

ERITREA'S SUBMISSION TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON
PEACE AND JUSTICE IN SOMALIA

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-For the past 19 years, Somalia has been gripped in a spiral of internecine conflicts and intractable clan cleavages without respite. It has been virtually reduced to a theatre of chronic rivalry between warlords with ever-shifting alliances. In spite of its relative ethnic, racial and religious homogeneity, especially by African standards, Somalia remains today fragmented into several mini-States: Somali-land, Punt-land, Benadir-Land etc. The country has become the “epitome” of a “Failed State” with all the tragic consequences that this implies to its citizens.

The extortion of its citizens by ruthless and callous warlords; the mushrooming and proliferation of piracy along its coasts and adjacent sea lanes; the unconscionable plundering of its maritime resources by extraneous forces; the instrumentalisation of the weak and fragmented entities by neighbouring countries both to extract unfair and illicit agreements or to use these fragile Mini-States as an appendage of their domestic economies are some of the disturbing realities that this simmering Somali situation has given rise to.

As a result of this poignant state of affairs, tens of thousands of Somalis have lost their lives. Hundreds of thousands more have been driven into internal dislocation; compelled to seek refuge abroad; and/or, are living in very abject conditions. The crisis has gone beyond Somalia to affect the stability of the Horn of Africa as a whole. The situation is, furthermore, deteriorating from bad to worse almost on a daily basis.

Somalia's problems may have indigenous or local origins. But this is only part of the story. Perceived geopolitical considerations by major powers and regional actors, military involvement of external forces, misrepresentation of Somali political realities in the aftermath of September 11, and the failure of several ill-conceived peace initiatives have further compounded the internal commotion.

The crisis that we see unfolding today is the byproduct of all these complications. Clearly, the complexity of the situation and the multiplicity of the actors cannot be a reason to absolve the main internal and external players who have willfully exacerbated the crisis in Somalia to induce gross

and unparalleled sufferings on its population. Eritrea maintains that the UN Security Council ought to launch a comprehensive investigation of the crisis in Somalia from its origins through its truncated evolution with a view to finding a durable solution and ending impunity.

In Eritrea's views, those who bear prime responsibility for the immense sufferings of the Somali people are: i) Somalia's warlords; ii) Somalia's immediate neighbours; and iii) the misguided policies successive US Administrations.

i) **Somalia's Warlords:**

Somalia's warlords are primarily responsible for the turmoil and mayhem that has seized Somalia since 1991. The practices of flagrant extortion, banditry; piracy and wanton killing of civilians and ransacking of their property are war crimes that cannot be justified by the absence and fragmentation of central political authority.

ii) **Somalia's Immediate Neighbours**

a) ***Ethiopia:*** Among Somalia's immediate neighbours, Ethiopia bears highest responsibility for its intermittent military invasions of Somalia and other deliberate acts aimed at destabilizing the country in order to make it fragile and divided. Ethiopia's motivations emanate from historical animosity between the two countries – Ethiopia and Somalia had gone to war twice (1964 and 1977) prior to the current crisis – on account of the Ogaden. Ethiopia used this historical baggage and its domestic internal problems to work relentlessly since 1991 to bring about the fragmentation of Somalia. Ethiopia was instrumental in encouraging the unilateral separation of Somali-land without due process of law and popular plebiscite. Furthermore, Ethiopia violated UN Security Council Resolution 1725 (2006) to invade Somalia at the end of 2006. Ethiopia's invasion was responsible for the displacement of around half a million Somalis and the death and maiming of thousands. It must be borne in mind that Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia represented a clear act of aggression and violation of international law.

b) ***Kenya and Djibouti:*** These two governments are also increasingly involved in exacerbating the current crisis in Somalia. Both countries have historically had strained relations with independent Somalia since the 1960s because of their adjoining regions and territories (French Somali-land (Djibouti) and the Northern Eastern

District in Kenya) invariably inhabited by ethnic Somalis and which were incorporated – in constitutional terms - by the newly independent Somalia. With the encouragement of the United States, both Kenya and Djibouti have increasingly augmented their involvements in the internal affairs of Somalia in the recent years further polarizing and poisoning the Somali political landscape.

- c) *The Misguided Policies of the United States:* In 1992, the ~~Bush~~ ^{Clinton} Administration decided to intervene in Somalia under “humanitarian” considerations. At the time, many in the region, including Eritrea, had voiced their reservations about an external military intervention that was not predicated on a well thought-out peace formula. US military presence in Somalia came to an abrupt end when a mission by US forces to capture General Aideed was ambushed and several US army men killed and brutally dragged in the streets of Mogadishu. The United States was largely absent from the Somali political arena until the recent times. But its recent interventions under the rubric of “combating terrorism” have not only been counterproductive but have contributed to worsening the situation in Somalia. The United States provided financial support to notorious warlords in 2006 in its ill-conceived efforts to counter-balance the growing influence of the Union of Islamic Courts. Washington then pushed Ethiopia to invade Somalia in contravention of international law and UN Security Resolutions. In the past years since then, US jet bombers and drones have carried out several aerial bombings in Somalia and also provided arms, further inflaming the situation.

Eritrea requests for a sober assessment of these facets of the Somali crisis with a view to taking remedial action. Eritrea further believes that a durable and viable solution to the Somalia crisis should be predicated on:

- i) The long term objective must be the restoration of a unitary Somali State with effective institutions of central government.
- ii) If the desire is to divide Somalia into several Mini-States (Somaliland, Punt-land; Juba-land; Benadir-land; ... etc), this should transpire only when and after the requisite legal and political processes are consummated. To tolerate as accomplished facts the proliferation of fragmented and non-sovereign entities for an indefinite period of time is not only devoid of legal, political and moral justifications but it is

also tantamount to relegating the Somali people and the Horn of Africa region to a situation of perpetual crisis and destruction.

- iii) A “Transitional Political Arrangement” which paves the ground for achieving the ultimate goal or which can be operational in the interim period, needs to be in place. To this end, a “Transitional Administration” would be formed with a clear mandate and for a specific time-frame. (The flawed approach, repeated three times in recent years, of imposing in Mogadishu of an externally established government with presumed sovereign legitimacy and authority on the country as a whole must be avoided for obvious reasons).
- iv) In order to expedite the formation of the “Transitional Political Arrangement” and the “Transitional Administration”, an inclusive political process would be set in motion. It must be recognized that this process cannot be achieved through a quick-fix. It would also be vital to ensure that the process is not hampered and distorted by unacceptable pre-conditions and/or the exclusion of important stakeholders. In this regard, the role of facilitators would be critical.
- v) The vital issue of the “very survival of Somalia” should not be intertwined with the problem of “terrorism”. The “war against terror” must be identified clearly by mapping out a common strategy as well as the mechanism of its implementation. In this connection, it must be acknowledged that the ultimate remedy rests on the existence of an effective Somali Government that is equipped with effective institution of defense and security. Other alternative or interim arrangements will not indeed bring about a lasting solution.
- vi) That the United States can play a pivotal and constructive role is evident indeed. It is however essential that it disengage first from its on-going, ill-advised involvement. This will require a fresh start and a new engagement on the basis of revised policies and strategies.