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EU-US high level meeting

- The European Commission and the United States held a “virtual high level meeting” in which several panelists discussed the crisis in Tigray in anticipation of the G7 meeting on Friday 11th-13th June.
- In attendance were the US ambassador to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, who provided the opening remarks, US Special envoy to the Horn, Jeff Feltman, EU Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič, EU Commissioner for International Partnerships Jutta Urpilainen, USAID administrator Samantha Power, UN Humanitarian Chief Mark Lowcock, SecGen Norwegian Refugee Council Jan Egeland, UN Special representative on Sexual Violence in conflict Pramila Patten.
- In her opening speech, Thomas-Greenfield said that the UNSC failure to act on the unfolding crisis in Tigray is unacceptable. She said that thousands of people have been killed, raped, and tortured, and it is time for the UNSC to have a vision on what is happening and to respond with a sense of responsibility. Lowcock shared his frustration of UNSC inaction, even after repeated briefings and whitepapers warning of the dire and worsening situation in Tigray.
- Lowcock also spoke about the recently published IPC report, which paints a picture of an extreme situation. He said that “there is famine now”. The famine situation in Tigray is worse than anywhere in the world since the famine in Somalia in 2011.
- Those feelings were echoed by Lenarčič, who said that using starvation as a weapon of war was in contravention of humanitarian law. He also said that while the EU will continue to provide humanitarian support, it is not satisfactory and that it has not been enough for many months already.
- Mark Lowcock shared his frustration that the UNSC was not doing anything regarding the conflict. Although he briefed the Council three times already, and has sent multiple whitepapers on the impending starvation crisis in Ethiopia, the UNSC has not yet held a meeting on the subject.
- All the participants emphasised the importance of the G7 and the leading role it can play in shaping international action on Tigray. Action needs to be taken right away, and the worst can still be avoided.
- Participants also warned of the destabilising effects the conflict could have on the broader region. In Ethiopia, several regions are facing heightened levels of violence and food insecurity. Somalia and South Sudan are also facing crises. They warn that the international community needs to act on all these crises. They also note that the conflict in Ethiopia has the potential to destabilise progress made in other neighbouring countries such as Sudan.
- Panelists also said that humanitarian organisations have a critical shortage of funds and resources, and that more money is needed to scale up operations in Tigray.
- Panelists also reiterated the need for a famine prevention ceasefire to provide food to hundreds of thousands of people and unfettered humanitarian access to the region.

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Links of interest

<https://webcast.ec.europa.eu/us-aid>

http://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Ethiopia_Acute_Food_Insecurity_2020Oct2021Sept_Report.pdf