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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE FEDERAL
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

866 Second Avenue, 3rd Floor • New York, N.Y. 10017

Statement by

Ambassador Tekeda Alemu

Permanent Representative Federal Democratic

Republic of Ethiopia

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Commission on the Status of Women

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Check against Delivery

Mr. Chairperson,

At the outset my delegation would like to congratulate you and the other members of the bureau on your election to lead the work of the Commission. Let me assure you Ethiopia's full and active cooperation with, and support for, the works of this Commission. We would also like to express our profound appreciation to the Secretary-General for the reports on the priority theme. My delegation would like to associate itself with the statement made by Mozambique on behalf of Africa and by Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

I would like to seize this opportunity to express my delegation's satisfaction over the establishment of UN Women to enhance United Nations efforts to promote gender equality and empowerment of women. We were indeed gratified by the successful launch of UN Women last week and we wish to express deep appreciation for the commitment the Secretary-General has demonstrated to see the realization of this historically very meaningful initiative. My delegation's gratitude also goes to Ms. Michelle Bachelet, the Under-Secretary General for UN Women and her team for the excellent work they have been doing since her assumption of the office. It would be remiss of me if I failed expressing special thanks and appreciation to Ms Bachelet for choosing Addis Ababa, as the venue to unveil UN Women's new logo

during the 16th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union Heads of State and Government.

Mr. Chairperson,

The condition of women in society is a good measure of progress made in virtually all sectors of societal life. Because of the vital role it plays in all areas of development, education has, in this regard, drawn a deservedly great attention. Education of women and girls is one of the strategic objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Investment in education, benefits the individual, society, and even more broadly, the world as a whole. Most particularly, investment in women's and girls' education yields some of the highest returns of development and brings benefits that accrue to families, communities and society at large.

As pointed out in the Secretary-General's report, it is very encouraging to note that the ratio of girls' to boys' in primary, secondary and tertiary education have shown steady improvement. However, globally, the rate of girls' dropout from school is still high due to financial constraints and cultural barriers. Women constitute two third of the world illiterate adults. It is regrettable to note that women who are living in poverty, rural areas and urban slums, or those who live with disabilities, have very limited access to education.

Similarly, women's employment opportunity is not in line with their educational gains. Accordingly, women continue to lag behind men in the labour market. In developing countries, among women between 15-24 years old one third is not employed or is seeking employment. Hence, there is a need for redoubling efforts on the basis of a holistic approach to ensure women and girls have equal access to education, training and full employment opportunities.

Mr. Chairperson,

In Ethiopia, the government has implemented successive five year Education Sector Development Programs which got under way in 1997. As a result, the Gross Enrolment Rate has increased from 79.8% in 2004 to 95.9% in 2010. Similarly, we made tremendous efforts to increase the enrollment and retention rate of women and girls in all levels of education. In order to enhance women enrolment rate and reduce problem of school dropouts, the government has constructed low cost schools and class rooms at the nearest possible site. In addition, various sensitization programs have been introduced to create awareness among parents to send their children to school. Accordingly, Gross Enrolment Rate for girls at primary school has increased from 53.8% in 2002 to 93% in 2009. The Gender Party index has showed significant progress both at the primary and secondary education levels. The introduction of affirmative action has

allowed women and girls to enroll at secondary and tertiary education in unprecedented numbers. In 2009, women's and girls' enrolment has reached 41% at higher institution.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Ethiopian Constitution recognizes women's equal rights and accords them full legal rights to participate in the political and economic decision-making processes. As a result, the number of women in decision-making and leadership roles has increased considerably. Similarly, the Constitution guarantees women equal right in employment, promotion, pay and transfer of pension entitlements. Women are enjoying equal employment opportunities with men and the gap between the number of female and male employees continues to narrow. In an effort to eliminate violence against women and ensure respect for their rights before the law, the Family Law and the Penal Code have been thoroughly revised. Accordingly, perpetrators of various forms of violence against women, such as rape and abductions, among others, receive rigorous punishment. In line with the revised penal code, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), rape, abduction and trafficking are considered as serious crimes that entail severe punishment. But admittedly we still have a long way to go.

Mr. Chairperson,

Recently, the government of Ethiopia with participation of all stakeholders has designed an ambitious growth and

transformation plan. The Growth and Transformation Plan sets out a number of major objectives to meet the MDG's, eradicate extreme poverty and double the size of the economy within the next five years and has laid the basis for placing the country within the group of middle income countries in little more than two decades. In addition, the plan clearly highlights the unequivocal commitment of the government to eliminate gender disparity by the end of the plan period. I would like to seize this opportunity to call on our development partners to continue their backing in mobilizing adequate resource for the implementation of this important development plan which will have a decisive positive impact on the conditions of Ethiopian women.

In conclusion, **Mr. Chairperson**, I would like to reiterate Ethiopia's firm commitment to gender equality and empowerment of women.

I thank you.