

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**DJIBOUTI**

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**STATEMENT BY**

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AMBASSADOR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF DJIBOUTI TO THE UNITED  
NATIONS**

**BEFORE THE SECURITY COUNCIL**

**ON THE SITUATION IN SOMALIA**

**TUESDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2017**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

**Mr. President,**

At the outset, Djibouti wishes to express its profound gratitude to the Members of the Security Council for this opportunity to offer Djibouti's perspective on the unresolved border dispute with Eritrea and the heightened tension and insecurity, following the withdrawal of Qatari forces on June 13 of this year.

It further wishes to thank H. E. Mr. Kairat Umarov, Chair of the Sanction Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea for his briefing and commend him for his tireless efforts.

We also commend H. E. Mr. Matthew Rycroft of the United Kingdom for his effort that led to the adoption of the resolution today.

**Mr. President,**

### **On Somalia**

I would like to underline Djibouti's strong concern that Al-Shabaab continues to pose a serious threat to the peace and stability of the region. We have in particular witnessed a worrying trend of multiple incredibly vicious attacks this year. According to some reports, Al-Shabaab has been involved in over half of

all violent events attributed to militant Islamist groups in Africa in the first three quarters of 2017.

We applaud the political agreement reached on 16 April 2017 on a National Security Architecture to integrate regional and federal forces, the Security Pact at the London Conference and we look forward to the Security Conference to be held in Mogadiscio in December 2017. We firmly believe that only through viable political settlement, can we help chart an agreed pathway towards creating professional national security forces. To realize our common goal of defeating and degrading Al-Shabaab, it is important to underscore that continued and enhanced support to AMISOM forces in Somalia will be required. International partners must indeed enhance their support to AMISOM by providing the mission with vital capabilities, in particular force multipliers and enablers, to help face the challenges in achieving its mandated tasks.

Finally, Djibouti reiterates its enduring commitment to peace in Somalia and its readiness to contribute in any way it can.

**Mr. President,**

**On Eritrea**

Djibouti expresses serious concern that for the fifth consecutive mandate, the Monitoring group was not permitted to visit Eritrea. Similarly, the proposed mission by the Chair could not take place due to conflicting schedules, an often cited excuse by Eritrea not to cooperate with monitoring missions. We continue to believe that Eritrea has never ceased arming and providing support to Al-Shabaab and we have shared evidence of that with the SEMG as contained in its report to the Council. Obviously, if the monitoring missions were prevented from Eritrea from carrying out their mandate, they could not draw any conclusions about Eritrea's behavior. Eritrea should commit to full cooperation with the SEMG, including full access to all information and records the mission deems necessary to review, and all personnel it deems necessary to interview.

The resolution just adopted by the Members of the Council underscores the importance of cooperation with the Monitoring Group. There must be a change in the behavior of the State of Eritrea and we hope it would not again – and in defiance of the Council – publicly vow to obstruct the work of the Monitoring Group as it did state unequivocally in April in this very Chamber and I quote: *“Eritrea does not see any added value in a visit by the Monitoring Group to the Country”* (S/PV.7925).

**Mr. President,**

It has been almost ten years since Eritrea breached international law, illegally moved into our territory and occupied Ras Doumeira and Doumeira Island. It has also been almost ten years since Eritrea took Djiboutian prisoners of war, refused to provide a list of names and identification numbers of all the prisoners and other missing persons in its custody, or otherwise account for the Djiboutians that it has in its custody and held incommunicado and in the most inhumane and degrading conditions.

It has been ten years since Eritrea started recruiting, equipping and arming groups to destabilize the region and incite violence and civil strife in Djibouti. The report of the Monitoring Group offers compelling evidence of Eritrea's attempt to exacerbate the conflict by fomenting armed rebellion against the Government of Djibouti.

We have consistently demonstrated a persistent and keen interest in the peaceful resolution of this crisis. We have left no stone unturned in our quest for the resolution of this crisis.

Following the end of Qatar's mediation efforts, and after the departure of Qatar's personnel from the international border, Eritrea moved its military personnel to

Ras Doumeira and Doumeira Island, thus contributing to heightened tensions and insecurity and threatening a new outbreak of violence. Alarmed at the possibility of resumption of hostilities, the African Union decided to deploy a fact-finding mission to both Djibouti and Eritrea.

Djibouti has cooperated and facilitated the work of the African Union mission in its endeavor to accomplish its mandate. Eritrea, characteristically, has yet to cooperate with the African Union fact-finding mission. Djibouti, as called for in the resolution just adopted, fully commits to continue cooperating with the Chairperson of the African Union.

**Mr. President,**

Four months have elapsed since the withdrawal of Qatar's observers, and Eritrea continues to illegally occupy Djibouti's sovereign territory.

Now that the unresolved border dispute is no longer subject to third party mediation, Djibouti is of the view that the Security Council must urge Eritrea and Djibouti to accept, as a matter of urgency and to avoid further escalation of violence, the peaceful settlement of the border dispute in conformity with Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations.

We thank the Members of the Security Council for their assessment of the situation and in particular note paragraph 40 “which urges the two parties to seek all available solutions to settle their border dispute peacefully in a manner consistent with international law”. In fulfillment of Security Council’s resolution, Djibouti would agree to submit the dispute for final and binding determination under the International Court of Justice or by an international arbitral tribunal established in conformity with the applicable rules of the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

Even though the Qatar-led mediation broke down as soon as it began because Eritrea refused to appoint its member to the mediating body, Djibouti very early on has invested in peace! It has submitted a legal memorandum and a comprehensive statement of pertinent facts and legal principles applicable to this matter and other matters that form part of the dispute.

We have indeed cooperated and devoted time, resources and energy to achieve a peaceful settlement. In return, we only got obfuscations in bad faith from Eritrea!

## On the Prisoners of War

Thirteen remaining prisoners of war are unaccounted for and are in Eritrean custody. Our prisoners of War are human beings not numbers! The release of our remaining POWs from the cruelties of their captivity has been uppermost in our thoughts. We will work tirelessly to ensure their prompt repatriation. Eritrea's self-serving claims to have released all the Djibouti POWs under its custody has no credibility whatsoever. Even after the two Djiboutian POWs escaped in 2011, Eritrea refused to acknowledge it had ever held them. Indeed, for eight years, Eritrea denied the existence of the four POWs it released. The African Union, in its statement issued on March 2016, *"While acknowledging the March 2016 release of Djibouti POWs, nonetheless, was compelled to call upon Eritrea to clarify the fate of any remaining prisoners and to release them"*. In contrast, the Government of Djibouti has authorized the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNCHR) to review all the individual histories of Eritrean Prisoners of War held in Djibouti since the clashes of 2008, and to make recommendations with respect to their status and need for protection.



**Mr. President,**

Djibouti's overtures were rebuffed and the offer to dialogue was refused. Instead of looking for peace, Eritrea preferred to make war! Instead of cooperating with the African Union fact-finding mission, Eritrea is yet to provide a date.

By renewing the sanctions, the Security Council has sent a clear political signal that Eritrea has only itself to blame. Indeed, any objective and impartial analysis would reach the conclusion that the responsible party itself is Eritrea. At the same time, the resolution offers Eritrea a reasonable pathway. Eritrea is legally obligated to comply with the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council because as the United Nations fact-finding mission noted in its report dated 12 September 2008 (S/2008/602) in regard to Eritrea's defiance of the Security Council: "No country should be allowed to disregard the decisions of the Security Council with impunity, as this would not augur well for peace and security in the region and globally".

**Thank you, Mr. President**