



Speech of H.E. ARCHBISHOP ETTORE BALESTRERO, Apostolic Nuncio
and Permanent Representative of the Holy See to the United Nations
and Other International Organizations in Geneva
at the High-level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Situation in Ethiopia
GENEVA, 16 APRIL 2024

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Today's meeting is an expression of our solidarity with Ethiopia, a Country facing enduring a profound humanitarian crisis that affects one in six of its citizens. The plight of over 4.4 million internally displaced persons and over one million refugees underscores the urgency and scale of our mission and compels us to act with solidarity and support.

Ethiopia is grappling with the consequences of conflict, disease outbreaks and the fifth consecutive failed rainy season, resulting in the most severe drought conditions in decades. These catastrophic events have led to increased malnutrition rates, affecting in particular one million children and numerous women. Severe economic difficulties, such as inflation and disrupted trade, have further exacerbated these challenges.

The Ethiopian authorities and various international partners have responded with remarkable resolve and commitment. However, there is still a significant funding shortfall. It is essential that all actors, both internal and external, make a concerted and unified effort to bridge the gap for 2024.

Pope Francis has emphasized the severity of the humanitarian crisis¹ and the pressing need for solidarity with the affected populations. Reflecting his deep concern, the Holy See supports the appeals of the Ethiopian Episcopal Conference for immediate action and humanitarian aid and highly appreciates the convening of this High-level Pledging Event.

¹ Cf. Pope Francis, *Urbi et Orbi Message*, Easter (17 April 2022): "May the path of dialogue and reconciliation be undertaken anew in Ethiopia, affected by a serious humanitarian crisis [...]".

The Catholic Church in Ethiopia, although a minority, plays a pivotal role in providing and distributing aid to populations affected by food insecurity and victims of other emergencies. In 2023, the activities of the local Catholic Churches benefitted nearly 6 million people in nine of the country's twelve regions, regardless of their religious affiliation. The projects, which totaled more than \$80 million USD, focused mainly on humanitarian aid and food security. These figures do not include the significant amount of financial support provided by other international Catholic agencies.

Today, the Holy See is renewing its commitment. This is not out of obligation, but rather a profound sense of shared humanity, religious duty and moral obligation.

Let us act quickly and provide unwavering support to ensure that we make every effort to bring security, stability, and peace through our collective response to the humanitarian needs of Ethiopia.

Thank you.