



Permanent Mission of The State of Eritrea
To the United Nations, New York

30 August 2016

Excellency,

I have the honor to forward herewith Eritrea's written response to the issues raised by the Somalia Eritrea Monitoring Group during the informal teleconference consultation facilitated by your esteemed representative on 24 August 2016.

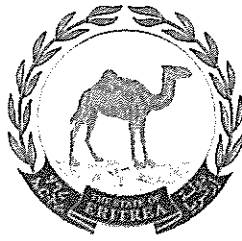
I would appreciate it very much if the attached written response is circulated to the members of the UN Security Council Committee.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Sincerely;

Girma Asmerom
Ambassador and Permanent Representative

H.E. Mr. Rafael Darío Ramírez Carreño
Chairman, Security Council Committee
established pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009)
United Nations, New York, NY, 10017



Permanent Mission of The State of Eritrea
To the United Nations, New York

**ERITREA'S RESPONSE TO ISSUES RAISED BY THE SOMALIA ERITREA
MONITORING GROUP (SEMG) ON 24 AUGUST 2016**

August 30 2016

The government of Eritrea commends the Chair of the Security Council Committee, His Excellency Ambassador Rafael Dario Ramirez Carreno for organizing this important dialogue and interaction between Eritrea and SEMG. Eritrea also appreciates the constructive role the UN Secretariat is playing.

It must be underlined and recalled that the SEMG has visited Eritrea twice and had extensive discussions with all relevant ministries, government and private institutions as well as diplomatic communities. Moreover, in the past three years alone, Eritrean government officials and SEMG have had more than 15 meetings, including three video conferences in which Eritrean officials gave extensive and clear explanations. Eritrea has also provided several clear, timely and comprehensive written responses to the SEMG and the UNSC. Therefore, while Eritrea's track record is showing it has fully cooperated with the SEMG, it is not only unfair but factually wrong for some quarters to accuse Eritrea for "luck of cooperation with the SEMG". It is a politically motivated allegation that is advanced by certain quarters for the purpose of maintaining the unjust sanction.

In the spirit of constructive and transparent engagement, the Eritrean government is once again, today on 24 August 2016, interacting through the Chair with the SEMG in a three way teleconference. The following is therefore Eritrea's oral and written response to the different issues raised by the SEMG.

Eritrea expects the Chair of the Committee and the Security Council to instruct the SEMG to properly include in its final report a summary of today's Eritrea's oral and written responses. The full text of this written response is also expected to be annexed to the SEMG final report.



1. There is no justification to maintain the unjust sanction against the people of Eritrea

The two pretexts for imposing the unjust sanction against the people of Eritrea: **(a) Eritrea's alleged support to Al-Shabab in Somalia** and **(b) The dispute with Djibouti** are proven to be non-existent. For the last four years, the SEMG has ascertained that **"it has found no evidence of Eritrea's support to Al-Shabab in Somalia"**. Regarding Eritrea-Djibouti dispute, the presidents of Eritrea and Djibouti have signed on 6 June 2010 a comprehensive seven point agreement entrusting the Amir of Qatar to mediate all outstanding issues between the two countries. Implementing the agreement, Eritrea has withdrawn its troops from the common Eritrean-Djiboutian border and the Qatari soldiers are deployed in the area, a fact that is confirmed by the state of Qatar in its letter dated 10th June 2010 sent to the UN Security Council. Therefore, since there is no imagined or real problem Eritrea is involved in Somalia or Djibouti, that affect peace and security of the region, there is nothing for the SEMG to investigate. Also, there is no justification for the Security Council to maintain the unjust sanction against the Eritrean people. It must be lifted immediately and unconditionally.

2. Support to Armed Groups

This provision is inserted under the politically motivated allegation that **"Eritrea supports Al-shabab in Somalia"** and in the context of its implication to regional peace and security. For the last three years the SEMG has concluded that **"it has found no evidence Eritrea's of support to Al-shabab in Somalia"**. The issue of **"support for armed groups"** is therefore deliberately advanced by certain forces to move the goal post and stretch the mandate of the SEMG to deal with Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict and to maintain the unjust sanction against the people of Eritrea.

Eritrea strongly feels that the Security Council has not given the SEMG the mandate to deal or report on Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict. Eritrea also strongly feels that it is about time for the Security Council to give clear instruction to the SEMG to stop reporting on Eritrean-Ethiopian conflict under the pretext of **"supporting armed groups in the region"**. The Security Council clearly understands that the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict is not within the preview of the SEMG's mandate. It is an issue of the occupied and the occupier. This persistent and unwarranted attempt by the SEMG to deal with the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia under the pretext of **"support for armed groups"** is not only unacceptable but a diversionary tactic used by certain forces to maintain the unjust sanction against the people of Eritrea and to embolden Ethiopia. Therefore, SEMG attempt to deal with Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict must be dismissed by all members of the Security Council as illicit, inappropriate and counter-productive. This illegal



and unnecessary intervention by the SEMG has in fact encouraged the Ethiopian government to occupy sovereign Eritrean territory including the town of Badme for the last 14 years. This is a violation of the UN Charter and the final and binding Eritrean Ethiopian Border Commission (EEBC) 2002 delimitation and 2007 demarcation decisions. Ethiopia is also training armed mercenary and subversive groups. It has become a common feature for high level Ethiopian officials to make belligerent public statements against Eritrea.

For example:-

- On 12 June 2016 the Ethiopian government unleashed unprovoked major military aggression against Eritrea at the Tzorona front. Concerning this belligerent act and violation of the UN Charter it must be recalled that the government of Eritrea had sent two letters to the UN Security Council on 13th and 23rd June 2016 requesting an urgent meeting on the Council in accordance with the article 34 and 35 of the UN charter. To Eritrea's surprise and disappointment no action was taken against Ethiopia by the UN Security council.
- On 05 July 2016, addressing the Ethiopian Parliament, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia said, **"We have taken a proportional military action against the Eritrean government and we will intensify this policy."**
- On 28 June 2016, while presenting his report to Parliament, the Ethiopian Defence Minister arrogantly admitted that it is Ethiopia not Eritrea that started the military confrontation at the Tzorona Front on 12 June 2016. He said, **"The action taken by the patriotic Ethiopian Defence forces demonstrated that our forces have the capacity to take a military action against Eritrea at any time. We have given the Eritrean regime something to worry about. The Ethiopian defence forces are ready and capable to execute any measure that the parliament deems necessary regarding Eritrea."** In the same meeting, invoking Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia in 2006, Dr. Adhana, a card-carrying member of TPLF, demanded for a major military offensive to overthrow the Eritrean government.
- On 14 June 2016, in an interview with Ethiopian Journalist and the Voice of America, Ethiopian Minister of Government Communication, Mr. Getachew Redda stated that **"on 12 June 2016 Ethiopia took proportional military action and gave a lesson to the Eritrean government."** He also vowed to continue the policy.
- On 7 July 2015 the prime minister of Ethiopia speaking to his parliament said that **"Ethiopia will be forced to take appropriate action against Eritrea."**



- **On 9 August 2014** during an interview with the Washington D.C based Radio Tsenat, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia clearly stated that “the no-war no-peace situation with Eritrea is over. Ethiopia from now on is ready to take military action against Eritrea”
- **On 17 April 2012**, speaking to the Ethiopian Parliament the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi stated that “the Ethiopian government has now decided to carry out a more active policy, taking actions against Eritrea. The action will involve using all means at Ethiopia’s disposal to change the Eritrean government. The other major area where Ethiopia will further strengthen its activity is in supporting Eritreans in their campaign to change the government.”

The use or threat of use of force against any country big or small is a violation of the UN Charter and international law that should be condemned by the Security Council.

Concerning the political, social and military crises and problems inside Ethiopia, the government of Eritrea has nothing to do with them. They are purely crises that are products of Ethiopia’s ethnic based political and structural problems as well as misguided economic policy. These are well documented facts by several Ethiopian organizations and international humanitarian groups for anybody including the SEMG to see and understand. Leave Eritrea alone.

It must however, be underlined that the UNSC has the full responsibility and obligation to deal with Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict, under a separate and different agenda item. As a guarantor of the Algiers Agreement and shouldering its global responsibility the Security Council must also clearly demand the Ethiopian government to withdraw its occupation army from sovereign Eritrean territory including the town of Badme, immediately and unconditionally. It must also condemn Ethiopian high level government officials for their public and frequent belligerent statements and military aggressions and threats against Eritrea.

3. Arms Embargo

Eritrea has not violated the unjust “Arms Embargo” resolution. The imposition of arms embargo is unjustified and counter productive. The embargo does not enhance peace and security in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea Region. In fact it is a recipe for humanitarian and military disaster. It has already encouraged the government of Ethiopia to occupy sovereign Eritrean territory including the town of Badme for the last 14 years. It has also emboldened high level Ethiopian government officials to publicly declare their belligerent “regime change” agenda.



The arms embargo does not only negatively affect Eritrean's capability to effectively and efficiently contribute in the fight against regional and global terrorism and extremism; it will also encourage terrorist groups, pirates and illegal fishing companies to take adventures activities inside Eritrean land and sea sovereign territories and air space.

It must be underlined and clearly understood that Eritrea with 1,200 kilometres of coast line and more than 350 islands as well as 50% Christian and 50% Muslim population is located in the most volatile Horn of Africa and the Red Sea Region. Nevertheless it is a peaceful and harmonious country. With Somalia, south Sudan, Yemen and Ethiopia in a crises situation the world can not afford to "create and manage" another crisis in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea Region. Therefore, since the SEMG did not find credible and verifiable evidence that Eritrea has violated the arms embargo, it has the responsibility to recommend to the Security Council unconditionally and immediately to lift the arms embargo against Eritrea and for the Security Council to do so.

4. Financial Issues and Natural Resources

The provisions of the UNSC resolution related to the financial matters, i.e. **the 2% Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Tax and the Mining Sector**, are anchored on hypothetical and speculative assumptions on its "potential use". First of all the UNSC resolutions does not give the SEMG the mandate it claims to have. Furthermore, the SEMG has several times ascertained that "it has found no evidence of Eritrean support to Al-Shabab". Therefore, there is no justification for the UN Security council and the SEMG to continue requesting Eritrea to provide information on these matters. It is also a violation of the UN Charter that respects the sovereignty as well as the political independence of Eritrea.

Just for the record and in the spirit of transparency and cooperation once again the Eritrean government through the Chair wants to inform the SEMG that Eritrea's total revenue from the mining sector is about 200 million per year. When compared with the public and social expenditures such as Education, Health, and Food Security this revenue is insignificant. For example in 2014, the government of Eritrea's budget for education, health and food security alone was 328,894,753.00 US dollar while its annual expense for fuel is also over 300 million dollar. Therefore, "the potential" and possibility of diverting the revenue to other activities is impossible and non-existence. Eritrea is also a least developing country. Therefore, there is no justification for the SEMG to continue with its hypothetical and speculative analysis as well as reporting methodology and investigation. The unjust sanction is also clear that it affects Eritrean peoples' right for development. It is a collective punishment which is the highest form



of human rights violation. It also goes against the letter and spirit of Agenda 2030. The motto “**No One Should Be Left Behind**” must be respected by all of us. As a result, Eritrea expects the SEMG to recommend to the Security Council to lift the unjust sanction against the people of Eritrea and for the Security Council to do so.

5. Djiboutian prisoners of war

The Eritrean government would like, through the Chair, to inform the SEMG, there are no Djiboutian prisoners of war in Eritrean custody. This is an issue that has been properly settled and concluded by the government of Qatar on 18th March 2016. This fact is confirmed by the letter the Government of Qatar sent to the UN Secretary General. Eritrea therefore does not understand why the SEMG wants to continue reporting on an issue that is clearly concluded and settled through the Qatari mediation. The SEMG must maintain its neutrality and objectivity. The issue is not whether Eritrea should make available information concerning Djiboutian prisoners of war. The issue is to whom it should report. Eritrea strongly feels that the correct and appropriate mechanism is the Qatari mediation. The SEMG must also respect this mechanism. Concerning the matter it must consult and interact with the government of Qatar not with the governments of Eritrea or Djibouti. In no way or under any pretext it should include insinuations, hearsays and baseless allegations it receives from different quarters in particular Djibouti, about Eritrea. The SEMG is established to investigate information it receives from reliable and credible sources not from politically and diplomatically motivated sources.

Once again, in the spirit of transparency and cooperation as well as setting the record straight, the Eritrean government would like through the Chair, to present to the Security Council and the SEMG Eritrea’s stance on the issue of “**Djiboutian prisoners of war in its custody**”.

There are no more Djiboutian prisoners of war in Eritrean custody. There were only seven Djiboutian POWs in Eritrean custody out of which two escaped, one has died and the remaining four have been released on 18 March 2016 through the mediation of the Government of Qatar.

On 6 June 2010 the presidents of Eritrea and Djibouti signed a **Seven Point Comprehensive Peace Agreement** to settle their dispute peacefully, through the mediation of the Emir of Qatar.



Article 3 of the seven-point Agreement, states that:

“Each party shall provide the state of Qatar with a list containing the number and names of POWs detained by it. All these shall be done under the supervision of the state of Qatar.”

In violation of this clear agreement and instead of sticking to the Government of Qatar Mediation process, Djibouti preferred to pursue a disinformation and cherry-picking approach by raising the issue of Djiboutian POWs outside the mediation mechanism that both presidents agreed to respect. It even went to an extent of presenting contradictory figures.

- In 2015, in an official letter sent to Somalia Eritrea Monitoring Group, the government of Djibouti claimed that **“there are 18 POWs in Eritrean custody.”**
- The 19 March 2016 Press Statement Released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Djibouti claimed that **“there are 13 Djiboutian Prisoners of war in Eritrean custody.”**
- In a letter Dated 31 March 2016 to the UN Security Council, the Permanent Representative of Djibouti to the United Nations claimed that **“there are 15 Djiboutian prisoners of war in Eritrean custody.”**

Clearly, the Djiboutian government has not only been fabricating contradictory figures but has also failed to track and coordinate its own fabricated figures and statements. Contrary to the Djiboutian disinformation campaign, the Government of Qatar has clearly stated that the four POWs released by Eritrea **“were part of a group of seven in Eritrean custody, out of which, one has died and two others fled.”**

On its part, Eritrea respecting the letter and spirit of 6 June 2010 Agreement insisted the issue to be handled comprehensively and only through the mediation of the Government of Qatar and refused to discuss or debate the issue of Djiboutian POWs in another fora. This principled and legitimate stance of Eritrea did finally bear fruit.

The disinformation and misrepresentation campaigns aside, the Government of Eritrea diligently pursued the mediation process of the Government of Qatar. As a result, extensive and constructive discussion took place in Doha between the Emir of Qatar and the president of Djibouti on 28 February as well as the Emir of Qatar and the President of Eritrea on 15 March 2016. Subsequently, on 17 March 2016, Eritrea released all Djiboutian prisoners of war in its custody and handed them to the Government of Qatar. These four Djiboutian POWs accompanied by the Foreign Minister of Qatar arrived in Djibouti on 18 March 2016. During the



receiving ceremony at the airport, in a joint press conference, the Djiboutian Foreign Minister, praised the release of Djiboutian POWs by Eritrea “as a **positive step forward.**” Immediately after the press conference, accompanied by the Foreign Ministers of Qatar and Djibouti, the four Djiboutian POWs were taken to the palace to meet the president of Djibouti. In this meeting, the president of Djibouti expressed his appreciation to the Emir of Qatar for the role he played in the release of the Djiboutian POWs and expressed his commitment to the Qatari mediation process.

It must be underlined that be it at the airport or the Palace handover ceremonies the Djiboutian government high-level officials have never complained or registered their reservation to the Government of Qatar concerning the number of Djiboutian released by Eritrea. In fact, informing the release of Djiboutian POWs by Eritrea as well as settlement and conclusion of the issue, the Government of Qatar sent a letter to the UN Secretary General on 18 March 2016. In response to this positive development, between the two countries and the United Nations Secretary-General and several governments commended the release of the Djiboutian POWs by Eritrea and expressed their support to the mediation effort of the Government of Qatar to resolve other outstanding issues between Djibouti and Eritrea.

Given these uncontroversial facts and Djibouti’s high level government officials’ public statement, “that they are committed to the Government of Qatar mediation process”, Eritrea does not understand why the SEMG continue to reflect the Djiboutian baseless allegation against Eritrea. Eritrea, therefore, expects the UNSC to give a clear instruction to the SEMG not to deal with the issue and to cease from reporting on the matter.

The issue of POWs concluded, once again the Eritrean government wants to reiterate its commitment to the mediation of the State of Qatar and its readiness to solve other outstanding issues with Djibouti peacefully. It is high time for the SEMG to stop reporting on the Djiboutian POWs and for the UNSC to unconditionally and immediately lift the unjust sanction against the people of Eritrea.

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