EIARC Resolution on the situation in Ethiopia

The Education International Africa Regional Committee (EIARC), meeting online on the 23rd, 24th and 25 of February 2021:

Noting that:

1. Ethiopia is the second most populated country in Africa, next to Nigeria, and hosts the African Union and other international institutions;
2. The Prime Minister of Ethiopia, His Excellency Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali, who came to power following reforms in 2018, was awarded the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize because of his initiative in creating peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea, both of whom were in a “no peace no war situation” for more than two decades;
3. The Tigray Region has become the centre of violent conflict involving the Federal Ethiopian Army and the forces of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) since November 2020;
4. The information that the Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute has been reignited while Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt are still negotiating on the utilization of the Nile River (called Abay in Ethiopia), which is long overdue;
5. In any conflict, the most vulnerable are children and women and that schools must be safe havens as provided for in International Humanitarian Law;

Concerned that:

6. Violent conflict always causes the death or displacement of teachers, Education Support Personnel (ESP) and students;
7. Fighting between the TPLF and the Federal Government is having devastating effects on teachers, ESP, students, their families, and the whole education system in the region as schools remain closed due to the conflict;
8. At least two million people have been displaced by the conflict and more than 60,000 people have crossed the border to take refuge in Sudan as a result of the armed conflict;
9. Coupled with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Tigray war has made the situation of teachers, ESP, and students in the Region more precarious;

Considering:

10. The Government of Ethiopia’s report that the operation in Tigray was a “law enforcement operation” but that things did not return back to normal;
11. The letter sent to the media by the EI affiliate in Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Teachers Association (ETA), on the situation of Tigray on the 17th of November 2020 condemning the measures taken by the TPLF forces against the Ethiopian defense forces, while also requesting the government forces to protect peaceful citizens and civilian institutions during its law enforcement operations;

12. ETA’s letter sent to the concerned authorities on the 21 January 2021 expressing its serious concern about the peace situation in the country and also demanding payment of the salaries of teachers and ESP in Tigray;

EIARC, therefore:

13. Reaffirms solidarity with the Ethiopian Teachers’ Association and its members in Tigray and the whole country in their quest for peace, security and safety;
14. Calls on the Ethiopian Government to take urgent action involving stakeholders to create peace and security in the country, as well as create conducive conditions in Tigray so that schools re-open and educators carry out their responsibilities. Education prevents conflict, fosters healing, peace and tolerance;
15. Requests the Ethiopian Government to work closely with ETA, our member organization in the country, in monitoring the situation and supporting teachers to play their roles in safety;
16. Commends African Governments, notably the African Union, for taking the Ethiopia border tensions as a serious issue and for supporting the negotiation of the three countries on the utilization of the Trans-boundary Nile River based on international principles; and,
17. Encourages the International Community to closely monitor the situation in Ethiopia and provide humanitarian aid to the war victims in Tigray.