



Statement

By

H.E. Osman Saleh

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea

At the Preparatory Ministerial Meeting of the XV Summit of
the Non-Aligned Movement

Sharm el Sheikh, 14 July 2009

Your Excellency Ahmed About Gheit, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt and Current Chairman of NAM

Your Excellencies Ministers,

Members of Delegations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset allow me to thank the people and government of the Arab Republic of Egypt, one of the founders of our Movement, for the warm hospitality accorded to my delegation since our arrival in the beautiful city of Sharm el Sheikh. I also would like to congratulate the sisterly country of Egypt for assuming the Chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Allow me also, Mr. Chairman, to express my delegation's appreciation and admiration to the Government of the Republic of Cuba for its outstanding leadership of our Movement in the last three years.

Mr. Chairman;

As reaffirmed by previous distinguished speakers, despite the doubts harbored by some concerning its relevance in the post-Cold War order, the founding principles of the Non-Alignment Movement remain relevant as ever. The Movement has played and continues to play an important role in promoting solidarity among its members.

Mr. Chairman;

Let me share my reflection in some depth on the theme for this interactive debate, "International Solidarity for Peace and Development". The theme is critical and timely; and indeed summarizes the exigent imperative of the NAM countries.

The people of the countries of Horn of Africa like many of our brothers and sisters in the other member states of NAM suffer from acute poverty and lack of basic social services. Improving the quality of life of our people by addressing these problems is the

priority of priorities of my Government. The Government of Eritrea believes that the maintenance of peace and security is a prerequisite to fully realize our societies' development objectives.

My country, Eritrea, since the early days of its independence, was convinced that the policy of self-reliance is the only road to ensure sustainable development and social justice. Today, after 19-years of independence, Eritrea has not only recovered from the ravages of the war for independence, but, and against all odds, it has been able to establish a solid base for its economic development and social justice. According to United Nations Reports, Eritrea is likely to achieve six of the eight Millennium Development Goals by the year 2015.

Yet, such development could only be sustained and furthered in a region enjoying peace and stability. Hence, ensuring peace and stability that could pave the way for economic cooperation and integration, in the Horn of Africa remains our paramount and strategic objective.

Mr. Chairman

Eritrea since independence has relentlessly been engaged in finding sustainable solutions to the conflict situations in the Horn of Africa. Achieving lasting peace is Eritrea's strategic objective. Hence, it has opposed the quick-fix-quick-exist strategy of conflict resolution that was employed by many western powers but that has repeatedly proved to be futile and counterproductive. Eritrea believes that the only way to end a conflict is through initiating a process that is all-inclusive and free from any form of external impositions. The contributions of external parties should be confined to creating conducive environment to enable parties to a conflict to work out their differences. More importantly, efforts to resolve intrastate as well as interstate conflicts should not, in any way, encroach up on basic principles of international law, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states in accordance with the founding principles of our Movement.

It is in this spirit that Eritrea has been actively engaged in the conflict resolution efforts in the region. In the Sudan, beginning from the early 1990s, Eritrea made its humble contribution to assist the warring brothers to achieve a lasting peace. In the effort to resolve the conflict in Southern Sudan, it actively supported the Naivasha process and worked with the parties to push for the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Moreover, in 2006 Eritrea successfully mediated between the Government of Sudan and Eastern Sudan Front. Similarly Eritrea has worked closely with the Government of Sudan, all Darfurian forces and the international community to find a lasting political solution to the problem.

In Somalia, since the early years of the state collapse, Eritrea tirelessly worked to bring together all the warring parties in the country. Eritrea firmly opposed a government that was imposed from outside under various names and also opposed foreign military adventures that resulted in the perpetuation of the pain and suffering of the Somali people. Ending the agony in Somalia could only be achieved through respecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Somalia, initiating an all-inclusive process (that includes Somaliland, Puntland etc.) and through the reconstitution of the country. To this end, in 2007 Eritrea provided all Somalis both from inside and outside a platform in Asmara in order to achieve a common ground regarding the future of their country.

Furthermore, Eritrea worked along with Libyan Jamahiriya to find peaceful resolution to the conflict between Chad and Sudan. My country provided a small number of peacekeeping forces to monitor the implementation of the Tripoli Agreement, which was signed between the two parties in 2007. Eritrea was also a member of the Chad-Sudan Contact group formed pursuant to the Dakar Agreement.

Mr. Chairman;

As indicated yesterday by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cuba, the reform of the United Nations Security Council remains one of the priorities of our Movement. The

domination of the Security Council by some of the veto-holding states has seriously undermined its role in the maintenance of international peace and security. It has become common to observe some permanent members of the Security Council abusing the Council as an instrument to promote their destabilizing policies in many parts of the world. The same countries are using the Council as a platform to threaten and punish countries that have independent views and policies; and the countries that prioritize the interests of their peoples.

Opposing unjust sanctions in all its forms has been the hallmark of our Movement. The overwhelming support of the member states of the Movement for the Declaration calling for an end to the illegal embargo on Cuba is the latest reaffirmation of this. On many such summits, our Heads of State and Government have reiterated their serious concern on the issue of Security Council imposed sanctions. My Government firmly stands in solidarity with the countries that have fallen victim of unjust sanctions. I would avail this opportunity to call on all members of the NAM to oppose the threat or imposition of unjust sanctions in all its forms.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you!!