



Permanent Mission of Eritrea to the United Nations
New York

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Statement by
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during an informal consultation with

the Security Council Committee established pursuant to
resolution 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning
Somalia and Eritrea

New York, 12 July 2013

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Delegates,

Let me take this opportunity to express my delegation's appreciation to You, Mr. Chairman, and through you, to the members of the Committee and the UN Secretariat for arranging this informal consultation. Eritrea deeply values its engagement with the Committee.

After the report of the Somalia Eritrea Monitoring Group was submitted to the Sanctions Committee on 19 June last month, I made a formal request through my letter of July 1 2013, addressed to You, Chair, in order to get a copy of the report. While conditional access was granted by allowing my delegation to visit the UN Secretariat to read and take notes of the report on the spot, the awkwardness of the arrangement is too evident indeed. It is clearly inconvenient and far from the requests of my delegation for unfettered access to all relevant documents that accuse my country of violations of Security Council resolutions. Eritrea is a concerned state and finds this method of work incompatible with the legal principle of 'equality of arms'. The situation further provokes an important question: why resort to elaborate measures of preventing timely and full access to the accused party if the contents of the report are indeed a result of rigorous, verifiable and professional investigation?

Mr. Chairman,

Please allow me now to briefly turn to some of the contents of the report under consideration. I will be as brief as possible focusing on the new elements as Eritrea has addressed many of the allegations in the current report on previous occasions. I believe that any objective reader will agree with Eritrea that the Report is not a result of thorough and objective investigation. It relies on self-serving sources such as "defectors", "unnamed diplomats", and "authorities in an East African country".

I would like to stress that however unjustified Security Council resolutions 1907 and 2023 might have been, Eritrea has not violated the provisions of the two resolutions as well as other relevant instruments of the Council. Contrary to the assertions of the report, Eritrea maintains good neighborly ties and continues to engage with most of its neighboring states to promote peace and stability of the region. But while these are the facts, and although the report does not provide any material evidence of Eritrea extending financial and/or military support to Al-Shebaab or any other armed group in Somalia. It nonetheless insinuates the existence of a continuing threat to peace and security in Somalia by misconstruing incidental contacts that may have been historically cultivated with certain individuals. I would like to emphasize again that Eritrea supports earnestly the efforts of the Government of Somalia to stabilize the country. Eritrea upholds the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Somalia and supports the Federal Government. It encourages all Somalis to engage in constructive dialogue and national reconciliation, and opposes all negative intervention in the internal affairs of the country. Yet, the report speculates, in disparaging tones, that Eritrea's relations with the Federal Government of Somalia must be based on 'tactical considerations'. This is presumptuous and raises serious questions on the manner and substance of the SEMG's judgment and conclusions.

The report further accuses Eritrea of possible arms embargo violations. This assumption is predicated on the fact that the central government garage enjoys business relations with several

countries. In the absence of arms embargo violations, the report extensively dwells on non-military imports on the flimsy excuse that Eritrea might use certain category of civilian equipment for military purposes.

The whole purpose of this transparent exercise is to concoct some plausible reasons in order to justify a new recommendation that places additional, onerous, obligations on Eritrea to notify the Council prior to any purchase of civilian equipment and machinery. The government garage mentioned in the report houses civilian transportation vehicles as well as construction and agricultural machineries. Naturally, it has cultivated, throughout the past years, technical cooperation arrangements with several companies based in different countries in order to ensure and enhance the government's efforts to build its infrastructure. These technical cooperation arrangements have no military components whatsoever. The SEMG has not produced any contract that the government garage has executed in the past for the purchase of weapons for or on behalf of Eritrea. Accordingly, there are no grounds for the SEMG to recommend "an import notification of certain categories of civilian equipment and spare parts" on the central government garage. Eritrea discerns in this recommendation another malicious attempt to impede its development efforts.

Mr. Chairman,

On several occasions before, Eritrea and several members of the Council have expressed profound concern on the contents of the report of the SEMG and its repeated tendencies to go beyond and exceed its mandate as stipulated in the relevant UN Security Council resolutions. But heedless of these concerns, the SEMG has again taken the liberty to overstretch its authority by including in its current report information that has nothing to do with its mandate. The report dwells on several issues outside its mandate, including on the internal political situation of Eritrea and on the issue of human trafficking. One wonders why and for what purpose the SEMG went out of its way to portray a negative and unrealistic depiction of events and trends in Eritrea. More pointedly, analysis of the internal political situation of the country does not fall within the purview of the SEMG; nor that of the human trafficking.

As the Eritrean Government made it clear in previous communications to the UN Secretary-General, Security Council, as well as during the debate of the high-level meeting on human trafficking in May of this year, Eritrea is a victim of human-trafficking and is earnestly working with the countries in the region to eliminate it. The report lacks ingenuity when it accuses Eritrea of this egregious crime and when it also addresses the rehabilitation and reconstruction tax paid by Eritrean nationals in the Diaspora.

The report erroneously infers that "paragraphs 10 and 11 of resolution 2023" dictate that Eritrea should cease levying the "Diaspora tax". The fact is there is no provision on the stated resolution that prevents Eritrea from the collection of the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Tax from its citizens residing overseas. How does it constitute a "threat" when and if Eritrea collects lawfully Rehabilitation and Reconstruction tax from its nationals in lieu for government services that are routinely rendered? In fact, the measures taken by Canada that the report alludes to are not warranted by, and constitute at best, a misinterpretation by that country of UNSC Resolution 2023 (2011). The SEMG's understanding of its authority in this regard is clearly erroneous and must be rectified if this indeed emanates from an honest mistake.

Mr. Chairman,

The report continues to advocate for intrusive measures on the nascent mining industry of my country. It is crucial to note that the SEMG has never established to date evidence to prove that the mining revenue is being used by the Eritrean Government to violate Security Council resolutions. The mandate stipulated in resolution 2023 is for the SEMG to assist "the Committee in the preparation of guidelines for the optional use of Member States." This is at variance with the objective set in the report that is ostensibly aimed at "controlling Eritrea's mining revenues". Eritrea insists that this arbitrary goalpost goes beyond the parameters set in resolution 2023 (2011). If this is left unchecked, it could lead to mortgaging Eritrea's sovereign budgetary and financial decisions.

For all the above reasons, my delegation finds the report and its recommendations to be unacceptable both in form and content. In this connection, Eritrea welcome Russia's proposal not to make the draft report public. I also like to welcome other delegations that have supported the proposal. I would equally encourage others to do likewise, as it gives an unambiguous signal to the Group that conclusions and recommendations based on unfounded allegations and bias are not acceptable.

Mr. Chairman,

It is getting close to four years since the Security Council imposed sanctions on Eritrea. The sanctions were imposed hastily and are totally unjustified. And now there is absolutely no basis to maintain them. The main original reason for their imposition was Eritrea's presumed support to Al-Shabaab, which has long been proven to be non-existent. On Djibouti, Eritrea remains committed to the facilitation of the State of Qatar on all aspects of the differences between the two neighbors.

The time, therefore has come, if it is not overdue, to lift the unfair, unjust and counterproductive sanctions on Eritrea. Sanctions are supposed to be an extreme measure and there is no legitimate reason for this extreme measure to continue to be imposed on Eritrea. The arms embargo on Eritrea contravenes its inalienable right to self-defense when its territories remain occupied in breach of international law and relevant provisions of the UN Charter. Its economic implications on a country that is making modest but solid economic and social progress cannot be understated.

Harping on Eritrea on presumed support to subversive groups in Somalia and maintaining a sanction regime on these grounds must indeed ring hollow in these times when we see major UN Security Council members openly providing arms to opposition movements linked to subversive groups in Syria while the incumbent government, whatever its failings, is still a member of the United Nations. Moral discrepancies of this magnitude will only tarnish the image of United Nations and its Security Council in addition and above suffering that is inculcating on the people of Eritrea. The Eritrean people aspire like any other people to live in peace and dignity.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, let me make one, but crucial, plea. Eritrea, through this Committee, calls on the Security Council to shoulder its responsibility and demand that Ethiopia withdraw from sovereign Eritrean territories that it has occupied for the past 12 years and thereby make a critical contribution to regional peace and stability. It is wrong and a discredit, that the Security Council

is actively seized on all regional issues, including Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia and others, but studiously avoids the Eritrea/Ethiopia issue that is at the heart of much that is happening in the region. In the interests of not only Eritrea, but also Ethiopia, the sub-region, Africa and the Middle East, Eritrea calls on the Security Council to redress this wrong.

Thank you for your attention.