

**Statement by Ambassador Koonjul on the Situation
between Eritrea and Ethiopia on 6 March 2002**

Allow me, first of all, to congratulate you, Mr. President, and your delegation on organizing today's meeting and on giving us the opportunity to comment on the report of the Security Council mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Before going into the substantive issues, I would also like to congratulate Ambassador Peter Kolby for his excellent leadership of the mission and for introducing the report today. Norway attaches great importance to the Ethiopia-Eritrea peace process, as has been demonstrated by the significant contribution it made in financing the work of the Boundary Commission. I would also like to thank the Government of Norway for providing us with the aircraft which facilitated our mission. Our thanks also go to the Governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea for their very warm hospitality and, of course, to Ambassador Legwaila, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) and the members of the Security Council Secretariat for preparing the mission and for the facilities provided to the members of the mission.

The mission to the two countries has been extremely useful, as it has allowed members of the Council to have first-hand information on the activities of UNMEE on the ground. The meetings with the United Nations country teams and the diplomatic corps in both countries, as well as with the religious leaders, provided us with insight into the underlying complexities of the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict.

We commend the report of the mission, which faithfully reflects the substance of the meetings and contains a set of observations and recommendations to which we fully subscribe.

We believe that the mission to the two countries was indeed very timely and opportune, especially in the light of the much-awaited decision of the Boundary Commission later this month.

As we are entering a crucial stage in the peace process, we welcome the commitments with regard to the upcoming decisions of the Boundary Commission that the leadership of both Ethiopia and Eritrea reiterated during our mission to the two countries. The commitment of the two sides to abide by the decisions of the Boundary Commission as per their undertakings under the Algiers Agreement constitutes a very important step in forging a sustained peace between the countries.

As highlighted in the mission report, we discussed with the two parties the various steps relating to the implementation of the decisions of the Boundary Commission. Once the decisions are known later this month, it will be extremely important for the two sides to sit together with UNMEE to discuss ways and means of implementing them. We would like to mention that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Legwaila, and his team, who have our full trust and support, will have a very important role to play in the months ahead. To ensure smooth implementation of the decisions of the Boundary Commission, the guarantors, facilitators and witnesses of the Ethiopian-Eritrean peace process should continue to use their good offices to urge the two sides to live up to their obligations under the Algiers Agreement.

Norway, as we can see, attaches great importance to this file of the Council, and we would like to suggest that Norway also use its good offices to complement Ambassador Legwaila's work of ensuring that the two parties implement the decisions of the Boundary Commission.

Once the decisions of the Commission are known, it will be of utmost importance for the two sides to refrain from any unilateral action that could have negative repercussions on the peace process. We highlighted this aspect during our mission to the two countries and we do likewise today. Hence, all issues pertaining to the movement of population or troops should be addressed only through dialogue within the framework to be established by the United Nations through the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Legwaila.

During our mission, we had the opportunity to visit a school where children's awareness of landmines is being raised. Indeed, anti-personnel landmines continue to hinder the proper return of internally displaced persons. When we met with the leadership of the two countries, we urged them to live up to their commitments under the Algiers Agreement to cooperate fully in ensuring an expeditious demining process, which will take us to the demarcation stage.

There is no doubt that the continued presence of UNMEE in Ethiopia and Eritrea will be of extreme importance until the demarcation and delimitation process is successfully completed. My delegation is ready to explore all possibilities that might ensure that the demining required for paving the way for a successful demarcation process is efficiently carried out in a timely manner. It is in this spirit that we would like to approach the draft resolution that would extend the mandate of UNMEE. We are also ready to consider a change in the mandate of UNMEE to include demining activities.