



Permanent Mission of Eritrea
to the United Nations

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Statement by

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Before the

**United Nations Security Council
Informal Interactive Dialogue**

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New York**

Mr. President,
Members of the Security Council,

Let me first express my appreciation to you Mr. President and to the Permanent Representative of Gabon, for making the arrangements for this meeting. Allow me also to thank all the members of the Security Council who encouraged us to make this address and supported our right to do so. Mr. President,

Eritrea is a small and young nation. Our people fought long and hard, paid immense sacrifices for their freedom. Almost every Eritrean family lost a son or daughter or some other loved one fighting for the national cause. It is therefore fit and proper that Eritrea's priority is to ensure a life of dignity and prosperity for a people who have paid so much, and deserve no less.

Despite numerous threats and challenges, we have remained focused on development- economic growth, improvement of the livelihood of our people and empowerment of our citizens. We have prioritized food security, health, education and infrastructure. We have given primacy to mobilizing the energy and skills of our people and making judicious use of our natural resources. At the same time, we have valued and promoted development partnerships, especially in trade and investment.

As a result, Eritrea has made significant progress in rebuilding an economy ravaged by war twice. Food security has improved. Children and youth have access to free education from primary to vocational and university levels. Infant and maternal mortality rates have plummeted, killer diseases controlled, children universally vaccinated. Our people live longer, better lives.

Even as we highlight these achievements, we are aware that they fall far short of our expectations and the aspirations of our people. We are constantly and critically assessing and working to improve our performance. But we also need regional peace, security and cooperation, so that Eritrea and the whole region can give undivided attention to development and flourish together.

Mr. President,

It is now 13 years since an unnecessary war that cost over 100,000 people on both sides broke out between Eritrea and Ethiopia. The war came to an end in December of 2000 when the parties signed the Algiers Peace Agreement under the auspices of the African Union, the United Nations, the United States and the European Union, all of whom signed as witnesses. The Agreement stipulates that the OAU and the UN were the guarantors and that action would be taken under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter if it was violated.

In April 2002, the Eritrea- Ethiopia Boundary Commission, which was set up on the basis of the Agreement, to delimit and demarcate the boundary in a "final and binding" manner, gave its verdict. While Eritrea immediately accepted the decision, the Ethiopian government undertook a campaign of prevarication and delay, with the purpose of buying time, pushing the issue into the back-burner and creating new facts on the ground.

Despite these maneuverings, the Boundary Commission completed its work in 2007 and in its final report to the Security Council, it affirmed categorically that the "Eritrea-Ethiopia boundary

stands as demarcated.” The maps of the demarcated boundary were deposited by the Commission at the United Nations and copies were officially given to the two parties. This was the final legal and technical closure of the conflict. And yet, Ethiopia remains in illegal occupation of sovereign Eritrean territory. The hope that this final determination would end a tragic chapter and enable the two neighbors to resume their cooperative relations was dashed.

The continuation of this conflict has exacted a heavy price on the people of Eritrea, and we believe also Ethiopia. Our economies and the quality of life of our peoples have been affected. The cost in lost opportunities has been huge. This conflict has also been disastrous for our long suffering region, which clearly benefits when Eritrea and Ethiopia are working together and fares badly when they are at odds with each other.

For all these reasons, Eritrea has over the past nine years tirelessly appealed to the United Nations Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities and take concrete measures to bring Ethiopia into compliance with its obligations. This has been to no avail, as the United States has regrettably shielded Ethiopia and blocked any discussion of this threat to regional peace and security.

Eritrea is not alone in believing that this approach, which has encouraged a dangerous precedent, is erroneous and extremely harmful for the peoples of Eritrea, Ethiopia and the region. Clearly there is no justifiable reason to allow Ethiopia to persist in violating with impunity international law and Security Council Resolutions. Ethiopia’s insistence on dialogue, without specifying the substance of that dialogue, as a precondition for honoring its obligations, cannot be acceptable, as it runs counter to the provisions of the Algiers Agreement. Moreover, there can be no dialogue about the border, which has been conclusively determined by a protracted and painstaking arbitration, delimitation and demarcation process. And if Ethiopia is really interested in normalizing its relations with Eritrea, then it will find a willing partner in Eritrea, which has committed itself to normalization as soon as Ethiopia accepts the demarcated boundary and withdraws its occupation troops from Eritrean soil.

Eritrea, therefore, appeals once again to all members of the Security Council, including the United States, to give the matter the attention it deserves and, taking the side of international law and justice, to ensure the return to Eritrea of occupied territory and thus give an immense boost to regional peace and security.

Mr. President,

Eritrea’s second major regional concern is the challenge of turning the turbulent Horn of Africa into a safe neighborhood. Eritrea believes that regional peace, stability and cooperation are crucial for its own national development and the progress of all the countries in the Horn and has been making its modest contribution to that goal.

On Sudan, Eritrea has been at the forefront of the regional efforts that led to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). It has also been actively engaged from in the Darfur peace process, lately as a member of the Arab-African Ministerial Committee supporting the Doha Process, which last week saw the signing of a peace agreement in the presence of regional leaders, including President Isaias Afwerki. Eritrea also facilitated the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement

that brought the war in Eastern Sudan to an end. It has consistently supported the struggle of South Sudan for self-determination, welcomed the referendum, respected the choice of the people and celebrated with them the birth of their new state, which it will continue to support. Eritrea is currently engaged with the Government of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan to encourage them to resolve their differences and to establish cooperative relations, which are critical for both of them and the entire region.

Regarding Somalia, Eritrea's objective and national interest is to contribute to an enduring solution that will enable the Somali people to live in peace, with a functioning, broad-based political arrangement that protects their rights and interests. It believes that any framework for a lasting settlement cannot dispense with three fundamental premises:-

1. There can be no military solution to the conflict in Somalia.
2. A lasting solution can only be the outcome of an inclusive political process- inclusive of Somaliland, Puntland and the many actors in south-central Somalia; and
3. To succeed, this process needs to be Somali owned and driven.

Obviously, this will be a difficult, complex and drawn out process; but if it is steadfastly pursued and encouraged, progress can be achieved as the Somali experience itself attests.

Eritrea stands ready to work with all Somali actors and with regional and international partners in the search for a peaceful and dignified life for all Somalis, an achievement that would have immense and positive regional as well as international ramifications.

Back in the beginning of the 1990s, Eritrea had hoped that its own independence and the changes in Ethiopia, which coincided with the end of the cold war, would usher in an era of peace and regional integration. It was this vision that spurred us to work with Ethiopia and others to revitalize IGAD and foster regional cooperation. Although, events in Sudan and Somalia, and later the breakdown in relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia temporarily derailed the regional project, Eritrea believes there is no workable alternative and remains committed to the original vision.

Mr. President,

Any picture of the regional situation cannot be complete or accurate if it omits the role of the United States and its antipathy to Eritrea. It is true that we have been critical of the thrust of US policy in the region. We have been disappointed by US attempts to thwart our economic development. Its protection of the Ethiopia's refusal to implement a binding international agreement, its encouragement of Ethiopia's threat to use force has harmed Eritrea, Ethiopia and the region. Its approach in Somalia has clearly not worked. Many opportunities, such as the one in 2006, when a semblance of peace and order had prevailed, piracy had been curbed and talks were underway under the auspices of the Arab League, were sadly missed.

These Eritrean criticisms are valid and honest, and are widely shared. But Eritrea is not opposed to the United States; there was a time in the 1990s when we had good relations. What we seek is

a more balanced and constructive US role. Eritrea has tried to engage with the US, particularly the present administration, and will continue to do so.

Mr. President,

Eritrea wishes to raise one last point- the hasty, drastic and dangerous sanctions imposed by the Security Council during the festive Christmas season of 2009. Eritrea will in detail address with the Sanctions Committee the issues raised in the report of the Monitoring Group. Here, it wishes to underscore that those sanctions and the continuing effort to pressure and isolate Eritrea have not served the interests of peace and security; they have only led to further deterioration of the regional situation, which has grown even more tense.

Much has also happened since December 2009. Djibouti and Eritrea have accepted the mediation of the Emir of Qatar to resolve their differences and normalize their relations. On Somalia, which continues to bleed and suffer as the humanitarian situation worsens, the position of many in the international community has evolved and Eritrea's position is better appreciated.

Clearly the time has come to lift the unjust and counter-productive sanctions on Eritrea. This, along with a robust effort to bring to an end Ethiopia's occupation of Eritrean territory, would not only redress injustice and provide the Eritrean people with a spur to redouble their efforts for national development and regional stability; it would also relax tensions and promote cooperation in the Horn of Africa.

Once again, I thank you for giving us this opportunity.