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STATEMENT

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY MR. OSMAN SALEH
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE STATE OF ERITREA

AT

THE GENERAL DEBATE
OF THE 64th SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, 28 SEPTEMBER 2009

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

Let me begin by congratulating our sisterly country, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, and you personally, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the 64th session of the United Nations General Assembly and I express our confidence that your long diplomatic skill and leadership will lead us to a successful conclusion of the session. I wish to assure you the full support of the delegation of the State of Eritrea in the realization of your mission.

Permit me also to seize this opportunity to pay a well deserving tribute to your predecessor, H. E. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann of Nicaragua, for the very able and effective manner in which he carried the affairs of the 63rd session. Likewise, we commend the Secretary-General, H. E. Ban Ki-moon, for his efforts with which he continues to administer the affairs of our United Nations and especially for convening the Climate Change Summit last week.

Mr. President,

The United Nations General Assembly is holding its annual General Debate for 2009 at a very critical juncture. One year after the world “Financial and Economic Crisis” began, this gathering provides us another opportunity for reflection.

The Hall in which we convene today and the lofty purpose for which it was founded have both outlived their time. This body was conceived in another era to address the challenges of the post World War I and World War II world order. Therefore, it cannot realistically cope with the exigencies of the 21st century. From an objective point of view, the United Nations should have embarked on a process of transformation 20 years ago in concurrence with the end of the Cold War. By now, it should have been replaced by a reformed organization fit to address the challenges of the century we live in and beyond. The calls for the reengineering of this renewed organization have not been few. Two decades have passed without any meaningful outcome in the direction of substantial reform. The “Financial and Economic Crisis” and the global awareness that it has spawned are mere symptoms of the consequences of inaction at the cost of reform.

Mr. President,

The prevailing world order has not succeeded in guaranteeing the peace and security of our world, in spite of the noble intentions that brought forth its creation and despite the harsh lessons learnt from the two World Wars. On the contrary, this ageing world order has been hijacked to serve the interest of the few, opening the door for a myriad of ramifications. Financial institutions have been left to operate astray without restrictions or regulations. Economic structures that pillage the resources and wealth of peoples and nations have been consolidated. Illegitimate military and coercive blunders have been allowed to fester unchecked; the employment of war and its proliferators have been refined in a business like order. The number of people suffering from poverty and hunger has not been reduced; it has rather multiplied in many folds. Violent extremism has not received the attention it deserves; rather it has been further fuelled and manipulated as a pretext and excuse for ulterior motives. A culture of “politics of fear” and “management by crisis” has been nurtured, exploited and established as a norm. Indeed, world peace and security have been imperiled beyond measure. The United Nations, itself, has been one of the victims of this world order. Evidences to this effect are known to us all and are well-documented.

Reform and change have been long overdue. Despite the fervent calls for reform by the international community, the few who control the outdated world order are unfortunately not attuned to the notion of change. They have instead regarded the crises and suffering as ordinary historical imperatives. Towards this end, they have resisted all attempts at introducing change, and through their preexisting clout, influence and advantages, they were able to block it. Thus, no real reform has been made so far.

Mr. President,

In this global maelstrom, where even the populaces of the developed countries have been adversely affected, none have been more exposed to harm than those of the marginalized in Africa. We, the peoples of Africa, have been victims of poverty and hunger, models of backwardness, metaphors for diseases and epidemics. And the continent has become the ground for crises and conflicts. In this regard, the most important case for concern is the fact that the special interest groups have rendered the Africans

paralyzed. Hence, instead of resolving our own problems, we find ourselves amid poverty, hunger and disease; rather than actively striving to achieve development and growth. Similarly, when it comes to the resolution of crises and conflicts, Africans find themselves dependent on the goodwill of others. However, criticism is not only reserved for the special interest groups that steer the prevailing world order but also be apportioned to the other special interest groups who serve as instruments and partners of the former. Indeed, the role of Africa in this august body as well as other international organizations could be better described as inconsequential. The evidence for this unfortunate matter is also well documented.

Mr. President,

In order that world peace and security may be preserved, justice and human rights be respected, poverty and hunger be eradicated, and economic development and growth be made to benefit the majority in a sustainable fashion, the need for fundamental change in this organization and other international bodies should not be left to the goodwill of the few. The change that needs to be effected to transform this “outdated world order” into a “new world order” should not only be gilded in reform, it should be solidly genuine to the effect that it portends peace, security and prosperity for the coming generations. The desired reform should not only be limited to increasing the number of seats in the United Nations Security Council. It should rather steer away our world from its dangerous path of descent, where it is controlled by the powerful few and redirect it towards a path that ensures the safety of all. Though this is the ideal for which the world’s population aspires and strives, the African Continent, for obvious and special reasons, need to expend more efforts to achieve it.

But beyond all the good wishes, the fundamental reform that we are waiting for requires collective commitment. On this auspicious occasion, it would not do justice to dwell on numerous current events, or consequences spawned by the fundamental flaws of the world order. Doing so would only serve to confuse and distort the bigger picture. Therefore, I have chosen not to address important issues of the Horn of Africa and Eritrea’s specific issue of illegal occupation of sovereign Eritrean territory which is already in the records of the United Nations awaiting responsible and urgent action.

I thank you, Mr. President.