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

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STATEMENT

BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT

THE 61ST SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, 27 SEPTEMBER 2006

Madam President,

Allow me to extend to you our sincere congratulations on your assumption of the Presidency of the Sixty-first Session of the General Assembly and to express our full confidence in your ability to guide our session successfully.

Let me also express our appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for his leadership during the 60th Session.

My delegation's appreciation also goes to the Secretary-General, Mr. Koffi Annan, for his selfless commitment and devotion to the objectives of the United Nations in general and for his contributions through various initiatives to the efforts of reforming our organization and for his dedication to their practical implementation in particular.

Madame President,

One of the key accomplishments of the international community in recent years, in our view, is the agreement on the Millennium Development Goals. It is imperative that we all commit to building stronger partnerships to achieve these noble goals and targets. In this regard, we are cognizant of the fact that each country is responsible for its development. It should also be equally recognized that for those at the early stage of economic development there is a need for strong support from the international community if they are to meet the MDGs. For the low-income countries there is nothing more important than a partnership which is predictable, consistent and which is based on mutual obligations defined in advance. The much awaited opening up of international trade, especially through the elimination of agricultural subsidies should also be expedited. On our part, we have intensified our efforts to improve the socio-economic conditions of Ethiopia. Today, after a decade and a half since dictatorship was removed from our country, our socio-economic progress has been substantial. We have succeeded to channel our limited resources into programs of capacity building and infrastructures serving the entire country: opening up of new Universities and higher-learning technical institutions, expansion of primary healthcare services, construction of roads and airports, power production and transmission and telecommunication facilities and services, among others. Domestic and foreign investment has grown as attractive opportunities have become more apparent.

In this regard, I would like to highlight some of the achievements registered so far. In the last three fiscal years the Ethiopian economy has grown by an average of 9.5 per cent annually. Over the same period, our export trade has grown by 28.5 per cent per annum. Our primary school enrollment ratio has increased to 89 per cent from a mere 30 per cent in the early 90s. In order to strengthen our capacity for development we are building 13 public universities. When fully operational within two to three years the total annual intake of public universities would increase from the current 30,000 to 150,000 students. Similar results have also been registered in the health sector where the Government is equally determined to enable the rural people of Ethiopia to have adequate access to basic health care by 2010.

Benefiting from the encouraging results of the first five year plan, and the experience gained in its implementation, the Second Five Year Plan, namely the Programme for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty, has been drawn up on a much wider and enlarged scale. The main objective of this latest plan is

to alleviate poverty by ensuring food security and meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

Madame President,

As it carries out its development agenda, Ethiopia strongly believes that the prevalence of peace and security in the country and its region is an absolute necessity. That is why Ethiopia will not allow its dispute with Eritrea to distract it from its focus on development, although this is the main mission of Eritrea since the conflict began eight years ago. For the last four years, Eritrea has been blaming Ethiopia for its own aggression against us and for the current stalemate in peace and demarcation process. And in fact now, the whole world is blamed for Eritrea's own failure and for its inability to behave like a normal state.

Madame President,

For the benefit of this august Assembly, it would be fitting to place the conflict in the proper context and perspective for a better appreciation of the current impasse in the peace process. It would be recalled that it was in May 1998 Eritrea launched unprovoked attack against Ethiopia in a blatant disregard of international law, thereby igniting the war and leading to the present crisis. In this respect, I wish to draw the attention of the Assembly to the decision of the Eritrea Ethiopia Claims Commission as to liability for the war between the two countries. The Commission in its decision stated, among other things, the following:

- Eritrea is liable for committing unprovoked aggression against Ethiopia, stating that Eritrea violated Article 2, paragraph 4 of the Charter of the United Nations by resorting to armed force on 12 May 1998 and immediately the following days for attacking and occupying areas peacefully administered by Ethiopia.
- Eritrea is liable to compensate Ethiopia for the damages caused by that violation of international law.
- Rejected Eritrea's argument that sought to justify its recourse to force because some of the territory concerned was territory to which Eritrea had a claim.

The Commission's decision does not only show Eritrea's warped understanding of international law but confirms in an unambiguous manner that Eritrea's illegal act constituted aggression.

Ethiopia has demonstrated its strong desire and willingness to resolve the conflict with Eritrea by peaceful means, before Eritrea launched its aggression, during the war and afterwards. It would be recalled that in order to create a condition for sustainable peace and reestablish an all-rounded cooperation between the two countries, Ethiopia presented a Five-Point Peace Plan, which the international community, including the Security Council, has welcomed but was flatly rejected by Eritrea. We have also cooperated fully with the Secretary General's Special Envoy. Furthermore, Ethiopia has welcomed the Peace Initiative by the Witnesses to the Algiers Agreements, which is also supported by the Security Council, to resolve the current impasse with the assistance of a neutral facilitator in the demarcation process; the full restoration of UNMEE's freedom of operations and the sanctity of the Temporary Security Zone; refraining from the threat or use of force; and that there be normalization of relations between the two countries. I would like, in this connection, to assure the international community that we shall continue to persevere in our search for a lasting peace.

Madame President,

Ethiopia has expressed its readiness, on various occasions, to demarcate the boundary in accordance with the decision of the Boundary Commission through dialogue and has attended in good faith the meetings convened by the Boundary Commission. It has also reaffirmed its readiness to normalize its relations with Eritrea. Ethiopia does so not because it is desperate for closer relations with Eritrea, but rather because normalization is critical for durable peace. But Eritrea would have none of this. Why? Because Eritrea's strategic goal is neither peace nor a peaceful common boundary. What it wishes to have is interminable boundary problem with Ethiopia. The latest Report of the Secretary General of 19 September and the attached Report of the President of the Boundary Commission clearly indicates that the Commission's meetings of last June and August were cancelled because Eritrea refused to attend. It has also issued ultimatums as a condition for its cooperation with the Boundary Commission. Let it be underlined here that Eritrea has no reason for frustration because of the lack of speedy implementation of demarcation. Eritrea is the cause for the boundary between the two countries still not having been demarcated.

Madame President,

Eritrea's illegal and anti-peace stance is not limited to making ultimatums. It has blatantly violated the Algiers Agreements by threatening the use of force and has violated the integrity of the temporary security zone by deploying its armed forces in the temporary security zone. It has intensified its flagrant restrictions against UNMEE and its personnel. The UN Secretary General has reported time and again that Eritrea has not only prohibited the Mission from carrying out its mandate but has also been engaged in a series of arrests and detentions of its personnel. These are naked violations of the Algiers Agreements, the resolutions of the Security Council and the Charter of the United Nations.

Madame President,

The way forward to break the current impasse in the peace process is very clear. Eritrea needs to abide by the UN Security Council Resolutions and the Algiers Agreements and withdraw its armed forces from the TSZ and restore the zone's integrity and UNMEE's freedom of operation. It must demonstrate its compliance with Article 1 of the December 2000 Agreement by renouncing the use of force to resolve the dispute between the two countries. It should cooperate with the efforts of the international community aimed at resolving the dispute peacefully and through dialogue. It is only when Eritrea decides to cooperate with these legal measures that we can begin to resolve the dispute in accordance with international law. Eritrea should behave as a responsible state and resolve any dispute through diplomatic means. Eritrea has to understand that this is its only option. Its continued dangerous tactics of brinkmanship against many actors in international community should not be acceptable.

Madame President,

Ethiopia shares over 2000 km border with neighboring Somalia and is also home to about 3.5 million Ethiopian Somalis. Peace, stability and the prevalence of national harmony in that country is in the interest of Ethiopia. It is precisely because of this that we have spared no effort for the last 15 years to assist, along with other partners in IGAD and the AU, the Somalis achieve peace and national reconciliation. The Transitional Federal Government of Somalia is the product of efforts made by the Somalis with the support of IGAD countries, the AU and the international community in general. This is the Government which is now facing a major challenge from those who have ambition which have nothing to do with Somalia but everything to do with chaos, instability and terror. The international community would do a great disservice to itself if it failed to appreciate the implications of what is happening in Somalia currently and did not take the appropriate response. Somalia is being dragged into the abyss by those who are using religion as a cover to deny the people of Somalia peace and the opportunity to revive a state which has collapsed for 15 years now, making it possible for those who have no interest in peace and stability to thrive. The latest opportunistic move, in this regard, is made by Eritrea which is bound to fail.

It is not much which is asked of the international community. What is asked by IGAD and by the AU is political and diplomatic support so that the Transitional Federal Government would be in a position to contain those that are the agents of, not love but disharmony; not peace but war. It is only when the TFG is in a position to protect itself from internal and external enemies of peace that dialogue would provide the solution to the crisis in Somalia --- a crisis which the extremists within the Islamic Courts Union wish engulf the whole region. It is precisely for this reason that the partial lifting of the arms embargo is so critical.

There are those who want to wish away the danger in Somalia. There are on the other hand those who want to benefit from the danger. That the latter, among whom Eritrea is one, take advantage of the naïveté of the former is obvious.

Madam President,

There should be no doubt that Ethiopia will continue to be a pillar for peace and stability in the Horn of Africa. That is Ethiopia's vocation whether with respect to the problem in Somalia or in connection with the difficulty we have in ensuring that Eritrea would choose the peaceful path. Resort to force is never a base for sustainable peace. This is the philosophy that underpins our policy towards Eritrea and with regard to the crisis in Somalia. There is no better guarantee for peace and stability than the nurturing of mutual confidence and trust, regardless of differences in outlook and in political and other values. This also explains Ethiopia's legendary commitment to the United Nations and to its principles and purposes. As I conclude therefore, Madame President, let me reiterate Ethiopia's devotion to the United Nations and to the values of our interdependence which the organization embodies.

I thank you.