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

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Statement by

H.E. Ms. Zenebu Tadesse

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of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia**

**At the 56th session of the
Commission on the Status of Women**

**New York,
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Check against Delivery

Madam chair,

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. I would also like to express our profound appreciation to the Secretary-General for the report on the priority theme. My delegation would like to associate itself with the statement made by Algeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; and Tunisia on behalf of the African group.

Let me seize this opportunity to express my delegation's appreciation to the UN Women for its impressive achievement in the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women since its inception last year.

Madam chair,

This year's priority theme of the Commission, 'the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges' gives us a unique opportunity to focus our deliberation on the largest segments of the societies in countries such as mine who live in dire condition. Poverty, malnutrition and food insecurity resulting, inter alia, from inadequate income, lack of education and gender inequality continue to be predominant phenomena in rural areas, where women and girls suffer the most. As has been stated by many, the

multiple and interrelated crises, including the financial and economic crisis, volatile energy and food prices have further exacerbated the situation of women in rural areas. The increasing challenges posed by climate change, drought, desertification, and the loss of biodiversity have contributed to additional strains faced by rural women and worsened food insecurity.

In Ethiopia, agriculture remains the main stay of the economy and more than 85 percent of the people, half of them women, depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Ethiopia therefore attaches great importance to the empowerment of rural women and their contribution to the overall development of the country. Improving the participation and livelihood of rural women is at the center of Ethiopia's five years development plan, the Growth and Transformation plan. The plan clearly states that ensuring women's active participation in the country's political, social and economic development and equal benefit from the economic growth is one of its priorities during the implementation period. Steps have been taken to ensure women's equal access to economic recourses including land, credit, agricultural extension programs and information technology. In line with the land administration law of both the federal and regional states, initiatives have been taken to register the name of both spouses for land ownership certificates in order to guarantee the rights of women to own and administer resources. Under the Food Security Program, more attention has been given to women, particularly to female-headed households.

Special encouragement is being given to women to engage in micro and small-scale enterprises. In terms of reducing the burden of house-hold work of women, the National Energy Development Program has taken effective steps in introducing appropriate technology such as bio-gas, energy saving stove, etc. Similarly, access to potable water has increased significantly both in urban and rural areas.

The government of Ethiopia has also taken a number of measures to eliminate violence against women, which has been a deep rooted problem in the country. The adoption of the new Criminal Code, the Family Law and gender sensitization programs as well as multi-sectoral interventions have helped to mitigate the problem and to bring improvement in this regard. We have made tremendous efforts to increase the enrollment and retention rate of women and girls in all levels of education. Various sensitization programs and incentive mechanism, especially in rural areas, have been introduced to create awareness and motivate parents to send their children to school and reduce absenteeism and school drop-outs. I am pleased to announce that Ethiopia will meet the Millennium Development Goals at primary level.

Ethiopia is also engaged in a range of activities to improve access to and raise the quality of family-planning services. The health policy and health sector development program emphasizes universal access to essential health services, focusing on the poor and the vulnerable in rural communities. Several measures have been taken

to reduce maternal mortality and improve access to health service through the health extension program. As a result, maternal mortality rate has declined and the covers for prenatal and postnatal care and deliveries attended by skilled health personnel have shown improvement.

Madam Chair,

We all agree that empowerment of women and gender equality remains unfinished agenda in many parts of the world. Women have continued to face significant gender disparity in access to and control over resources. Deep rooted harmful traditional practices, lack of access to social services, infrastructure and technology continues to hinder girls and women empowerment at all levels. Achieving gender equality and empowerment of women is both a key development goal by itself and an important means for achieving all of the Millennium Development Goals. Hence, the international community must act together to mobilize the necessary resources to support national efforts in the empowerment of women and gender equality.

Madam chair, I wish to reiterate Ethiopia's firm commitment to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

I thank you.