



Madame Chair, distinguished member state representatives, UN agencies, NGOs and my fellow distinguished indigenous delegates,

I am speaking on behalf of the Ogaden Youth and Student Union. In the past, the Ethiopian government transferred thousands of Ethiopian settlers into the Ogaden in an attempt to change the demographic nature of the region. With the goal to eliminate the Somali national identity and to transform the Ogaden into a region of Ethiopia, in which indigenous Somalis would become an insignificant indigenous minority. When the transformation and assimilation policies failed, the Ethiopian government adopted a policy of intimidation and physical elimination. This resulted in an enormous human suffering and forced cultural assimilation.

Ethiopian state sponsored violence against Ogaden civilians is institutionalized through state policies and entrenched within their military doctrine. Ethiopia's Anti-Terrorism Proclamation, passed in 2009, is used to silence political dissidents, opposition party members, journalists and others in civil society- and it is the youth that are systematically targeted in this way. The Charities and Societies Proclamation Law places excessive restrictions on the work of human rights organizations. Human Rights groups argue that the law itself infringes on fundamental human rights and restricts civil society groups from accomplishing work. In addition, tactics such as institutionalized rape and gender-based violence is used by the Ethiopian government. Defected military officials have testified to being trained on how to use rape as a tool of intimidation.

The Ethiopian administration in the Ogaden treats the Somalis in the Ogaden as second class citizens in their own country, exploits the country for economic gains in collaboration with large corporations, and deprives the Ogaden people of their fundamental human rights. Discrimination and segregation against Somalis, in terms of education, health care, employment and economic development is the cornerstone of the current Ethiopian government's policy. In terms of education, there is no policy of inclusion or outreach towards this indigenous community who have a very particular way of life, many of whom are young people. This is an example of a specific form of state regulated education that not only excludes the history of the Ogaden and the ancestral cultures of the indigenous communities there, but one which excludes Ogaden youth from accessing education systems and institutions entirely. This form of alienation and marginalization has a corrosive and long lasting impact on young people. The presented PTSD of adults living in an occupied state, is unimaginable, and this is of course if the child even reaches adulthood. This is a cyclical process, these children grow up surrounded by adults living in the confines of a prison state, victim to targeted discrimination and marginalization practices, only to suffer the same state.

The United Nations recognizes a number of international charters designed to protect the rights of minorities globally. In 1960, the United Nations Educational and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) introduced the Convention against Discrimination in Education. This charter recognizes the right of minority groups of States to carry out their own educational activities for instance – this includes the right to establish schools and teach in their indigenous language. However, the Ethiopian government has chosen to not prioritize the rights of the indigenous people of the Ogaden. We as Ogaden Youth and Student Union, urge the international community and this forum to further investigate the human rights violations, specifically taking place in the Ogaden. It is of the utmost importance to uphold the currently



non-existing rights of the indigenous people of the Ogaden, and importantly, to assert pressure on the Ethiopian government to stop and end the economic blockade, trade embargo and complete isolation of the region so that a visit by the special rapporteur can be made.

Thank you.