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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE FEDERAL
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

**H.E MR. SEYOUM MESFIN
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE
FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA**

**AT THE
FIFTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK
28TH SEPTEMBER, 2004**

Mr. President,

Allow me to extend to you warm congratulations on your election as president of the 59th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. I would like to assure you of our fullest co-operation in the discharge of this heavy responsibility bestowed upon you. I have no doubt that both Gabon and Africa would be proud of the leadership that I know you will provide to this 59th session of the General assembly.

I would also like to commend your predecessor for his invaluable contribution to the success of the 58th session of the General Assembly.

We continue to be deeply grateful to our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the great work he has been doing in a variety of areas and at various levels. We are grateful to him at the international level for doing whatever is humanly possible to protect the integrity of the United Nations, and to defend the rule of law. At the level of Africa, we appreciate his commitment to the creation of the political and economic conditions that would generate hope for the revival of the continent. For the sub-region of which Ethiopia is a part, the role of the Secretary-General could have had no substitute. Whether in connection with the effort being made for peace or with respect to the fight against hunger and poverty, the role of Mr. Kofi Annan has been critical in our sub-region. We thank him very deeply for all this.

Mr. President,

Never before have we in Africa been as determined and as resolute in our attempt to change for the better the economic and social conditions on our continent and to create the right climate for peace and stability. The results may not be all that satisfactory and, in fact, the future of Africa is still as bleak as ever, but what is undeniable is the serious efforts that have begun to be made in Africa for economic development, for peace and for good governance.

This is what the transformation of the OAU into the African Union signifies and what the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) symbolizes. NEPAD's Peer Review Mechanism is a vivid demonstration of Africa's commitment to good and accountable governance.

With respect to the effort for peace and stability in our continent, the renewed vigor with which we in Africa have begun to be proactive in this area, within the framework of the Peace and Security Council of the AU, is indeed a promising beginning. Our nation is proud in contributing to the collective effort to insure peace and stability in our continent as a member of the peace and Security Council of the African Union.

But, Mr. President, despite these efforts being made by Africa, the progress that we have so far made have been modest and thus have not been sufficient to bring about hope in the future of the continent.

Part of the explanation for this is obvious. There is just not sufficient support internationally to make it possible for Africa to meet the economic challenges it is facing. Despite the various attempts made by partners to help African countries withstand the unfavourable conditions in international trade, the reality is that no substantial progress has been made to ensure that there is a level playing field in this regard for the developing world and for the least developed among them. The terms of trade have thus continued to militate against Africa's development. Moreover, no substantial progress has been made either to relieve many in Africa of the debt burden.

It is the combination of all these that has created serious doubts about the ability of many in Africa to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

It is our hope that these trends would be 'reversed and that the promises upheld by the Millennium Declaration would be met.

Mr. President,

We in Ethiopia realize full well that at the end of the day nations must assume responsibilities for their future, for their development and for their peace and stability. Ethiopia has no illusion in this regard. We realize fully that in the final analysis it is what Ethiopians do that will shape and determine our future. It is this conviction which is the basis for the various activities currently under way in our country.

What we in Ethiopia face are triple challenges---the need for rapid and fast development; the further deepening of the democratization underway in the country; and ensuring peace and stability, not only within our country, but also throughout our sub-region.

With respect to issues of development, the primary task for us is the fight against poverty and ensuring food security for our people. This is a task that should have been completed much earlier than yesterday. A nation as diverse as Ethiopia can countenance no other form of governance than a democratic one. As such, the very survival of Ethiopia requires good governance and democratic handling of differences, not only by preference but as a matter of prudence. Peace and stability in Ethiopia hinges on the deepening of democracy in the country.

Mr. President,

It is self-evident that neither development nor good governance can be fostered in the absence of peace and stability. There are few regions of the world that have suffered as much as the Horn of Africa in terms of opportunities lost for development because of lack of peace and stability. There are few countries in the world that have lost as much because of conflicts both intra-and inter-state, as much as Ethiopia had.

It is precisely for this reason, and with the view to making up for lost time, that at the present time there is no greater imperative for Ethiopia than the fostering of peace and stability in our country, and in the region of which Ethiopia is a part.

It is also, Mr. President, this same logic which governs Ethiopia's position on the peace process between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Since this issue has for obvious reasons attracted a lot of attention and interest, it may be useful to put forth Ethiopia's position in greater detail.

Let there be no doubt, Mr. President, that Ethiopia wants to put the crisis it has had with Eritrea behind it. Our conviction is that both peoples would be mistaken to see the other as an enemy. The truth is that both have one common enemy--poverty and backwardness.

It is indeed regrettable that after so much bloodshed, it has become difficult for Ethiopia and Eritrea to formally complete the peace process because of complications that have been created in connection with the implementation of some aspects of the decision of the Ethiopia--Eritrea Boundary Commission [EEBC]. I say some aspects of the decision of the EEBC because when the chips are down the obstacles to a breakthrough in the peace process between Ethiopia and Eritrea involve controversy surrounding the demarcation of no more than 15% of a common boundary which is altogether more than 1,000 kilometers long.

Let me be very clear, Mr. President. Ethiopia is prepared to do whatever is humanly possible for peace. There is no greater priority for our country than ensuring peace in our country and stable and mutually beneficial relations with all our neighbours. That is precisely why we have reiterated that we are ready for dialogue with Eritrea with the view to finding a win-win outcome for the current stalemate faced by both countries.

Dialogue and normalization of relations between the two countries is not a favour that either party makes to the other, or to the international community. It is rather an obligation that both countries have in as much as all other alternatives are ruled out by international law and by the Algiers Agreement.

Mr. President,

The Algiers Agreement, among others, is unambiguously clear on two points. It rules out permanently the use of force as means of resolving disputes between the two parties. The very first Article of the Agreement makes this an obligation on the two parties. The said Article reads as follows:

The parties shall permanently terminate military hostilities between themselves. Each party shall refrain from the threat or use of force against the other.

It is seen in this light that Eritrea's objection to dialogue and, what is more, its reluctance to co-operate with the good offices of the Secretary-General, becomes difficult to understand.

Eritrea, Mr. President, is keen on repeating its mantra about the decision of the Boundary Commission being final and binding. This is supposed to make Ethiopia appear to be standing at the wrong side of the law while making Eritrea look like law-abiding. The truth is that what Ethiopia has been calling for is the implementation of the delimitation decision of the Boundary Commission in line with its own decision and in conformity with the reality on the ground, which the Commission failed to undertake, and consistent with the major objectives of the Algiers Agreement with respect to creating condition for durable peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

This is one of the critical aspects of the Algiers Agreement. The promotion of durable peace between the two countries and the call for terminating permanently military hostilities between the two parties, are the pillars of the Algiers Agreement.

Ethiopia is convinced that the implementation of some aspects of the "Observation" of the Boundary Commission on demarcation is not in the interest of peace between the two countries, and will not advance the major objectives of the Algiers Agreement. Nor will it advance the cause of peace in our sub-region.

It is under these circumstances that Ethiopia has felt that there is only one rational way out of this impasse, dialogue_ an open ended dialogue on all issues dividing Ethiopia and Eritrea, including on the boundary demarcation with the view to finding an amicable and a mutually acceptable way out of the deadlock and a modus vivendi that would form the basis for normalization of relations between the two countries.

Eritrea is, however, of a different mind. It continues to be preoccupied with the hope of getting the Security Council to impose sanction on Ethiopia and with the anticipation of drawing vicarious satisfaction from that. Eritrea should be made to know that, that is unlikely to happen. Not because Eritrea is not big enough to have its way, but because the idea is too inappropriate, and too unrealistic. Formality aside, and the refrain heard often from Eritrea about "final and binding" notwithstanding, all fair minded people cannot forget what happened in May 1998 and until May 2000, and about what the OAU said on Badme and its environs.

But, Mr. President, talking about the past is not going to help Ethiopia and Eritrea.. The two countries have little time for preoccupation with each other. That will leave no time for thinking about the future, and the future of their hungry and destitute.

There is also one other important point which Eritrea should not be allowed to continue misleading the international community on. Nowhere in the whole text of the Algiers Agreement of December 2000, is provision made for any entity to enforce a court decision, neither for the Security Council nor for the AU. This is deliberate, not accidental. Achieving peace and implementing the demarcation of the common boundary between the two countries is primarily the responsibility of Ethiopia and Eritrea. This has been repeated in various resolutions by the Security Council.

Let me close this issue, Mr. President, by reiterating one fundamental point. Ethiopia is committed to peace with Eritrea and to the removal of the obstacles to achieving that objective. Whatever means might be available to take us to that goal, we will be ready to

embrace those. Dialogue and negotiation, including using the good offices of the Secretary-General that has been availed to the two parties, is the most realistic and feasible means for the two parties to make progress in the peace process. Ethiopia is ready to go more than half way to make this a reality. But so far it has been left with the proverbial situation of almost trying to clap with one hand. It is our hope that reason will prevail in Eritrea sooner than later.

Mr. President,

The conflict with Eritrea has been for Ethiopia a tragic setback, a waste and a distraction from critical duties both domestic and regional. There is no doubt that its final resolution would afford Ethiopia greater opportunities for playing an even greater role for peace in our sub-region and beyond.

The peace process in Somalia has now come to a very critical point, with the Somalis having now come closer than anytime over the last thirteen years to establishing a government. Ethiopia will continue, as a member of the IGAD Facilitation Committee, to contribute to the achievement of national reconciliation and the rise from the ashes of the Somali state. This is an obligation for Ethiopia and also consistent with the vital interest it has in peace and stability in our sub-region.

That is also why Ethiopia was looking forward to the final consummation of the peace process between the Government of the Sudan and the SPLM/SPLA which has now slowed down because of the tragedy in Darfur, a tragedy which was hardly anticipated. Ethiopia is keen to see the Darfur crisis resolved and the humanitarian tragedy dealt with as speedily as possible. The peace and stability of the Sudan is so critical for our sub-region, Ethiopia would continue to do the best it could, including as a member of the AU peace and Security Council, to assist that sisterly country overcome the challenge it is facing, both in the humanitarian, security, and in the political areas.

Ethiopia's contribution to peace and peace-building is not limited to what we have been doing in our own sub-region. We have from the outset been closely associated with the peace process in the Great Lakes Region, including at the highest level.

Currently, as part of the African Mission initially, and later as part of the United Nations Operations in Burundi, Ethiopia's contingent in Burundi has continued to contribute in a modest way to the success of the peace process in Burundi.

Another modest contribution we are making is related to the effort being made for the restoration of peace in Liberia as part of the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

No doubt, we are also the beneficiaries of the support of so many countries for the operation of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) whose work has been critical for keeping the situation between Ethiopia and Eritrea stable. We are indeed grateful to UNMEE, its personnel at all levels, and to the troop contributing countries.

Mr. President,

We all agree, that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations is a crime against humanity. As our Secretary General rightly stated in his address to this August Assembly, "no cause, no grievance, however legitimate in itself can begin to justify such acts". Thus the international community should fight this scourge with resolve and in unison.

Mr. President,

I would like to conclude by reaffirming Ethiopia's commitment to the United Nations and to the principles and purposes for the promotion of which it has been created. It is our earnest hope that the UN will continue to enhance its credibility with respect to its entire membership. That is why the reform of the Organization is so critical and imperative, including the reform of the Security Council so that regions, including Africa, would have the desired fair representation. No doubt, enhanced democratization will make the UN more transparent, therefore more credible. The future of the Organization rests on this. In the meantime, Mr. President, Ethiopia will continue to be devoted to the United Nations and to the values it stands for.

I Thank You