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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE FEDERAL
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

H.E. MR. SEYOUM MESFIN
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE
FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA

AT

THE 60TH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

New York, 23 September 2005

Mr. President,

Allow me to extend to you warm congratulations on your election to preside over this historic 60th Session of the General Assembly. You can rest assured of the fullest co-operation of my delegation. We want to register our appreciation for the outgoing President of the 59th Session of the General Assembly, our brother, Mr. Jean Ping, whose tenure as President of the Assembly has coincided with momentous events at the United Nations, which required both wisdom and a great deal of competence from the President. Mr. Jean Ping showed he had both and he has made us all proud.

We are as usual grateful to our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, whose terms of office will always be remembered as periods of enormous dedication for reform of the United Nations, and of noble effort to mobilize international support to combat extreme poverty.

Mr. President,

The Outcome Document which our Heads of State and Government endorsed, depicts a global consensus that reform of the United Nations is essential and timely. My delegation welcomes the Document which outlines a far reaching agenda for change.

Mr. President,

The achievement of the MDGs by those vulnerable to being thrown off track is critical to all, and not just to those directly affected. It would be regrettable if targets that have so much meaning for the well-being of all are to be missed in the course of the following 10 years due to failure on the part of those directly affected or because of lack of solidarity at the international level. We strongly believe that the targets are neither unrealistic nor unduly ambitious.

Mr. President,

It cannot be emphasized enough that at the end of the day those who have primary responsibility for prevailing upon extreme poverty are those that are directly affected. But those that suffer from extreme poverty require the support of the international community to be on track to achieve the MDGs.

This would mean in concrete terms that ODA, measures in debt relief and in the areas of trade would need to be aligned with the realization of the MDGs. In this regard, we are encouraged by the progress made at the Gleneagles Summit of the G8. We were also encouraged by the expression of commitment by some leaders at the High-Level Summit, to address the current distortions on international trade including through the elimination of agricultural subsidies.

There is nothing more important for the low-income countries, Mr. President, than a partnership which is predictable, consistent and which is based on mutual obligations defined in advance.

Mr. President,

No amount of international co-operation would do the trick in terms of achieving the MDGs unless the domestic conditions are fulfilled in all the relevant areas.

We in Ethiopia have been doing our level best in this regard. We have spared no effort to change the economic situation in our country for the better, our primary focus being the rural sector. Ethiopia has made a relentless effort to implement the Millennium Development Goals.

The recent elections in Ethiopia, despite all the complications and the absence of a tradition of loyal opposition, has demonstrated the depth of commitment we have to transform the governance tradition in Ethiopia --- a tradition which has been as remote from democracy as it is possible to be. These elections stand out as a milestone in the process of democratization of the state and the society at large. Ethiopia has entered into a new era of vibrant multi-party political system.

Mr. President,

In the area of peace, most particularly with respect to peace in our sub-region, we, along with those like minded partners, will continue to be, pillars for peace and stability.

On the fight against terrorism, Ethiopia will continue to discharge her responsibility in cooperation with other peace loving countries. Ethiopia rejects terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We in Ethiopia are determined to work with the international community to implement the counter terrorism strategy.

Mr. President,

In connection with our deep aspiration for peace our only source of disappointment is the lingering dispute we have with Eritrea. Ethiopia has been contributing more than its share to sort out this outstanding problem. The Eritrean representative, in his statement this last Wednesday, officially threatened to use force against Ethiopia based on the unfounded allegation that part of Eritrean territory is under Ethiopian occupation.

I find it incumbent upon me to put the record straight.

This is a problem which grew out of an aggression committed by Eritrea against Ethiopia. It is no secret how Ethiopia managed to reverse the Eritrean aggression and how it created the condition for the peaceful resolution of the crisis between the two countries based on legality to which Ethiopia has been, and remains, committed. Any suggestion, as the one made by the Eritrean representative on Wednesday, that Eritrean territory is occupied, is a mockery of the truth, and an insult to the intelligence of the international community.

The threat or use of force should have no place as means of resolving disputes between States. This is a principle that Ethiopia has adhered to before the Eritrean aggression, after the aggression was reversed, and since.

Eritrea's attitude is regrettably different, as has been repeatedly evidenced on the ground in our region, and in statements made by their officials at different fora, including before this August Assembly. The Eritrean Government needs to be reminded that it should make no mistake that it would be held accountable for its actions.

Ethiopia has always been committed to the rule of law and the maintenance of peace and stability. Our five-point peace proposal of November 25, 2004 for moving forward towards peace with Eritrea and welcomed by the international community, demonstrates Ethiopia's seriousness in this regard. Eritrea knows that Ethiopia has been ready for dialogue to ensure the demarcation of the boundary on the basis of the decision of the Boundary Commission and for normalization of relations between the two countries. Eritrea abhors dialogue, perhaps because it suspects that dialogue would eventually lead to peace. It is not clear whether the Government of Eritrea believes peace serves its interest. Perhaps the people of Eritrea need to be kept on their toes, their gaze focused on an artificial external adversity. In any event, Eritrea has no reason to be angry at Ethiopia or at the world. Eritrea dragged Ethiopia into war in 1998. And now continues to be an obstacle to the normalization of relations between the two peoples.

The problem between Ethiopia and Eritrea has never been, and is not, legal. It is rather political and Ethiopia has the political will to move forward. We invite Eritrea to join us in this effort. Ethiopia does not believe at all in saber rattling, least of all between countries who should have little time to spare from fighting extreme poverty.

Mr. President,

At the Continental level, we are encouraged, by the dynamism that the new African Union has injected into the joint African effort for peace and stability. There is no doubt that the reform of the United Nations could create even greater possibilities for Africa to play its proper role not only within Africa, but also outside the continent.

Mr. President,

Ethiopia continues to attach great importance to the reform of the United Nations. We believe that, though all our expectations have not been met, the High Level Plenary Meeting did provide a huge impetus for making progress both in terms of achieving the MDGs and pushing forward the reform of the United Nations. It is our hope that it would be possible to register progress in the course of this session.

I would like to conclude, Mr. President, by reiterating Ethiopia's commitment to the United Nations and its preparedness to do whatever is necessary to contribute to efforts designed to make the Organization more effective and more representative.

I Thank You