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LETTER DATED 25 JANUARY FROM THE CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE
PERMANENT MISSION OF ETHIOPIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED
TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit to you a press release issued on
25 January 1999 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic
Republic of Ethiopia.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex
circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Fesseha A. TESSEMA
Chargé d'affaires, a.i.

Annex

Press release issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of
Ethiopia on 25 January 1999

Over the past few days a number of countries as well as the European Union and the Security Council have taken a few steps towards becoming more transparent about the ongoing crisis between Ethiopia and Eritrea, most particularly about the continuing intransigence of the Eritrean authorities and about their continuing refusal to give peace a chance.

Among others, the Governments of Italy, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of the United States of America, the European Union and now the Security Council have clearly recognized Ethiopia's acceptance of the internationally backed peace proposals of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The Security Council, in particular, has very recently welcomed Ethiopia's acceptance of the OAU proposals for a framework agreement.

Ethiopia cannot but take note of these efforts by the international community as encouraging steps that may convey to the Eritrean authorities the message that their aggression and their intransigence will not be rewarded and that the international community in this regard does care. If this is the beginning of a demonstration of resolve on the part of the international community to put the necessary pressure to bear on Eritrea to cease defying OAU and to get it to accept and implement the OAU peace proposal, then, one may indeed be confident that law-abiding nations can count on international support and solidarity and that aggressors will be told that what we live by are not the laws of the jungle but principles of law and civilized norms and behaviour.

These latest moves by the international community need, however, to be put into perspective and should be looked at against the backdrop of the complete deadlock in the peace process created by Eritrea's obduracy, which now Eritrea wishes to conceal behind the fig leaf of the yet awaited OAU clarification. But what are the clarifications sought by Eritrea? Is it not obvious that Eritrea had asked the OAU to amend the core elements of the peace proposal in Ouagadougou on 17 and 18 December at the summit meeting of the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention Management and Resolution, which demanded that Eritrea withdraw from Ethiopian territory and allow the restoration of the status quo ante - amendments which amounted to a counter-proposal and which were rejected by OAU out of hand? Plainly Eritrea knows that those positions are not going to change and the core issues of the crisis are not about to be put aside through procedural gimmicks or through filibustering. Or is it that Eritrea feels that we all have short memories, that we cannot recall what Eritrea said earlier with respect to its rejection of other peace proposals after having said all along that the devil is in the details?

The issue at hand is Eritrea's withdrawal and the restoration of the status quo ante. Yes or no is what is expected from Eritrea with regard to the only remaining issue - implementation of the OAU peace proposal. The rest is an Eritrean ploy to cover its ongoing refusal to cooperate with OAU, and its ongoing effort to expand the war even wider can hardly be missed by anyone

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following developments since Eritrea's occupation of Ethiopian territory and since their rejection of the first peace proposal by the United States and Rwanda.

It is under these circumstances that Ethiopia would find it difficult to consider these latest statements by the international community, though encouraging and positive, sufficiently forthright and commensurate with the gravity of the situation we face, which is made all the more serious in light of the continuing Eritrean attempt at expanding its occupation and its war of aggression. In truth, Eritrea is not at the moment awaiting OAU clarification but is rather preparing, under the pretext of an allegedly Ethiopian-initiated resumption of the war, to start yet another adventure. An aggressor, which until very recently had made fun of Ethiopia's by now very clear policy of reserving its right of self-defence as a bluff, is now wont to repeat again and again how Ethiopia is about to initiate an offensive.

What the past eight months have shown with sufficient clarity is that the Eritrean authorities are not for peace but are rather committed to imposing war on Ethiopia which Ethiopia has so far resisted, despite the incessant Eritrean provocation that continues unabated. In light of this, what is most appropriate now, as Ethiopia has made known repeatedly, and what is called for, to reverse what Eritrea is determined to make imminent, is the application of effective and meaningful pressure on Eritrea in all areas - political, diplomatic and economic - to force it to see reason and to give peace a chance. This is what Ethiopia still hopes the international community will do. Nothing less will suffice.
