



Security Council

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Letter dated 1 February 2008 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I refer to my letter dated 21 January 2008 drawing the attention of the Security Council to the critical fuel crisis facing the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE). As indicated in that letter, I also sent a letter to Isaias Afwerki, President of Eritrea, on 21 January, as a last resort, appealing for his personal intervention to facilitate the resumption of fuel delivery to the Mission, which was completely stopped by the Eritrean authorities on 1 December 2007.

I regret to inform you that I have yet to receive a response to my letter to President Afwerki, and the fuel supply has not been reinstated. In addition, UNMEE has not been granted the authorization to import fuel directly or from the United Nations Mission in the Sudan. Consequently, the operations of the Mission are grinding to a halt. UNMEE daily patrols, for instance, have been reduced from some 60 on average before the fuel stoppage to around 20. At the same time, I am also deeply concerned about the safety and security of UNMEE personnel, particularly those deployed at remote sites, where they are solely dependent on generators for energy to power communications and to preserve food and medical supplies.

The Mission's current fuel stocks will run out in the coming few days, leaving only the strategic reserves, which are intended exclusively for emergency evacuation purposes. I therefore wish to inform you that if the Eritrean authorities do not reinstate the fuel supply by 6 February 2008, I will be compelled to instruct UNMEE to begin relocating the Mission's personnel and equipment from Eritrea in order to avoid total immobilization of the Mission and endangerment of the safety and security of United Nations personnel.

Under the UNMEE contingency plan, some of the Mission's troops would have to be temporarily relocated to the Ethiopian side until a decision is taken on the longer-term presence of the Mission, while other troops may be concentrated in Asmara for onward temporary evacuation to their home countries. A technical assessment mission led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations will travel on an urgent basis to Eritrea and Ethiopia to work with UNMEE and the Eritrean and Ethiopian authorities on developing options and recommendations for the future direction of the Mission. In this regard, should Eritrea insist on maintaining restrictions that would endanger the safety and security of UNMEE personnel, I would have to consider the total withdrawal of the Mission and recommend the termination of the Mission's mandate.



I should emphasize that the Mission's fuel reserves are sufficient only for the emergency relocation of UNMEE personnel. Consequently, the removal of all equipment will require additional fuel and time. It will therefore be essential to secure the full cooperation of Eritrea in this regard. I will keep the Security Council informed of developments regarding the temporary evacuation of the Mission.

I should be grateful if you would bring this urgent matter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Ban Ki-moon**
