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Statement from a Coalition of Pan African Organizations on the War in Ethiopia

We are deeply disturbed by the escalation of violence following the declaration of war on the regional state of Tigray by PM Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia on November 4, 2020. We are New York-based Pan African advocacy and humanitarian organizations representing the interest of Africa and Africans in the Diaspora in the U.S. and worldwide.

This conflict has the potential of spiraling uncontrollably into large scale civil war possibly drawing in neighboring countries. As Martin Plaut, a former BBC Africa editor told Aljazeera on November 8: “It is impossible to be certain of Eritrea’s role in Ethiopia’s domestic conflict. Since the first visits to each other’s capitals by the two leaders in July 2018 there has never been a press conference at which journalists could ask either Prime Minister Abiy or President Isaias what they hoped to achieve. However, it is clear that relations are today so close that it is inconceivable that the Ethiopian leader would have undertaken such a major operation, on Eritrea’s border, without clearing it with his opposite number.”

There are now unconfirmed reports of Eritrean troops crossing the border into Ethiopia in support of Abiy’s military offensive in Tigray. This development is ominous as it could engulf the Horn of Africa and countries along the Red Sea in the conflict, with implications for peace and security in Africa and the Middle East. It is no longer an internal Ethiopian matter.

Concerned by the developments in Ethiopia, the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) comprising countries of the Horn of Africa, the Nile Valley and African Great Lakes has issued a statement calling for the de-escalation of the tensions and resolving their differences through dialogue and reconciliation. The European Union representative also expressed on November 7 concern for the integrity of the country and the stability of the wider region and called for de-escalation of tensions.

In his letter to South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, the current president of the African Union Commission, Dr. Debretsion Gebremichael, president of the regional state of Tigray, expressed his firm belief that political problems could not be solved through military means. He adds “the AU has the responsibility and is better placed to

help all political and civic stake holders of the country into an all-inclusive and comprehensive dialogue to avert an all-out civil war in the country.”

PM Abiy has so far rejected all appeals for cessation of hostilities. Air strikes on major cities in Tigray are being carried out in addition to the large scale military offensive on the ground. Thousands of civilians are reported to be fleeing to neighboring Sudan.

Humanitarian agencies including the UNHCR are facing difficulties reaching Tigray which is completely sealed by Dr. Abiy with the Internet also cut off. Tigray is also home to an estimated 100,000 refugees from Eritrea. A humanitarian crisis may be in the making.

U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren has called for the immediate de-escalation of violence and for providing immediate humanitarian assistance to civilians in the Tigray region. She urges an inclusive dialogue between all parties in Ethiopia to protect all Ethiopian citizens' rights to participate in free and fair elections. We can't agree more.

As concerned Africans in the Diaspora and as friends of Ethiopia, we in the United African Congress (UAC) and partners call for immediate cessation of hostilities and strongly urge both parties to engage in a peaceful dialogue to resolve what is essentially a political problem.

Recognizing the conflict as a threat to international peace and security we call upon the UN Security Council to convene an emergency meeting to demand immediate ceasefire and to urge the parties to engage in peaceful dialogue.

We also call on the African Union to take a more active role in mediation efforts aimed at a peaceful resolution to stop the needless carnage which could easily spread into a wider regional conflagration.

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