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September 21, 2021

Re: Open letter to United Nations General Assembly on Climate Change, COVID, Humanitarian Aid & Democracy

Dear Members of the United Nations General Assembly,

This message is sent to you as we collectively voice our concern for the heart of humankind and the birthplace of humankind – Ethiopia, known as the cradle of Dinknesh, or as you know her, ‘Lucy’. We think it's important for us to speak out strongly now when Humanity is so close to destroying its environment, and when disease threatens to cull the populations of nations.

We write as leaders of "People to People," an organization dedicated to building bridges across institutions and all levels of Ethiopian society. In building these bridges, we reach out to you: to offer advice, help, suggest, warn, and plead. Let's not forget that life, as we know it on earth, began in Africa and that Ethiopia has been at the epicenter of the world – and, for it to continue flourishing, please heed us now as we express the need for cooperation to address vaccine access, to invest in sustainable economic development, and to ensure human rights and democracy are upheld.

On issues regarding the global effort to address Covid-19, we remain concerned with the pressing need for more focused global cooperation around access to vaccines. We also remain alarmed by the lack of efforts to protect older generations, a generation which plays critical leadership roles in our societies. The significant delays in vaccine roll-outs in developing countries, combined with the lack of a strategic approach to synchronized vaccination, means that the world remains highly vulnerable to mutated variants of SARS-COV-2. Consequently, the delays become costly vaccination programs which will address obsolete threats.

We hope that your discussion on climate change will comprehensively and transparently address issues related to equity and development. The American ‘Build Back Better’ strategies and the economic transition of the developed world cannot be done without developing world partners as we have a common earth. It is imperative not to disregard African countries and countries in other regions that have both the resources and the human capital to immensely contribute. This global project of making countries ‘safe’, ensuring that democracy prevails, and executing sustainable economic development projects will be unattainable without the developing countries and cannot be undertaken at a cost to the development gains achieved through the generous contributions of developing nations over the past 50 years. These gains include agricultural, industrial and export trade opportunities which gave the Ethiopian population the wherewithal to fund the development of its own national water project in order to give the country access to 85% of Nile waters it hosts.

Lastly, on human rights and democracy, nations reserve the right to deal without interference with rebel insurrectionists which threaten the territorial integrity of



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their nations. The recent post-election violence on America's Capitol Hill resulted in the calling in by duly elected American authorities of the National Guard and arrest of 642 people. This approach remains in line with the well-accepted NATO standard practice of 'Military Aid to the Civil Authorities' and with the UN Charter's Article 2 on the rights of states, which includes several sub-sections in 2.7 relating to the right to internal law and order operations. This practice appears not to have been acceptable for a developing country which faced an armed insurrectionist force that murdered thousands of federal troops and whose strategy was to overthrow the government by way of an armed coup. It is important to note that human rights arguments have been used selectively to undermine this issue for years. We would urge the General Assembly to initiate a new discussion on a formulation that provides a balanced analysis and approach on these issues. Current practice is seen as a double standard as developed countries have full authority to use force in order to maintain law and order though developing countries are criticized for upholding the same of authority as we see now in Ethiopia. While countries like the US, the UK and their allies face no limitations in employing these policies regularly, it is a sign of global injustice to marginalize Ethiopia and its leadership for acting in a similar, more than justified, manner.

We, the leadership of this non-partisan global "People to People" network, extend this message to the United Nations member states as we speak as citizens of the world and echo the sentiment of nations in the developing world. We have often relied on this collective body for various conflicts and common global challenges. We have often heard from this global assembly eloquence and bluntness, but seldom harmony and productivity. It is our sentiment that the world craves progress and not just renewed resolve.

With this letter, we hope you will understand our concerns and that perhaps you will be able to shift perspectives that can genuinely lead you to answers to uplift nations around the world, desperate for relief and hope.

Endorsed,

People to People Board of Directors