

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Henok Teferra,
Ambassador of Ethiopia and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO
At
210th UNESCO Executive Board Session**

**President of the General Conference,
Chairperson of the Executive Board,
Madam Director-General,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. I would like to convey my Government's deepest condolences for the passing of the many personalities in Africa and the rest of the world. May they all rest in peace!

2. My delegation wishes to thank you, Chairperson of the Executive Board and Dear Brother, for your perseverance against all odds, which has enabled us to hold our current session. Without your leadership, this session would not have taken place.

3. My Delegation highly commends the leadership of the Director General and the dedication of the entire Secretariat for their work and initiatives to support Member States, including mine, in addressing the daunting challenges of COVID-19 pandemic in UNESCO's areas of competence. Madam Director-General, history will remember that you were up the task and that you performed admirably in these difficult times.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. My country went thru a very difficult month of November. Violence in its cruelest form was imposed on the Ethiopian State by the junta of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). In the late hours of 4 November 2020, the forces of this junta assassinated in cold blood, some in their sleep, of our officers and soldiers based in our Northern Command.
5. The aim of this cowardly act was to precipitate the disintegration of the Ethiopian State and thru its disintegration to enable the leaders of the junta to reclaim the undue political and economic dominance they enjoyed in Ethiopia for many decades up to 2018 and which they had lost since the coming to power of H.E. Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed.
6. However, thanks to the swift action taken by our Government and the bravery of our military, we were able to redress the grave danger these attacks posed. In less than 3 weeks, the junta forces have been completely defeated, its leadership is being pursued, will be caught and brought in front of court of a law to face justice for the crime they have committed. The rule of law operation is now successfully completed.
7. We are now as this week entirely focused on the rehabilitation of our people in Tigray with the provision of humanitarian assistance for those in need and the repatriation of refugees back to their communities. To this end, on 30 November, an agreement has been signed with UN

agencies for the opening of humanitarian corridor giving them unfettered access to the region.

8. Dialogue is fully engaged with local communities thru the legally established provisional regional administration for Tigray headed by a respected personality. Local administrations are being set up with the participation of various political parties, the elderly and civil society. Things are now coming back to normal. We thank all those who were by the side of Ethiopian people and lend us their support in this critical time in our history.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. Some of our friends in the international community ask why our Prime Minister, winner the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize and UNESCO's Félix Houphouët Boigny Peace Prize engage in the use of force.
10. In the aftermath of World War II, the Preamble of UNESCO's Constitution affirmed that since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defense of peace must be constructed.
11. However, some read this statement wrongly as meaning that peace is possible even in the face of the most abhorrent forms of atrocities. This is a grave mistake. As history, this only emboldens those in pursuit of the vilest enterprise.
12. For the defense of peace to be constructed in our minds, those bent on committing the worst forms of savagery must be made accountable. Otherwise peace is impossible.

13. I would like to bring to the attention of our Executive Board the abominable massacre perpetrated by militia of TPLF junta on 9 November in Maykadra on innocent civilians chosen on the basis of their ethnic identity. As Amnesty International has confirmed, over 700 innocent civilians were stabbed and hacked to death by TPLF junta militia before fleeing the area.
14. The only answer to such barbaric acts and the only way to ensure genuine and lasting peace is the pursuit of the killers, bringing them in front of a court of law and ensuring they are punished for their crimes. Peace can only be established on the basis of humanity's basic moral values.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

15. The pandemic has exposed the vulnerabilities of our societies and our education systems. In this regard, the input of the Futures of Education Commission chaired by our Head of State, H.E. President Sahlework Zewde, will be invaluable in rethinking the role of education, learning and knowledge in the coming decades.
16. On IBE, Ethiopia wholeheartedly welcomes the renewed mandate of the Bureau and the Chinese proposal for the establishment of an IBE Office in Shanghai. We believe such an office will be particularly beneficial to Africa. We call for the de-politicization of this issue and urge for further detailed consultations on the technical, financial and legal issues with a view to establish the office.

17. My Delegation strongly supports the amendments of the Africa Group on the preliminary proposals concerning the Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 and the draft Program and Budget for 2022-2025 as it relates to Priority Africa.

Madam Director-General,

18. Lastly, my delegation wants to address to you, Madam Director-General, its appreciation for the job well done during your first term. You have excelled Ethiopia's expectations.

19. Everyone, even the most critical voices, are forced to admit that our organization is in much better shape today than it was when you took its helm our years ago. Whether politically, financially, in terms of its visibility or in delivering for member states, you have performed outstandingly.

20. After hearing your decision to stand for a second term and listening to your vision statement, Ethiopia fully supports your candidature and will give you its vote.

Thank you!