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STATEMENT

BY

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AT

THE GENERAL DEBATE
OF THE 63rd SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, 29 SEPTEMBER 2008

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

I wish to take this opportunity to warmly congratulate you on your election as President of the 63rd session of the United Nations General Assembly. You have the full support of my delegation and I wish you every success as you guide the important deliberations of this session at this most critical time.

I also wish to take this opportunity to express my delegation's appreciation to your predecessor, Dr. Sergjam Kerim, who successfully presided over the 62nd session of the General Assembly.

Mr. President,

These are turbulent times indeed. The world today is not getting safer by all standards. Alas, it seems like a vortex of perennial conflicts and crises. The fires in Afghanistan and Iraq have not been extinguished. To the contrary, they continue to smolder and intensify; punctuated by misleading, short-lived lulls. The intractable conflict situations in the Middle East are not nearer to a solution today. In Somalia, a humanitarian suffering

of unparalleled magnitude continues to unfold although it remains largely ignored by the international media. Furthermore, the war in Georgia with its potential fall out for global polarization is symptomatic of, and underscores, the extremely fragile security environment that prevails in our troubled world today.

To add to this gloomy mix, the world is also witnessing volatile and speculative fluctuations in the value of fuel oil; unprecedented hike in food prices; and the recent spate of insolvency of financial corporations that in combination are driving the global economy towards recession. Rapid climatic changes resulting from progressive environmental degradation; the resulting spell of more frequent floods and droughts; as well as pandemics that are affecting millions of people complete the grid of the immense challenges that our global community is facing today.

These multi-faceted problems are, of course, rooted on multiple causes. At the same time, it cannot be denied that many of them have been exacerbated, if not instigated, by the misguided and domineering policies of the US Government. Indeed, the fingerprints of the sole super-power are discernible in most of the conflict situations that are raging in many parts of our globe with the deleterious economic, financial and humanitarian ramifications that they invariably entail.

The perplexing feature of this overarching and negative development is the emergence of “management by crisis” as a new tool of policy promotion. These days, candid efforts are not exerted to prevent and manage conflicts. On the contrary, crises are deliberately spawned and allowed to fester so that their “management” would provide the United States with the opportunity and latitude for control in a situation of permanent instability.

The absence of countervailing forces in a uni-polar world has only aggravated the situation. Principal among these is the weakness of the United Nations to pursue an independent line and act as a bulwark of robust multilateralism.

Mr. President,

The strong misgivings that I have expressed above are attested to by the multiple turbulences that continue to unfold in our part of the world. Allow me to illustrate this grim reality through a brief description of the causes and complications of these turbulences.

In the border war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, both parties had ultimately agreed to resolve the dispute through binding arbitration on the legal basis of the sanctity of colonial boundaries. These are cardinal principles of international law enshrined in the UN Charter as well as in the Constitutive Act of the African Union. Furthermore, these commitments were solemnly enshrined in the Algiers Peace Agreement that was signed by the Parties in December 2000. The Algiers Agreement was comprehensive in details. Essentially, it had two components:

1. Confidence-building provisions and measures through the deployment of a modest UN peace-keeping force; and,

2. Settlement of the border dispute through a final and binding arbitration on the basis of the colonial treaties and international law.

As you all know, the parties went through a lengthy and meticulous legal litigation in The Hague in 2001. The Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission – a five member arbitration panel of international jurists - announced its unanimous final and binding Award on 13 April 2002 and made serious efforts, for five years, until the completion of its work in November 2007.

From November 2007 onwards in particular, Ethiopia's military presence in sovereign Eritrean territories is one of blatant occupation. This is so because the Boundary Commission has decided to complete its demarcation functions - which were disrupted and held hostage by Ethiopia for five long years - through precise representation of the boundary by coordinates.

Throughout these years, Ethiopia's reckless acts of destabilization and aggression were and continue to be supported by the United States. Throughout these years, the US did not only use its formidable clout in the UN system to forestall appropriate measures against Ethiopia on the basis of Chapter VII that the Algiers Agreement envisaged. But the United States concocted various formulas – special envoys, extension of UNMEE's mandates, among others - of “management by crisis” to perpetuate the conflict and derail enforcement of the legal decision.

The tragedy in Somalia is another extremely grave humanitarian situation that has been exacerbated, if not brought about, essentially because of wrong US policies. Half a million Somalis are today displaced and living in abysmal conditions mainly as a result of Ethiopia's military invasion that occurred in 2007. Thousands of innocent civilians have been killed. US war planes occasionally pulverize Somali villages in the name of the war on terrorism. Were these interventions legal, justified or necessary in the first place? The deliberate distortion of facts, the portrayal of Somalia and the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) as the epicenter or hub of terrorism were neither true nor candid. Somalis should and could have been given a chance to sort out their own problems through the reconciliation processes that they had begun in earnest. But all these efforts were stemmed in the bud through a pre-emptive invasion by Ethiopia under the instigation of the United States to produce the largest humanitarian tragedy that dwarfs other contemporary crises in Africa.

The situation in the Sudan is not different either. While the complexities of the long and varied conflicts cannot be downplayed, the fact nonetheless remains that US policy in the Sudan is driven by other objectives and considerations. And the net outcome has been and remains the aggravation of the multiple problems; whether in relation to the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the North and South, or in regard to the situation in Darfur.

And recently, the United States, which has a military base in Djibouti, has fabricated a new conflict situation between Djibouti and Eritrea to keep alive “the hot spots of

tension” in the region. As I have explained above, due to US influence, the UN Security Council has been paralyzed and rendered impotent in the face of Ethiopia’s occupation of sovereign Eritrean territories, including the town of Badme. At the same time, the United States has doggedly tried to use the Security Council platform during its presidency last June to fabricate a non-existent problem and establish a case against Eritrea.

All these destabilizing acts are sometimes portrayed as unavoidable consequences or collateral damage of the war on terror. The fact is the war on terror has long been derailed from its original objectives and intentions to serve as an excuse to undermine and subvert forces and governments that do not toe Washington’s line. Furthermore, the dragnet has been widely extended to entail US transparent interference in the sub-regional and regional organizations in our part of the world.

Mr. President,

This untenable state of affairs cannot go on and should not be tolerated. The human sufferings have been, and are, too great; the time too long. In the event, collective international efforts to check US excesses are timely and imperative. Also because these failures are widely recognized and shared by significant segments of public opinion in the United States itself.

The perils of unchecked uni-polarism have become glaringly obvious in the past years. This reality can only accentuate the need for bolstering the United Nations, to make it a democratic and a robust institution of multilateralism through prolonged and concerted collective efforts.

Especially in our region, the need for prompt action assumes even greater urgency. For this to happen:

- Illegal occupation of sovereign territories must be terminated; the rule of law and the Charter of the United Nations fully respected;
- The invasion of Somalia must come to an end; and the perpetrators of war-crimes held accountable;
- Interferences in, and complications of, the problems in the Sudan must cease; and a conducive climate created to bring about a lasting solution; and, most importantly,
- US meddling in the affairs of the Horn of Africa region which has invariably led to the instigation of crises must be terminated.

The consequences of failing to act are dire indeed. Unless effective measures are taken to remedy the multiplying problems that our global community is confronting today, we run the risk of further widening and exacerbating them. The situation in the Horn of Africa may, indeed, spiral out of control unless these destabilizing practices are brought to an end.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I sincerely hope that our plea will be heeded in order to avert further turmoil and suffering in our region.

I thank you for your attention.