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**OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER**

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Addis Ababa

## Press Briefing Transcript of August 26, 2021

### Key Highlights of the week include:

#### 1. Official State Visit by President Salva Kiir of South Sudan

- Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed met with President Salva Kiir and his delegation who just concluded an official visit to Ethiopia this afternoon.
- The focus of the visit was to discuss key bilateral and regional issues of mutual concern
- Of particular interest is a focus on strengthening economic ties and join infrastructure development to facilities these ties
- Prime Minister Abiy briefed President Salva Kiir and the delegation on current issues in the country; including the positive economic performance of key sectors despite the many challenges including COVID19; he also shared examples of the enhanced democratic practices being experienced in the country for the first time and affirmed his government's priority to domestic and regional peace as a first priority.
- President Salva Kiir on his part, congratulated the Prime Minister and the Government for the peaceful conclusion of the 6th National Election; he also commended the successful second filling of the GERD and reaffirmed that South Sudan's continues to attach great importance to the relations with Ethiopia. He condemned the attack of the Northern Command by TPLF which initiated an armed conflict and appreciated the Government's effort to safeguard the Constitutional order, highlighting non-interference by external parties in Ethiopia's current domestic challenge.

#### 2. Humanitarian Response Update in the Northern Part of the Country

- This update includes humanitarian assistance provision to the Amhara and Afar regions in addition to the usual update for Tigray.

## Amhara and Afar

- Due to the terrorist group TPLF's incursions into two other regions, the number of displaced in the Amhara and Afar regions have surpassed 500,000 requiring **urgent** humanitarian assistance to these communities
- It is estimated that 4.5million people have also been affected as a result of these incursions and related destruction
- Resultantly, in addition to the activation of the National Emergency Coordination Centre, Regional ECCs have been activated in Afar & Amhara regions and Emergency Incident Posts installed
- The Fed Government is closely working with Afar leadership, elders and the community at large to facilitate smooth humanitarian access
- Government has thus far distributed 4,820 quintal food for IDPs in Afar
- WFP allocated three rounds of food distribution to IDPs in Afar and the First round is underway.
- 4,621 qtl of food distributed to 30,939 beneficiaries in the Amhara region
- 2,800 qtl moving to Wagemra zone of Amhara
- 2,000 qtl food delivered to IDPs in Debark
- Partners have also mobilized resources to 60,000 IDPs in Desse. 5,080 qtl distributed to 30 thousand beneficiaries
- **However, the support for the Amhara and Afar regions is still sparse and requires partners to scale up assistance as many lives are equally impacted**
- **Assessment of damages due to the aggression by TPLF is being conducted in Afar and Amhara regions**

## Tigray

- On assistance to the Tigray region, as of yesterday August 25, 2021, **457** trucks have been deployed to the Tigray Region with 318 trucks that have already arrived
- Check points have been reduced from seven to three to enable efficient transit of humanitarian assistance
- Initially the government arranged four inlets to Tigray to facilitate humanitarian access. Now three are inaccessible due to attacks by TPLF forces. A corridor, still with intermittent access due to attacks, is open through Afar.
- Food and non-food items plus agricultural inputs and fuel include aid deployment items by around 20 partners providing humanitarian assistance to the Tigray region.
- More than 59million birr (more than 1million USD) has been transferred by partners between July 14 to August 14 to the region
- Provision of agricultural supplies (seeds and fertilizer) has continued after the humanitarian ceasefire through partners
- Unfortunately, service to Eritrean refugees in Tigray region disrupted putting the lives of tens of thousands at stake
- Orchestrated and heinous attacks on Eritrean refugees in Tigray by TPLF forces; TPLF targeted Shimelba, Hitsats, Mai-aini and Adi-harush camps. Looted, many abducted and killed

- To address these challenges, 91 hectares of land have been provided by the Amhara Region for setting up a safe haven for refugees and select partners have agreed to work on food distribution, construct of shelters; the site planning is currently underway.
- **The challenge however, remains that there is hindrance of safe passage by TPLF to refugees to move out of the conflict zone**

### 3. Challenges faced by the Government in facilitating humanitarian assistance

- Access blockage by TPLF's continued attacks at humanitarian aid access corridors
- **Food aid and medicines diversion by terrorist TPLF groups intended for civilians** - we have seen images that have surfaced showing international humanitarian aid agency food items in the hands of terrorists which indicates that humanitarian assistance is clearly being siphoned away from civilians that need it by TPLF
- The agreed upon timeframe for loaded trucks to unload and return is 3-5 days. But reports indicate that 72 vehicles haven't returned since 21 July. There is needs to be an accountability for this...
- Some other challenges:
  - o Failure to follow the already in place communication guideline.
  - o Travelling with unlicensed communication equipment
  - o Failure to carry communication licenses
  - o Failure to submit timely humanitarian activities reports.
  - o Record keeping and reporting system for utilized food and non-food items in place. No report received in the past three months from partners
- **Nevertheless, this will be addressed through continued discussion with partners to better coordinate humanitarian aid acquisition and distribution.**

### 4. Crimes by TPLF in Afar and Amhara Regions

- The past week the Terrorist TPLF has continued its killing of civilians, looting and destruction of properties in the Afar and Amhara regions
- In North and South Gondar zones of the Amhara region, TPLF looted medical equipment and destroyed medical facilities including the Nefas Mewucha City Hospital
- In North Wollo, they left killing a number of livestock which is a critical foundation of livelihood for citizens there
- In Afar, in Kilbet Rasu Zone, Berhale woreda, aseda and asgidu kebeles, they attacked schools, government district offices, health centres, water reservoirs and civilian homes.

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