



Official Correspondence GSTS-O.C-2021-023
The Leadership of the Global Society of Tigray
Scholars and Professionals (GSTS)

H.E. António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN)
New York, NY

Subject: A Call for Action Regarding the UNDP's Note to Your Excellency on the War in Tigray

Your Excellency, it is with utmost regret and dismay that we, the Global Society of Tigray Scholars and Professionals (GSTS)¹, learnt the extremely biased and hostile confidential UNDP's Note to your Excellency, on 16 February 2021.

GSTS categorically denounces this ill-intentioned note towards the people of Tigray and its elected leadership. We, at GSTS, understand that this note does not reflect the official UN position and that, as rightly stated by various UN agencies regarding the ongoing atrocities and dire humanitarian crisis.

The International Community and several credible human rights organizations have already attested the mass atrocities, war crimes, extrajudicial killings, ethnic cleansing and forcible transfer of population and annexation of territories, pillaging and wanton destruction of infrastructures and heritage sites. Furthermore, systematic rape and sexual violence have been employed as a weapon of war.

As part of the plot to exterminate the Tigray people, the joint Ethiopian and Eritrean forces including the Amhara troops and militia have deliberately destroyed and denied access to life-saving medical supplies and starved the population by looting and burning the livelihood assets necessary for survival. Eritrean Refugee Camps were deliberately attacked and destroyed, and thousands of refugees are still missing.

All these facts have been unequivocally reported by internationally reputed media outlets such as CNN, BBC, New York Times, Reuters, and so forth.

In the contrary, the UNDP's Note to the SG, has intentionally distorted facts related to the root-causes, dynamics, and devastating consequences of the war on civilians of the population of Tigray. The Note depicts one of the warring parties, namely the Tigray forces, as "cancer". What is more, the Note echoed the terms repeatedly used by Prime Minister Abiy including "cancer", "no civilian casualties", "no children and women among



those who fled to Sudan but criminal men”; and “no Eritrean troops in Tigray except in disputed places”.

Let alone to the UNDP, the preparations for the war on Tigray are well known to the public and was brewing since the rise of PM Abiy. It is a fact beyond dispute that Tigray was the most peaceful region in Ethiopia. During Abiy’s administration, Tigrayans have become the victims of state-sponsored and widespread hate speech and media campaign, ethnic profiling and purge from public, private and international institutions.

It is a public knowledge that federal routes connecting Tigray with the rest of the country were blocked for over two years. Furthermore, Tigray was denied its fair share of the federal budget and foreign aid, including safety net programmes. In addition, the war was neither accidental nor was it triggered by what the Note’s claims. This blanketly endorses the official narrative of Abiy’s Administration without an independent investigation.

Preparations were ongoing including the formation of a tripartite clandestine security pact among Abiy, Isaias, and the Amhara Regional commanders including repeated official and unofficial exchanges of visits. The Amhara region chief of police publicly confirmed that his forces were deployed to the areas bordering Tigray before the night the war was declared. Few days before the war, PM Abiy had reportedly requested Sudanese leaders to close the border between Tigray and Sudan.

In effect, the Note not only exonerates one of the parties to the war (led by Abiy’s administration), but also promotes the genocidal war on Tigray. By so doing, GSTS is of the strongest opinion that the UNDP’s Note may have led to the mischaracterization of the war and the denial of the invasion of Tigray by the Eritrean forces. This, as a result, may have contributed to the delayed response by the UN.

In a nutshell, the Note distorted facts, pronounced verdict on the cause of the war, and misinformed the UN system in violation of the core principles enshrined in the International Civil Services, Ethical Framework of the United Nations, Chapter 2 that states “UN Personnel, in the performance of their duties, shall always act with impartiality, objectivity, and professionalism”.

The UNDP, in its Note, states that the “Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has a good reputation and the capacity to lead such investigations possibly with international participation”. In the contrary, the EHRC does not enjoy public trust, credibility and lacks the capability to investigate such egregious war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. That is the reason why there is an urgent international call for UN-mandated investigation.



Therefore, GSTS calls:

1. For the immediate resignation of Mr. Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator and Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa, UNDP's Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Africa, UNDP
2. On the UN Secretary-General, as a matter of urgency, to conduct an investigation and take swift corrective measures to prevent similar blatant violations of the UN core principles of neutrality and impartiality.



The GSTS Leadership
11 March 2021

CC:

- All Member States of the UNSC
- The Chiefs of All UN Agencies
- Mr. Achim Steiner
UNDP Administrator
- Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa
UNDP's Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Africa, UNDP

ⁱ GSTS is a Non-Partisan Global Knowledge Network of 3,000+Tigray Scholars/Professionals aimed at creating Knowledge-based sustainable economy & Society in Tigray & beyond. It stands for academia, multidisciplinary and cross sectoral research and applied policy development, human capital development, fostering and advancing science, technology, and innovation, technology and knowledge transfer, youth and gender development, migration and displacement, and other educational and development related endeavors, engagement with various stake holders, focusing on peace, governance, human rights, and humanitarian law.