



**Convention against Torture
and Other Cruel, Inhuman
or Degrading Treatment
or Punishment**

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Summary record of the 1997th meeting*

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 3 May 2023, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Heller

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

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 19 of the Convention *(continued)*

Second periodic report of Ethiopia (CAT/C/ETH/2; CAT/C/ETH/Q/2; CAT/C/ETH/RQ/2)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Ethiopia joined the meeting.*
2. **Mr. Wondimeneh** (Ethiopia), introducing his country's second periodic report (CAT/C/ETH/2), said that the report had been prepared by an interministerial group of experts with input from civil society organizations and technical assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The Government had recently established the National Implementation, Monitoring, Reporting and Follow-up Mechanism with a view to meeting all its reporting obligations under international and regional human rights instruments, and the authorities were working with OHCHR to create a national human rights data-collection mechanism.
3. Ethiopia was a country with a wide range of diversities, a "nation of nations" that had been devastated by centuries-old conflicts and unsettled differences, which had caused tremendous suffering. Many had suffered ill-treatment at the hands of authorities and perished. The Government was working to transform the political, social and economic situation in line with its commitment to human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals. Having adopted the first and second National Human Rights Action Plans during the reporting period, it was currently finalizing the third Plan, the implementation of which would be monitored by a group of senior officials, headed by the Minister of Justice.
4. The justice system had been reformed to ensure that prosecutors were more effectively deployed and better able to oversee investigations, visit persons in custody and take legal measures in response to any violations of human rights, including torture and inhuman or degrading treatment. The office set up in the Ministry of Justice to coordinate the implementation of the National Human Rights Action Plan undertook frequent visits to places of deprivation of liberty and sought to improve detention conditions for inmates, while the Federal Prison Commission processed applications from inmates to be transferred to prison facilities closer to their families. A real-time dispatch model of criminal justice had been adopted with a view to shortening the length of pretrial detention and thereby reducing the potential for abuse in custody.
5. Ethiopia had undergone a major political transformation during the reporting period. New leadership had come to power in 2018 and immediately launched a series of reforms. From the outset, the new Government had acknowledged the gross excesses committed by security forces in the past, taking full responsibility and apologizing for violations. Investigations had been conducted and charges brought against high-ranking officials and law enforcement officers who were suspected of having perpetrated or overseen some of the worst human rights violations in the country's recent history. Secret places of detention and other sites notorious for gross human rights atrocities had been identified, publicly exposed and closed for good.
6. The Government had granted pardons to thousands of citizens, particularly those who had been charged and convicted under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation, many of whom had suffered torture and ill-treatment. The Anti-Terrorism Proclamation had been repealed and replaced with new and more human rights-friendly legislation. The lesson of the country's recent history was that stifling civil society led merely to the perpetuation of inhuman treatment. The Government had therefore adopted a new legislative and institutional framework intended to create space for civil society and protect human rights defenders.
7. The Justice Sector Reform Council was responsible for overseeing initiatives that aimed, inter alia, to improve conditions for persons in detention. Thanks to such initiatives, significant human rights advances had been achieved, including in relation to torture and inhuman treatment. The Federal Police Commission and the Ethiopian National Defence Force were both mandated to receive complaints from or on behalf of detained persons, and a mechanism had been put in place to ensure administrative and criminal accountability for

police and army officers who committed human rights violations. That mechanism had proved indispensable in investigating and prosecuting excesses committed by members of the National Defence Force in the context of the conflict in northern Ethiopia.

8. Modules on human rights and torture prohibition had been incorporated into the regular training imparted to police and prison officials. State-of-the-art technology had begun to be used as part of crime prevention and investigation procedures. In addition to helping prevent human rights abuses, the technology increased investigative capabilities and facilitated the implementation of corrective measures if such abuses occurred. The new print and electronic media that had flourished since 2018 had proved instrumental in monitoring and reporting human rights violations, particularly in detention and prison facilities. That, in turn, had helped the Government take measures to ensure accountability and prevent further abuses.

9. Amendments had been introduced into the proclamation establishing the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, which now had complete autonomy as required under the Paris Principles. The Commission was mandated to conduct unannounced visits to any place of deprivation of liberty in the country and to investigate complaints, summon and question public officials, make recommendations and propose remedial measures. Amendments to the proclamation establishing the federal courts had improved their institutional and financial independence and expanded their jurisdiction to cover human rights cases. The Federal High Court had established a fundamental rights bench to examine cases involving alleged human rights violations, including torture and ill-treatment. Other benches with specially trained judges had been created to consider cases involving human trafficking, migrant smuggling and children in conflict with the law.

10. The 2018 political transition in Ethiopia had marked the end of a decades-long era dominated by a single political group. However, opponents of the transition had exerted every effort to undermine the new Government and regain political power by all means, including violence and ethnic strife. Repeated calls to resolve differences in a civilized manner and through constitutional mechanisms had fallen on deaf ears and, regrettably, the Government had been forced into an armed conflict in November 2020 when forces of the Tigray People's Liberation Front had attacked and taken control of the Northern Command of the Ethiopian National Defence Force. The conflict had led to human rights violations on an unimaginable scale, including extrajudicial killings, sexual violence and degrading treatment. The Government had acted to restore peace and security while also protecting civilians and guaranteeing criminal accountability for any violations committed. It had created an enabling environment for human rights actors, inviting OHCHR to monitor the situation in conflict-affected areas and facilitating the conduct of joint investigations by OHCHR and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. The Interministerial Task Force had been created to oversee the implementation of conclusions and recommendations of those investigations.

11. The Task Force, in turn, had established the Investigation and Prosecution Committee, which conducted inquiries into violations in Amhara, Afar and Tigray regions, including those allegedly committed by the Ethiopian National Defence Forces. The Committee had gathered data demonstrating that more than 2,000 people, including children, had been subjected to grave sexual violence. The next phase would be to proceed with the prosecution of those crimes. The Government had taken steps to assist victims of sexual and gender-based violence, providing them with psychosocial and medical support and paying compensation. Training had also been provided to front-line service providers who attended to the needs of victims.

12. The Government had called several humanitarian truces during the course of the conflict, and it had declared unilateral ceasefires in June 2021 and again in March 2022. He was happy to report that active hostilities in the north had come to an end and that all parties were working to implement the peace agreement signed in 2022. A formal invitation had been extended to OHCHR and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission to conduct a human rights monitoring mission in areas of the region previously inaccessible due to the conflict. The Government was also working tirelessly to find peaceful solutions to conflicts in parts of the Oromia region, where it was hoped that negotiations with armed groups would bring an end to a struggle that had lasted for years.

13. The Government firmly believed in the importance of establishing transparent, accountable and impartial institutions that were responsive to the needs of the people, including a fair and impartial justice system, police and security services that respected human rights and effective governance mechanisms that facilitated public participation and ensured transparency and accountability. It recognized that lack of comprehensive accountability for past human rights violations and systematic abuses, including during conflicts, could obstruct efforts to ensure justice and lasting peace. The Government had published a paper setting out possible policy options for transitional justice in January 2023. Public input on the policy options would be gathered through consultations to be held in 66 locations. The Working Group of Independent Experts on Transitional Justice had been established to oversee that process, which would culminate in the adoption of a national transitional justice policy. The Working Group had already held nine consultations. Once adopted, the policy would provide a framework for ensuring criminal accountability for past human rights violations and preventing the recurrence of such violations.

14. The Government was also pursuing a national dialogue initiative that would address historical discord. The acknowledgement of historical injustices and grievances that had fuelled conflict and a genuine attempt to face up to the past and engage in honest dialogue about the root causes of conflicts would form part of a journey towards building a just, equitable and harmonious society. The Government would continue to work with civil society organizations, the human rights community and international partners to prevent torture and ill-treatment and uphold the commitments made under the Convention.

15. **Mr. Touzé** (Country Rapporteur) said that it was important to note that the Committee was charged with considering the application of the Convention throughout the reporting period, regardless of the political situation or the policies of the authorities during a given time. No derogation from the Convention was permitted under any circumstances. While he understood the need to ensure peace and security, any actions taken in that regard must be in conformity with the State party's obligations under the Convention.

16. The Committee was concerned by reports of a number of human rights abuses that had taken place since November 2020 in the Tigray region, where Tigrayans in the western zone had allegedly been driven from their homes and subjected to a campaign of ethnic cleansing conducted with the acquiescence and the possible involvement of the Ethiopian National Defence Forces. He would like to hear the delegation's views on those allegations. In addition, he wished to know how the delegation viewed the destruction of Shimelba refugee camp in the Tigray region, which had resulted in the displacement or disappearance of thousands of Eritrean refugees. The Committee had received reports of the arbitrary detention and summary execution of Tigrayan men in the town of Adi Goshu in January 2021 and the expulsion of vulnerable Tigrayans, including elderly persons and women and children, and the placement in detention of Tigrayan men in November 2021. Details of the measures taken by the State party to investigate those incidents, establish what had happened and take appropriate legal action would be appreciated.

17. He would like information on the status of investigations into the reported cases of sexual assault perpetrated by Tigrayan forces against women and girls in Chenna village in the Amhara region and the thousands of incidents of sexual and gender-based violence that had been reported to health-care establishments in the Tigray region in 2020 and 2021. In the light of reports that the Eritrean military had committed crimes against humanity in the Tigray region in November 2020, he wished to receive clear information about the action taken in response by the Ethiopian forces, as reports indicated that they, too, might have committed serious crimes. It would also be useful to receive details of the measures taken to investigate reported government drone attacks against civilian targets, including a school, in the Tigray region in January 2022, take appropriate legal action against those responsible, protect the population and care for victims.

18. In the context of the conflict in the northern part of the country, which had reportedly caused as many as 600,000 deaths and led to the destruction of vital infrastructure, including hospitals, and entire villages, he wished to know how the State party was ensuring that assistance was provided to the affected populations. Lastly, he would welcome an explanation of why the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia,

which had been established by the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2021, had met with difficulties in discharging its functions on the ground.

19. **Mr. Buchwald** (Country Rapporteur), welcoming the State party's commitment to fulfil its future reporting obligations, said that he hoped that it would also commit to providing a timely response to the Committee's request for follow-up information. He would welcome more information on the preparation of the periodic report, in particular on what role the police, military and security forces had played in its preparation and how the input of regional authorities had been solicited and included. Details on the mandate of the Authority for Civil Society Organizations, the requirements for participation in that body and its involvement in the preparation of the periodic report would be helpful. He wondered whether a similar process of consulting and coordinating with relevant stakeholders had been undertaken in preparing the replies to the Committee's list of issues in relation to the second periodic report ([CAT/C/ETH/RQ/2](#)) and whether such consultations would take place in connection with the follow-up procedure.

20. He wished to know whether the State party intended to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention. He would welcome updated information on whether the State party had considered becoming a party to the other international human rights treaties and optional protocols referred to in the Committee's previous concluding observations ([CAT/C/ETH/CO/1](#), para. 39), in particular the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. He would also like to know whether Ethiopia intended to become a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court or, alternatively, to make a declaration accepting the Court's jurisdiction, and whether it intended to establish an international independent investigative mechanism, as recommended by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and OHCHR in their joint report on alleged human rights violations committed during the conflict in the Tigray region.

21. The Ethiopian Government's opposition to the creation and continued functioning of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia was well known. Nevertheless, the Commission would remain in place and its mandate would continue. That being the case, he wished to know whether the State party intended to cooperate with the Commission and facilitate the access required for it to perform its work.

22. He would be grateful to receive as much information as possible concerning the actions and the monitoring activities of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission in the context of conflict in Tigray. He would also appreciate information on any exceptions, in law or in practice, to the right of the Commission to visit all places where persons were deprived of their liberty. It would be useful to know whether the Commission was able to meet in private with detained persons and what measures were taken to protect detainees against the possibility of reprisals by officials. Information on any cases in which it had been alleged that detained persons had been subjected to such reprisals would be appreciated. He would also like clarification as to whether non-governmental human rights organizations and institutions were permitted to visit all police detention facilities and could also visit other detention facilities and whether decisions to grant requests for access to detention facilities were made on the basis of formal standards. It would be interesting to learn whether the delegation was aware of any reasons why no requests to conduct visits to detention facilities had been received from civil society organizations.

23. He would be grateful if the delegation could describe the procedure for approving the Commission's budget and provide data on the budget levels requested and approved in recent years. He wondered whether the Commission's enabling legislation would be amended to limit the terms of office its members and permit their reappointment only once. It would be useful to receive information on the 26 incidents potentially related to torture and ill-treatment that had been referred by the Commission to the relevant authorities for further investigation and an update on the status of the investigations of those incidents and their outcomes. He wondered whether there were any measures in place to ensure that the relevant government agencies took the Commission's recommendations into account and whether those agencies were required to report their reasons for not implementing the

recommendations. What procedures were in place to monitor the extent to which the Commission's recommendations were being implemented?

24. The Committee had received reports indicating that the role of the courts in adjudicating on the application of human rights had been limited because judges often considered that they lacked the power to interpret the Bill of Rights section of the Constitution. He would like to know whether that limitation in fact existed under the law and how it could be ensured that judges were able to play their fundamental role in protecting human rights. It would be interesting to learn more about how the Federal Courts Establishment Proclamation No. 1234/2021 was applied in practice. In particular, he wondered whether it had been invoked in cases involving torture and ill-treatment and how it had been interpreted and applied by the courts.

25. The paper on policy options for transitional justice published in January 2023 indicated that previous transitional justice efforts in the State party had been ineffective owing to the "absence of a holistic transitional justice framework". He would like the delegation to explain that statement. It would be useful to learn how the Government was structuring the consultations on the policy options, taking into account lessons learned from the country's recent history, to ensure the success of the current transitional justice efforts. The delegation was invited to outline how the Government was ensuring meaningful participation in the consultations by marginalized groups, including women and girls, internally displaced persons, victims of the crimes that had been perpetrated during the conflict and the diaspora community. He would like to hear the delegation's thoughts on whether a period of three months was long enough for the consultations and for genuine consensus-building.

26. It would be helpful to have clarification regarding statements in the policy paper regarding the possibility of amnesty for crimes committed during the conflict, including torture, which would be at odds with article 7 of the Convention. He would welcome confirmation that the State party was committed to ensuring that any transitional justice plan adopted would comply fully with the Convention. He wondered whether steps were being taken to educate participants in the consultations and the public at large about the State party's obligations towards victims under the Convention and to ensure that victims and survivors of torture participated in the development of the plan and that the plan would fully protect their interests and legal rights. He also wondered whether, after the transitional justice plan was drafted, a second round of consultations would be conducted to obtain public input on the draft plan.

27. In the light of reports of widespread abuses against refugees in the State party, he would like to know more about the legal provisions related to refugees and deportations in the State party and how they were applied in practice. It appeared that there were gaps in the national legislation that would allow a person to be deported to a country where they would be at risk of torture. If that was indeed the case, he wondered whether the State party would consider amending its legislation to close the gaps. It would also be helpful to have more information on the plans and procedures in place to identify vulnerable asylum-seekers and to refer them immediately to the appropriate services to address their specific needs in a timely manner.

28. He would like the delegation to provide statistical information, disaggregated by sex, country of origin and age, on applications for asylum, refugee status or other forms of humanitarian protection, with an indication of how many of those applications had been successful.

29. The Committee had received reports that Ethiopian and Eritrean military personnel had forced Eritrean refugees to return to locations where they might be in danger and had returned refugees from Addis Ababa to camps in the Tigray region. There had also been credible reports of the beating, murder and rape of Eritrean refugees and of the looting and destruction of camps. He would like to know whether any action had been taken to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of those acts, provide redress and compensation to victims and prevent recurrences.

30. He would welcome information on how the provisions of the Refugee Proclamation No. 1110/2019, which allowed refugees to seek employment, were applied in practice. He

wondered what limitations applied to the employment of refugees, how it was decided whether a person could participate, what percentage of the refugee population had benefited, and whether the percentages among Eritrean refugees and refugees from other countries differed.

31. In its periodic report, the State party had indicated that it had granted nine extradition requests over the preceding nine years. It would be useful to know which countries had made those requests. He wondered whether any other individuals had been removed from the State party by means other than extradition and, if so, to which countries they had been removed. The periodic report also indicated that diplomatic assurances had been received prior to extradition. He would like to know the extent to which those assurances had been the basis for the State party's conclusion that the person involved would not face a risk of torture if transferred to the country in question. It would be helpful if the delegation would indicate which provisions under the State party's law ensured that national courts had jurisdiction over torture cases if the alleged perpetrator was present in the country, even if neither the perpetrator nor the victim was an Ethiopian national.

32. It was his understanding that consultations on the legality of marital rape under national legislation were being conducted. He would welcome further information regarding those consultations and regarding the prospects for amending the law to criminalize marital rape. He would be interested to learn more about the State party's efforts to end female genital mutilation, which was criminalized but reportedly still widely practised. In particular, he would like to know how efforts to monitor that practice were organized and whether the resources allocated to support those efforts were sufficient.

33. With regard to domestic and sexual violence, the State party had indicated in its replies to the list of issues that survivors were able to testify freely through coordinated work with the police. He wished to know what that coordinated work entailed. The delegation was invited to comment on concerns that women victims of violence lacked effective access to emergency health care and to rehabilitation services and redress. He would welcome specific information on any concrete steps taken to investigate, prosecute and punish those responsible for widespread rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence during the conflict and to prevent the recurrence of such crimes.

34. He would like the delegation to clarify the Government's plans regarding the adoption of legislation that included a definition of torture and that would fully comply with the State party's obligations under the Convention. It was his understanding that the crime of torture was not subject to any statute of limitations only when it qualified as a crime against humanity. The delegation was invited to confirm whether that understanding was correct and, if so, whether there were plans to address that legislative gap.

35. He wondered whether there was any legislation that specifically prohibited the use of confessions as evidence if they were obtained through torture or other illegal means. The Committee had received reports that objections to the admissibility of forced confessions as evidence were routinely rejected during trials, especially terrorism trials. It would be useful to have information regarding the number of cases in which persons had alleged that their confessions were obtained through torture, the number of such cases that had been investigated and the outcomes of the investigations, and the number of cases in which statements had been ruled inadmissible. It would also be useful to know whether forensic medical examinations had been conducted as part of the investigation of such cases, whether those found responsible had been punished and whether the victims of torture had been provided with redress. He wondered what steps might be taken to raise awareness among those involved in the criminal justice process of the importance of the rule against using forced confessions.

36. The Committee had heard much criticism of the proclamation declaring a state of emergency in November 2021, which had reportedly been overly broad and had provided, inter alia, for mass arrests and indefinite detention. There had also been criticism of the State of Emergency Inquiry Board, the body responsible for oversight in such situations. He would be interested in hearing the delegation's thoughts on what might be done to guard against overreach in any future states of emergency.

37. It would be useful to learn what measures the State party was taking to develop an organized and integrated data collection, storage and dissemination system that would produce the kind of disaggregated data on which the Committee generally relied. What funding was being made available for the development of the system and was there an action plan and timetable for its development?

38. **Mr. Touzé** said that he would like the delegation to explain how the independence and impartiality of the judiciary was guaranteed in practice. He would appreciate information on any progress made in eliminating corruption in the justice system. While he welcomed the inclusion of due process guarantees in the Ethiopian Constitution, he would like to know how due process rights were upheld in practice, particularly arrested persons' right to be informed of the reasons for their arrest in a language they understood and their right to remain silent. The State party's legislation did not currently provide for the right of persons in police custody to be advised by a lawyer, and he wondered if that right might be enshrined in law in the near future. It would be interesting to know what was being done to ensure that arrested persons were brought before a judge in a timely manner and to increase the number of lawyers qualified to assist persons who had been arrested or were being held in pretrial detention.

39. He would welcome the delegation's assessment of the effectiveness of the legal procedures for reporting and prosecuting torture offences, introduced as part of the 2018 legal reforms. He also wished to know what safeguards were in place to ensure that victims who reported acts of torture did not face reprisals from State officials.

40. While the measures taken to improve conditions of detention were welcome, much remained to be done to address the many concerns raised by civil society organizations. He was curious to know where the inmates of detention centres that had been closed had been transferred and what progress had been made in the construction of new detention centres. Given reports received of severe overcrowding in detention centres, it would be useful to have disaggregated data on the number of persons held in each facility. He also wished to know what was being done to improve hygiene conditions and ensure access to health care and to adequate food and water in detention centres and what resources had been allocated to that end.

41. He would like to hear the delegation's comments regarding allegations concerning the failure to separate minors from adults within some prisons, the use of incommunicado detention and the prevalence of torture and ill-treatment perpetrated by prison officials. He wished to know what was being done to prevent violence between inmates. He would also like to know whether any investigations had been conducted in response to reports of sexual violence against women inmates and whether any perpetrators had been prosecuted. The Committee had received reports indicating that women who had become pregnant following systematic rape within prisons were forced to give birth without medical or psychological support of any kind. He would welcome the delegation's comments on that matter.

42. Despite the adoption of legal provisions prohibiting the use of corporal punishment, the practice reportedly remained prevalent in schools and in family settings. He wondered whether the local authorities were aware of that situation and whether there was genuine political will to put an end to the practice. If so, what measures had been adopted to that end? Civil society organizations had raised serious concerns regarding the sexual exploitation of child, widespread child prostitution, child labour and the military recruitment of children. What was being done to address those problems?

43. Lastly, he wished to know whether the human rights violations alleged to have occurred on 6 and 7 August 2016, when law enforcement officers had opened fire on seemingly peaceful protesters, had been investigated and whether any persons had been held accountable. He would also appreciate a comment from the delegation on reports that a number of journalists had been arbitrarily arrested and detained.

44. **A representative of Ethiopia** said that his country had a long and proud history of hosting persons who were fleeing conflict and persecution. Ethiopia was currently hosting more than one million refugees, and it had continued to welcome refugees even throughout the periods of conflict, natural disasters and health crises that it had experienced in recent years. Even at the height of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, Ethiopia had kept its borders open to refugees and asylum-seekers. All refugees, including those from

Eritrea, had the same rights under Ethiopian law, including the right to work, the right to open a bank account, the right to hold a driving licence and the right to be included in the civil registries. The Government was continuing to provide education to refugees from the primary level through to the university level. It was working to accommodate new refugees from Somaliland and to prepare for the expected influx of refugees from the Sudan.

45. The safety of refugees was primarily the responsibility of regional security forces. During the conflict in the region of Tigray, however, the Tigrayan security forces had been drawn into the fighting. The Government had therefore relocated some 19,000 refugees from the Shimelba and Hitsats camps – which had been near the areas of conflict – to other, safer camps in the same region and had ensured that humanitarian services, including food distribution, were resumed promptly. Nearly all refugees who had been dispersed by the conflict had been accounted for. A new refugee camp in Amhara region had been established to accommodate more than 23,000 of the relocated refugees, and nearly 20,000 refugees had been granted expedited urban status, which gave them permission to remain in Addis Ababa for five years. A further 15,000 refugees without urban status had also recently arrived in Addis Ababa from other camps; the Government was attempting to find solutions to avoid returning those refugees to the camps.

46. Reports that thousands of Eritrean refugees had been expelled to Eritrea were untrue. None had ever been expelled by Ethiopian forces; on the contrary, the military had provided protection for Eritrean refugees who were being transferred from less secure areas to safer places within Ethiopian territory. Investigations were ongoing into reports of Eritrean refugees being forcibly returned to their home country by Eritrean forces; if such returns had occurred, however, the number of refugees involved was not thought to be large, as virtually all the refugees who had been displaced during the conflict had been accounted for.

47. As part of the Global Compact on Refugees, Ethiopia had pledged to extend out-of-camp privileges to all refugees in its territory. Since December 2019, refugees could apply for either unassisted urban status, which entitled them to support from international partners if they met the relevant criteria, or self-assisted urban status, which allowed them to end their dependence on humanitarian assistance if they could prove that they could support themselves. Thus far, more than 75,000 refugees from over 25 countries, including many from Eritrea, had been granted urban status, without discrimination based on nationality.

48. For those refugees who chose to remain in the camps, living conditions were far different from those imagined by many outside the country. Refugee camps were not secluded from their host communities; in fact, many were located adjacent to local neighbourhoods, and local residents and refugees often lived together harmoniously. Refugees were free to visit the local area and could apply to move to another area for health, social or other reasons. The Government was working with international partners, including the World Bank, to provide economic opportunities for refugees. Significant progress had been made thus far, with thousands of jobs having been created.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.