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## **Congressman continues ill-advised effort to tar Eritrea**

The Organization of Eritrean Americans (OEA) is dismayed by a recent call made by Republican Congressman Ed Royce, urging US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in a letter to designate Eritrea a state sponsor of terrorism. A little over a year ago, on June 10, 2009, the United States House of Representatives overwhelmingly rejected an amendment introduced by Congressman Royce that had unjustly sought to designate Eritrea 'a state sponsor of terrorism', on a patently false allegation that claimed "Eritrea supports insurgents in Somalia."

At a time when the world, from the UN Secretary General on down, is commending Eritrea's peaceful efforts in the region, Congressman Royce continues his decade-old effort to tar this young African nation which is trying to recover from 40-years of war with Ethiopia. Just recently, Eritrea and Djibouti signed a peace agreement negotiated by the Government of Qatar to resolve their border dispute. Other organizations praising Eritrea's actions to bring about stability in the region are: the European Union and the African Union.

The OEA again expresses profound dismay that this ill-advised effort to link Eritrea to terrorism is still being pursued mostly on behalf of Ethiopia, Eritrea's traditional enemy. We would like to think that Congressman Royce lacks information about what is really happening on the ground in the Horn of Africa in general and Eritrea in particular. Otherwise, it is preposterous to try to link Eritrea to terrorism.

This young African nation has been fighting terrorism since long before September 11, 2001"since the mid 1990s when bin Laden set up shop in neighboring Sudan. Eritrea was in fact his first target. It is still fighting against two of al Qaeda's cells that bin Laden created in the 1990s - the Eritrean Jihad Movement and the Eritrean Islamic Salvation Movement - that Ethiopia has been cuddling as part of the so-called alliance it finances and trains to destabilize Eritrea.

Again, we urge Mr. Royce to travel to the region to see for himself the complex issues that define this volatile part of Africa and, most importantly, to devise ways to bring about peace in this strategic region at the southern flank of the Middle East. The OEA, which has been diligently working to build US-Eritrea relations, welcomes the opportunity to work with Mr. Royce to further enhance the friendship of the two nations and thereby bring peace and stability for the Horn of Africa region.

A sound US policy for the Horn of Africa requires a thorough understanding of the complexity of the issues that define the crises that engulf the region. The OEA believes that a short-sighted policy for the Horn is likely to jeopardize long-term U.S. interests in the region, and even the rest of the continent.

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