

USG/ERC PRESS RELEASE ON VISIT TO ETHIOPIA

Addis Ababa, 9 November 2021: The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Martin Griffiths, concluded a four-day visit to Ethiopia yesterday.

The humanitarian chief held constructive discussions with Prime Minister Mr. Abiy Ahmed and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Demeke Mekonnen on the humanitarian situation in the country and the challenges aid organizations face in getting assistance to all Ethiopians in need.

Mr. Griffiths also met with the African Union's High Representative for the Horn of Africa, His Excellency former President Olusegun Obasanjo, in support of his efforts, and he met with representatives of non-governmental organizations, UN agencies, donors and Member States to discuss efforts to provide assistance to millions of people in need across Ethiopia.

Mr. Griffiths made a one-day visit to Mekelle, Tigray Region, where he met with humanitarian partners and engaged with de facto authorities on the need for humanitarian access and protection of civilians through all areas under their control, and respect for humanitarian principles. He also met with women affected by the conflict, including survivors of sexual violence receiving help from a UNFPA-supported programme.

The humanitarian chief said: "The women I met with were desperately focused on daily survival, repeating their need for the most basic support: food and medicine. The world must help them imagine a brighter future for themselves and their children."

While Mr. Griffiths visited Tigray on Sunday, senior UN officials, including the UN Humanitarian Coordinator, Dr. Catherine Sozi, the World Food Programme Country Director, Mr. Steven Were Omamo, and the OCHA Head of Office, Sarah Hilding, visited Amhara as part of the high-level programme. In Bahir Dar, they held constructive discussions with the Amhara Regional President to identify means of improving humanitarian access and aid to people in need in Amhara region, including those newly affected by the conflict.

In a site for internally displaced persons in Amhara, the delegation met many women, one of whom shared her fear of the future, having been displaced three times with her children due to fighting in the past month.

Conflict, large-scale displacement, drought, flooding, disease outbreaks and desert locust infestations continue to drive humanitarian needs across Ethiopia. Some 20 million people are targeted for humanitarian assistance, including 7 million who are directly affected by the conflict in northern Ethiopia.

While humanitarian needs increase and grow more severe in the country, the humanitarian community faces significant difficulty in getting aid to communities most in need. During his visit, Mr. Griffiths sought to address challenges related to the suspension of UNHAS flights; the availability of fuel, cash and supplies; bureaucratic impediments, including visas for humanitarian staff; and the treatment of humanitarian personnel.

In addressing these challenges, Mr. Griffiths stressed that "the UN, along with its humanitarian partners, will continue to work with the Government of Ethiopia and with local and international partners to support millions of people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance across the country."

He added: "All parties must facilitate unfettered movement of humanitarian supplies and workers so that all people in need across Ethiopia can receive desperately needed assistance. But ultimately, the only way to

stop the humanitarian situation from further deteriorating is peace. The conflict in northern Ethiopia has already caused enormous suffering for millions of innocent civilians.

“I implore all parties to heed the UN Secretary-General’s appeal to immediately end hostilities without preconditions, and reiterate the United Nations full support for the efforts of the African Union’s High Representative for the Horn of Africa, His Excellency former President Olusegun Obasanjo.”

The funding gap for the humanitarian response in Ethiopia for 2021 stands at more than US\$1.3 billion. An estimated \$606 million has been mobilized for response towards the Northern Ethiopia Response Plan, and \$474 million for response towards the draft Humanitarian Response Plan, which covers areas outside Tigray. However, this is far from sufficient to cover the mounting humanitarian needs across the country.

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