

**PRESS RELEASE**

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# **DJIBOUTI**

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**Statement by**

**His Excellency Mr. Roble Olhaye  
Ambassador, Permanent Representative  
To the United Nations  
And  
Head of Delegation**

**Before**

**The Sixty-Fourth Session of the United Nations  
General Assembly**

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**Check against delivery**

**Mr. President,**

I would like to begin by extending my warmest congratulations to you, for your election as President of the current Session of the General Assembly. I also take this opportunity to place on record our sincere appreciation for Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, for his efforts and leadership during the 63<sup>rd</sup> session. I wish to commend the Secretary General for his comprehensive report on the work of the Organization; and for his tireless effort and dedication in the cause of international peace and security.

**Mr. President,**

The current financial and economic crisis affecting many countries around the globe, particularly in the West, has reached the shores of Africa. Originating in the West, the uncontrolled banking mortgage over leveraged subprime lending schemes burst in the open, destroying the liquidity and survivability of many institutions in the developed countries.

It was thought that Africa, not being a player in this sector, its financial institutions and its economies would escape more or less unscathed. Such was not to be; African difficulties have been compounded. This crisis follows the footsteps of the food and energy crises and the challenges posed by the impact of climate change. The severity of the crisis on poor countries cannot be underestimated. Poor countries have no choice but work hard to restore strong growth and recover lost ground in order to move toward internationally agreed development goals. In this respect, it must be emphasized that the global crisis cannot be an excuse to avoid existing international aid commitments. In addition to timely delivery, flexibility of resources, and aid predictability, it is critical the aid be effective. Developing countries need access to new funding, including credit and liquidity facilities, infrastructure investment and support for domestic financial systems.

**Mr. President,**

Members of the General Assembly are aware by now of the tense standoff that prevails in the northern part of my country, following the unwarranted and deliberately provocative incursion and occupation by Eritrean forces of Djiboutian sovereign territory at the beginning of last year, 2008. This wholly reckless action by Eritrea instigated a mutual military buildup, leading to serious clashes between the two forces. In particular, the clashes of 10-12 June 2008, which resulted in many deaths, countless wounded, and prisoners taken on both sides, bear a special note. My country embarked upon a calm and prudent policy that deliberately allowed sufficient time for possible comprehensive bilateral contacts at every level in order to resolve this hostility amicably and peacefully. Our efforts fell consistently on deaf ears, accompanied by rebuffs, blatant denials, dismissive and condescending utterances. Regional organizations, Heads of

State and Government, and the United Nations have all attempted to initiate dialogue; these efforts have all gone for naught with Eritrea, which in its usual brazen manner has gone so far as to deny even the existence of any tension in the area, despite the clear, far-reaching and unmistakable conclusions of the UN fact-finding mission. Indeed, this report represents a damning indictment of the regime's deceptive and erratic behavior.

The Security Council has consistently condemned Eritrea's forceful occupation of my country's territory: Ras Doumeira and Doumeira Island; and in resolution 1862 of January 14, 2009, demanded, inter alia, that Eritrea withdraw its forces and all their military hardware to the status quo ante; acknowledge its border dispute with Djibouti; engage actively in dialogue to defuse the tension, as well as in diplomatic efforts leading to a mutually acceptable settlement; and to abide by its obligations as a member of the United Nations. The resolution required Eritrea to comply immediately, and, in any case no later than five weeks after the resolution's adoption date of January 14, 2009. Eritrea rejected the resolution the next day. There the matter has essentially remained, in the light of the series of requests made by the Secretariat for more time in order to pursue contacts, particularly with the Eritrean authorities. As everyone now realizes, it has been a futile exercise to be seeking a credible response from Eritrea --- whose intentions had always been to procrastinate through various guises while firmly entrenching itself in the occupied territory.

As Djibouti has repeatedly stated, the occupation of Ras Doumeira hill overlooking the Bab-El-Mandeb strait and Doumeira Island in the same Red Sea area, are situated in one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world. The militarization of this key strategic maritime route does not augur well for peace in the region and for international shipping and investment.

The dispute between Eritrea and Djibouti must not be allowed to fester any longer. It must be resolved along the lines of resolution 1862 (2009), without further equivocation, confusion and deliberate procrastination. Inaction sets a dangerous precedent which others will surely follow in the future ---- deny and refuse to cooperate! The Council must not appear to be appeasing Eritrea indefinitely; this is a dangerous and an unpredictable regime that has not shown so far any respect to international norms and behavior. The Council must act now, using all means at its disposal!

**Mr. President,**

Once again the situation in Somalia is tense, tenuous and unpredictable. Somalia's plight is sickening, hopeless and disgusting, to say the least. Here we have a Transitional Government that enjoys the full backing of the international community; yet it is paradoxical this same entity is woefully lacking money, and manpower to be able to confront the deadly insurrection that has paralyzed the whole country. Mogadiscio, the capital, is essentially a war zone. Most of its

civilian population is displaced having fled the never-ending anarchy and abuses, impunity and other egregious crimes against humanity. The collateral damage on the civilian population is horrendous, in short, unquantifiable! Coupled with that the Somali people are facing extreme drought that threatens widespread food shortage and starvation, which would necessitate major emergency food aid. The presence of African Union peacekeepers has largely been a major factor for keeping the Transitional Government in power, but they are continuously under attack, and the need for more troops cannot be overemphasized, including the training and equipping of Somali forces. Indeed, there is a tremendous goodwill toward the current Transitional Government, in particular to, Sheik Sherif Sheik Ahmed, the current President enjoys both trust and credibility. Unfortunately, that has not been matched by a commensurate support in terms of resource flows consistent with the promises and pledges made to the Government. Resources make the difference in the outcome of hostilities. All the same, life goes on, and with resources, Somalia must be able to commence to address the critical, urgent problems and issues of security, governance, and job creation. Addressing the terrible drought now battering the country and crippling its already low food stock is a top priority. We must all fulfill our obligations to enable the Government to function; that is a tall order, no doubt; but that is what it takes; and that is the challenge we have all to confront. We are quite conscious of the flow of arms and foreign fighters into the country, and the threat that AL Qaeda might establish a beachhead in Somalia. One can say the time has come for all well-meaning Somalis, as well as peoples and governments of goodwill everywhere, to step forward, in order to create a lasting and stable environment for the people of Somalia.

**Mr. President,**

The stage appears set for dramatic developments in the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories by far the longest occupation in modern times. As we all know, the UN fact-finding mission investigating last winter's three week war in Gaza has issued its report. While both Israelis and the Palestinians were strongly criticized, the condemnation of Israel by a UN body was unprecedented; stating that the assault was "a deliberately disproportionate attack designed to punish, humiliate and terrorize a civilian population, radically diminish its local economic capacity both to work and provide for itself, and force upon it an ever increasing sense of dependency and vulnerability".

The peace process is frozen and there is no hope in sight to jump-start it soon, as the new Israeli government is intent to pursue its "business as usual" policy of more settlements and refusal to engage in a process that addresses final status issues.

My country is eager, **Mr. President**, that peace and security will soon be restored in the northern part of the sisterly nation of Yemen, within the framework of its territorial integrity, sovereignty and unity.

**Mr. President,**

One cannot fail to notice the number of countries who have raised the issue of Security Council representation and composition. That we are in a different world from the one which existed in the aftermath of World War II, is undeniable. Given the critical need to have a global body capable of addressing, in some manner, the challenges of an evolving international landscape, the issue is of concern to many countries. For the UN to retain its credibility and authority, it must continue to be relevant. New norms have risen, while whole continents lack permanent representation, let alone veto power.

Once again it must be said that Africa, the continent with the largest number of countries, needs to have a permanent voice in the conduct of world affairs. Djibouti sees no reason to change its position of 2007, noting that "Africa seeks not less than two permanent seats with all the prerogatives and privileges of permanent membership, including the right of veto, in addition to five non permanent seats". Things had been changing in much of Africa for the better of late. But the current disastrous international economic crisis was not of our making, as is true for the fallout from global warming. Along with other crises, they underscore the urgency for our meaningful involvement in the UN and world affairs. Permanent seats and increased membership on the Security Council would be in keeping with these rising international demands.

**Mr. President,**

Time and space do not allow us to consider in any depth a number of other critical issues confronting developing countries. There should be some mention, however, of the harm to the countries' trade and development stemming from the protective tariffs of the industrialized west. The effort to provide subsidies for a few large farming operations blocking competition from developing world farmers, only hurts the latter. Cotton is perhaps a good example.

There is also the Doha Round trade talks stalemate. These discussions must re-open seriously with the commitment of reaching a satisfactory conclusion.

Lastly, we need to highlight the concern that exists regarding the Millennium Development Goals and the likelihood they will not be achieved by 2015 in most countries. In sum, that is tragic for so many lives. Efforts must, therefore, increase toward mitigating this trend.

**Thank you, Mr. President**