



29 September 2010
5:00 p.m.

Right of Reply
by
Ambassador Araya Desta
Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations

First round at the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly:

I am taking the floor in the exercise of the right of reply in connection to the statement made by the Foreign Minister of Ethiopia this morning.

- Clearly the Foreign Minister was trying to divert the attention of this august body from his country's refusal to withdraw his troops from sovereign Eritrea territory and his government's military misadventures in Somalia.
- Eritrea rejects all unfounded allegations. And I do not wish to dignify by trying to address at this late hour every unfounded allegations that were made this morning. In the interest of time I will briefly respond to the main issue at hand.
- Eritrea does not have problems with its neighbours and if it had in the past, it has been able to successfully solve them peacefully and legally, with the exception of Ethiopia.
- Ethiopia cannot hide behind a Security Council resolution that it mentioned. Its attempt to find comfort in a resolution that tried to scapegoat Eritrea for the problems of Somalia is a misplaced criticism; and when no evidence was found to substantiate Eritrea's alleged support to the insurgents in Somalia, all eyes are turning on Ethiopia. Even some members of the TFG admit that Ethiopia is using the Security Council resolution for its own hidden agenda. More and more voices are coming out to critically examine Ethiopia's self serving policies and actions in Somalia.
- Some sources assert that Ethiopia with a standing army of about 800,000, largest in Sub-Sahara Africa- receives about \$2 billion dollars per annum worth of military support; but this monetary support is used to destabilize Somalia which in turn feeds insurgency.

- The Government in Addis must be held accountable for its destabilizing policies and actions and it must be able to separate itself from the political affairs of Somalia. Unless it does that, the problem in Somalia and in the sub-region will continue.

Mr. President:

- I wish to underscore that Ethiopia has been the only constant factor through out the political crisis in Somalia.
- It is a very well known fact that Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia in 2006 has contributed to the rise of the Al- Shabaab group. Ethiopia's occupation of the Somalia not only created the largest humanitarian crisis in Africa but also significantly contributed to the destabilization of the country. About 1.5 million Somalis were displaced and over 20 thousand lives were lost through its genocidal act which deserves a thorough investigation by the relevant international bodies.
- The withdrawal of Ethiopian troops from Somalia was a face-saving measure for the government in Ethiopia. Yet, refusing to learn from its military misadventures in Somalia, the Government of Ethiopia has again sent troops to Central Somalia to continue its military and political interference in the affairs of Somalia. This act should not be tolerated by any standard, in particular by the UN Security Council. This special treatment of Ethiopia is glaringly becoming a source of serious problem to the peace and stability of the sub-region. Let all countries be subjected to the same standard of set of rules, especially the UN Charter which forbids military intervention unless authorized by the UN Security Council.

Mr. President,

While I have the floor, let me clarify Eritrea's views on Somalia.

1. Eritrea strongly believes in a political solution not military solution
 2. Eritrea supports an inclusive peace process that allows all Somalis in the government and outside the government to come to the negotiating table;
 3. The peace process should be Somali owned and Somali driven; and
 4. Eritrea will continue to work constructively with all Somalis and the United Nations to achieve these objectives.
- Let me conclude by pointing out that Ethiopia has become part of the problem in Somalia and this needs to be stopped if a Somalia owned and Somali driven inclusive peace process is to take roots in Somalia.

- Let me also urge the international community to call on Ethiopia to end its occupation of sovereign Eritrean territory in order to ensure a stable and secure sub-region of Africa.

Thank you