**Statement made by the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia**

**on**

**Human Rights Council Advisory Committee seventeenth session: progress report on the implementation of the principles and guidelines for the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members.**

Thank you Mr.President,

At the outset my delegation would like to commend the work of the 8 members of the Advisory Committee and especially of the Rapporteur Mr. Imeru Tamirat.

We see the progress report well researched and professionally organized. As it is highlighted in the report, it is necessary to understand that the problem of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members is not limited to certain regions or countries. The misconception of the disease still remains the main ground for stigma and discrimination. The misconnection of the problem with religions and belief concepts contributed significantly in hindering progress after long years of understanding of the scientific cause of the disease.

In the year 2016, in any country, having state or regional laws that criminalize or isolate persons affected by leprosy could not be justified by any means. We believe stigma and discrimination based on ones medical or physical condition is against the core principles of human rights.

Ethiopia for long has been working and is working to end the misconception of the disease in addition of working in creating favorable conditions for the affected .There are Hospitals specialized for treatment of the disease, favorable policy and laws to establish associations, and favorable laws starting from the constitution.

*Article 25 of the FDRE Constitution states that:*

*Right to Equality*

 *All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection without discrimination on grounds of race, nation, nationality,* ***or other social origin****, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, property, birth or other status.*

The commitment by the FDRE government is not limited in creating legislative and policy favorable conditions. The involvement in creating awareness and implementation of the laws are actively done at the prime minister and other ministerial level. The progress gained so far though encouraging, still requires much effort to correct the traditional misconception about the disease.

Ethiopia did not face legislative discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members. In the progress report paragraph 58 states that ---“Ethiopia repealed a provision in the family which previously allowed dissolution of marriage on grounds of leprosy”. Though it is a repealed law, the way cited in the report is misinterpretation of the provision.

The 1960 civil code in its article 591 stipulates errors during the conclusion of marriage. Among errors that are accepted, error on the state of health or the bodily conformation of the spouse, leprosy cited as example of a state of health. This provision was not meant to discriminate the affected, but rather it is to uphold the right of the other spouse in choosing his/her partner.

This law, because of other unconstitutional provisions in it, was repealed in 2000 at the federal level and other regions consequently.

Ethiopia recommends that for the future report, advanced good practices of states starting from the adoption of the principles and guidelines in 2010 should be presented in a manner that clearly show the relevance and effect of adopting the principles and guidelines.

Additionally, international cooperation in solving the problem and the effects of the disease in the mental health of the affected and their families should be further studied.

For the above mentioned reasons and proposals made in the progress report, Ethiopia accepts positively the establishment of a special procedure mandated under the auspices of the Human Rights Council for further study and practical recommendations.

I thank you