



UNMEE PUBLIC INFORMATION

UNMEE/PR/116

22 September 2005

**UNMEE Celebrates International Day of Peace:
“We Are Stuck in a Situation of No War, No Peace”—SRSG Legwaila**

“THE journey of the search for peace began five years, three months and three days ago. Today, we are stuck. While there has been no violation of the ceasefire all this time, the ceasefire should not be confused with the establishment of peace. The ceasefire is just the transitional period between war and peace. This is a situation of no war, no peace,” the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, said on Wednesday 21 September as he addressed celebrations to mark the International Day of Peace in both Addis Ababa and Asmara.

The International Day of Peace was celebrated at both UNMEE Headquarters and attended by representatives of UN agencies, the diplomatic corps, in Addis Ababa, representatives of the Ethiopian Government, the religious leaders and others. The International Day of Peace was first established by the UN General Assembly in 1981, as a day set aside to mark the observance of global ceasefire and non-violence. Several events and ceremonies have been organized around the world by UN offices, peacekeeping Missions, governmental and non-governmental agencies, as well as civil society and religious groups to promote the ideals of peace and non-violence.

During the occasion held at the UNMEE Addis Ababa Headquarters, His Holiness, Berhane Yesus, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Addis Ababa, on behalf of the religious leaders in Addis Ababa, led the prayer for peace, during which he stressed the virtue of forgiveness: “The pillars of true peace are justice and that form of love which is forgiveness. Let the world understand that justice and forgiveness are not irreconcilable; rather, forgiveness is the opposite of resentment and revenge; forgiveness is that which heals and rebuilds troubled human relations from their foundations.”

SRSG Legwaila in his remarks for the Day, revisited the two agreements signed by Ethiopia and Eritrea in Algiers more than five years ago: the “Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities,” on the one hand, and the Algiers Peace Agreement, on the other. The ceasefire “has been observed punctiliously,” he pointed out, “but the Peace Agreement has not brought peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea. That’s why I’m still here. That’s why UNMEE is still here. What we’re seeing is an interminable stalemate and I consider this tragic.”

“I’ve been in several peacekeeping operations. As a UN man, I know that no peace process has succeeded without dialogue. Even in Bosnia, where they were violating the ceasefire five times a day sometimes, they were busy talking, trying to find a peaceful solution,” the head of Mission stressed.

Later in the day at the International Peace Day ceremony held at the UNMEE Headquarters in Asmara, the SRSG also addressed a gathering of UNMEE staff, members of the UN Country Team, the diplomatic corps, the public and invited guests. In an address identical to that given in Addis Ababa, the SRSG appealed to both parties in Ethiopia/Eritrea to recognize the importance of dialogue in any peace process.

In the lead-up to the International Day of Peace, UNMEE staged an array of outreach and participatory activities in both countries. The celebrations kicked off with a “Peace Run” in Asmara on 17 September and a “Cycling for Peace” race in Addis Ababa on 18 September. Other activities included medical clinics at the Shilalo camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) from 19 to 21 September, a cultural concert in Asmara, and a poetry contest on the theme of peace for junior high school students in Addis Ababa. Events have been organized away from the capitals as well, particularly in Adiguadad and Senafe, on the Eritrean side and Adigrat and Mekelle in Ethiopia. **End Item**

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