

Statement on Tigray, Ethiopia

2020-12-02

EU-CORD members working in Ethiopia are extremely concerned about the safety and welfare of civilians in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. Since the eruption of the current conflict on 4th November 2020, tens of thousands of people have been affected (according to reports by UNHCR and UN OCHA) and we wish to express our shared conviction that their right to receive protection and assistance cannot be denied or delayed.

We are alarmed by what we are hearing concerning the situation of local communities, refugees, and our own humanitarian staff who have experienced violence, forced displacement, and lack of access to basic services, water, and food. We believe in upholding core humanitarian and protection principles, as also reflected in international humanitarian law. In our rendering of support to the people of Tigray, we reiterate our commitment to playing an impartial, independent, and non-partisan role, while providing assistance and protection for the people affected. This includes:

Timely, safe, and unhindered access, safe passage for civilians, the security of aid workers so that humanitarian workers will be able to deliver humanitarian assistance.

Civilians and civilian objects must be respected and protected. Not directing attacks against civilians or civilian objects and taking all feasible precautions, to avoid civilian harm.

Respect and protect **humanitarian relief personnel and assets**. Allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of impartial humanitarian relief for civilians in need.

It is critical to facilitate the **supply of essential goods**. The interruption of essential services and shortages of essential supplies have a devastating impact on medical care and the lives of civilians.

Humanitarians have **emergency supplies ready to deliver** and rapid, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access should be provided.

Civilians fleeing violence should be allowed to seek safety in another part of the country or to seek asylum in another country and members of the same family are not separated.

Humanitarian assistance should be **inclusive for everyone**, especially marginalized groups like **people with disabilities**.

In light of the above and in accordance with your mission to seek to strengthen the Union's capacity as a global leader to act autonomously and promote its values and interests around the world as well as to take the necessary decisions in a fast and efficient way related to common foreign and security policy affairs – in particular to the principles of the Petersberg Tasks as stipulated in the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon (TEU Art. 42) - we herewith call upon the European External Action Service to undertake immediate action in the affected regions of Ethiopia to preserve lives, prevent and alleviate human suffering and safeguard the integrity and dignity of populations who have become afflicted by the humanitarian crisis in the country.

We understand from the 26th November 2020 statement made by the Office of the Prime Minister of Ethiopia that „humanitarian assistance will not be further reinforced with the opening of a humanitarian access route to be managed under the auspices of the Ministry of Peace“. Therefore, considering this statement, may we also avail ourselves of this opportunity to request your support in allowing EU-CORD Network supporting members to be given immediate access to Tigray to provide humanitarian support to all affected by the current situation.

Ruth Faber, CEO