsay evidence was no longer admissible in court, and the circumstances in which the offence of incitement to terrorism could be invoked were more carefully defined. The Government was committed to ensuring the effective implementation of the new law.

38. Administrative measures taken to protect freedom of expression included the unblocking of numerous websites and television channels and the release of many journalists, bloggers and members of the political opposition. The Government nevertheless had a duty to protect the people of Ethiopia from anyone who abused the right to freedom of expression and threatened the security of the people. Some journalists and political activists had therefore been arrested and prosecuted, and their right to due process had been upheld. Although there might have been some shortcomings in the investigation process from a human rights perspective, they had not been major and could not be described as systemic. Challenges in that area were brought to the Government's attention by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and remedial measures were taken where necessary. Contrary to their claims, the people who had been arrested had not been targeted in connection with their political views or activities. They had been arrested as a result of conduct that had resulted in injury, loss of life or destruction of property. The Government could not refrain from taking action in such cases.

39. In the context of the conflict in the north and other outbreaks of violence around the country, the Government had shut down some media outlets, with appropriate notice, in order to control the spread of misinformation. However, it denied the allegation that Internet shutdowns had become a common practice in recent years. Internet access and other channels of communication had occasionally been shut down in order to maintain order and public security. In one case, a shutdown had been imposed because some university entrance examination papers had been stolen and shared on social media. Shutdowns were imposed for a limited period of time and did not have a lasting impact on the enjoyment of rights relating to information and communications. The Government wished to reiterate its commitment to protecting those rights.

40. In the previous four years, there had been a dramatic increase in peaceful assemblies relating to political, religious, social and other issues. However, some assemblies, including protests against the state of emergency declared in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, had been cancelled to protect public safety and order, in accordance with article 21 of the Covenant. There were shortcomings in law enforcement in that area due to gaps in the existing legislation and a lack of resources. In order to address those shortcomings, a new bill was being drafted and training was being provided to the relevant actors.

41. **A representative of Ethiopia**, summarizing the information provided in paragraphs 111–119 of his Government's replies to the list of issues, said that the Judicial Affairs Reform Task Force had been composed of independent legal practitioners and academics. The process of judicial reform was a challenge as it required a considerable amount of resources, including skilled workers. Concerns had been raised regarding the failure of some law

enforcement officers to cooperate with the judiciary. The problem was not a systemic one, however, and steps were being taken to ensure that the officers concerned were held accountable and that court decisions were observed.

42. The prosecution service was overseen by an administrating council that was composed of independent professionals elected by their peers. All prosecutorial positions were advertised and were filled on the basis of merit, not through political appointments. Prosecutors were guided only by the law and their code of conduct. A further guarantee of their independence was that they were not subject to the same pay scale as other civil servants.

43. **A representative of Ethiopia** said that the Government was committed to improving the welfare of children and to protecting and enhancing respect for their human rights. Among other measures to prevent child labour, the Ministry of Labour and Skills had introduced a national action plan and conducted extensive awareness-raising activities to prevent the exploitation of child labour and advocate the education of children. In addition, the minimum age of employment had been increased from 14 to 15 years of age, in accordance with the International Labour Organization (ILO) Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138); a proclamation prohibiting the employment of children aged between 15 and 18 years in forms of work that posed a danger to their life or health had been enacted; and a list of prohibited jobs for children, which included underground work in mines, had been drawn up. The Government was also working with employers' associations and trade unions to include in collective agreements provisions to prevent the employment of young workers in hazardous jobs.

44. **A representative of Ethiopia** said that addressing certain issues relating to conditions in places of detention remained a challenge owing to the scarcity of resources and rising prices. Nevertheless, efforts to improve monitoring of prison conditions included allowing the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, as well as international organizations, to conduct unannounced inspections of correctional and detention facilities. Civil society was encouraged to advocate for detained persons' human rights and worked closely with the Government on human rights issues and prison conditions. All correctional facilities provided detainees with three meals a day; free health care, including psychosocial support, was available through on-site medical clinics and referrals. A new referral hospital was being built and would serve as a hub for a number of detention facilities.

45. **A representative of Ethiopia**, referring to paragraphs 134–141 of her Government's replies to the list of issues, said that the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia had taken significant steps to ensure that the country's sixth national election was conducted in a participatory and transparent manner, including by holding more than 50 consultative meetings with representatives of political parties. Measures to intensify the participation of women included the provision of additional subsidies to political parties that fielded a minimum number of women candidates. Special polling stations had been set up, and transportation and security provided, to facilitate voting by internally displaced persons who were living outside their constituencies. Referring to paragraphs 145–153 of her Government's replies to the list of issues, she said that a number of measures had been taken to protect and uphold the rights of indigenous peoples, in particular with regard to the Gibe III hydroelectric dam and the Lega Dembi gold mine.

46. **Ms. Tigroudja** said that she would be interested in receiving more specific information on the criminal responsibility of children, including the number of children aged between 9 and 11 years who had been convicted of a criminal offence, the offences committed and the punishments imposed, including whether alternatives to custodial measures were pursued, taking into account the best interests of the child.

47. **Mr. Muhumuza** said that he would welcome the delegation's comments on reports that, during the state of emergency, detainees had allegedly been held in makeshift, overcrowded facilities, such as cinemas, colleges and warehouses.

48. **Mr. Bulkán** said that he would welcome additional information on the Media Proclamation, as the Committee had received reports that the provisions of the new law were vague and not in keeping with international best practice, as outlined in the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constituted incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. In addition, he wished to reiterate his

concern at reports that many journalists, human rights defenders and prominent critics had been arrested for incitement to violence under that law. Rather than posing a threat to national security, legitimate criticism of the Government or policies contributed to the strengthening of democracy. He would urge the State party to return to its stance of 2018 on expanding the civic space and promoting tolerance of the media.

49. He would be grateful for more specific information on the Gibe III Dam and the Lega Dembi gold mine, in particular on the consultations that had been undertaken, the environmental studies that had been carried out and the compensation that had been paid. It would also be useful to know whether the gold mine was currently operational and what concrete remedial measures had been taken to clean up the toxic contamination, dispose of the hazardous materials and establish procedures to prevent future contamination.

50. **Mr. Agidew** (Ethiopia), welcoming the constructive dialogue held with the Committee, said that Ethiopia recognized the importance of the rules-based international system and the value of differences between peoples and societies. His country's protection and promotion of human rights, including civil and political rights, was a work in progress. The new Government had had to rebuild institutions while working against the backdrop of a challenging political and security environment and with scarce resources. Much remained to be done, but the Government was committed to the country's progress, democratic reform and peaceful elections. His delegation had taken note of the Committee's questions and recommendations and would endeavour to submit any outstanding replies within 48 hours.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.