



Security Council

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Letter dated 2 August 2019 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to paragraph 57 of Security Council resolution [2444 \(2018\)](#), adopted in November 2018, in which I was requested to keep the Council informed of developments towards the normalization of relations between Djibouti and Eritrea. The present letter is my second update to the Council on the issue. In February 2019, the Council was briefed by the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and I subsequently submitted a letter to the President of the Council ([S/2019/154](#)).

As I have mentioned before, the rapprochement between Eritrea and Ethiopia in July 2018 has continued to provide hope for peace and security in the region and beyond. It triggered subsequent engagement between Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia, which continues to grow. We know of ministerial-level contacts between Djibouti and Eritrea in September 2018 in Djibouti. We understand that the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Djibouti sent a letter to his counterpart in Eritrea in 2018. However, we are not aware of other bilateral contacts at the senior level between the two countries since those initial gestures.

Again, I express my gratitude to Ethiopia for its work to bring the two countries closer, and I am aware of the efforts of the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia in maintaining contact with their counterparts in Djibouti and Eritrea, including with regard to advancing the normalization of relations between the two countries.

The positions of Djibouti and Eritrea remain divergent. Djibouti has not departed from its view that the unresolved differences with Eritrea constitute a threat to Djibouti itself and to international peace and security. It still wishes to have its border dispute with Eritrea resolved through binding international arbitration and remains concerned about the fate of its soldiers missing as a result of the border clashes between Djibouti and Eritrea from 10 to 12 June 2008. Eritrea views the regional transformation as complex and is determined to avoid errors. It continues to emphasize the need to adopt a holistic approach to the normalization of all inter-State relations in the Horn of Africa and hopes for more progress in that regard, including in its relations with Djibouti. Eritrea also maintains that the region must be given sufficient political space to resolve the outstanding issues.

The different stances of both countries notwithstanding, I do not doubt their commitment to the normalization of relations. Djibouti and Eritrea have expressed interest in advancing peace and economic integration in the region.



In the meantime, it is important to note that, since my letter to the Council dated 18 February 2019, Djibouti and Eritrea have continued to act responsibly. I commend the two countries on maintaining security along their common border, which remains stable, with checkpoints on both sides and no reports of incidents or skirmishes. That has been the positive practice for more than two years, since Qatar withdrew its troops from the area in June 2017. The two countries have also refrained from negative rhetoric and have continued to maintain diplomatic relations.

We remain hopeful that, with the support of friendly countries in the region and beyond, we will see the full normalization of relations between Djibouti and Eritrea as part of a broader process of normalizing inter-State relations in the Horn of Africa. That will have a favourable impact on creating trade opportunities and attracting investments that are vital for economic growth and development in the Horn. I urge regional and subregional organizations, as well as friends of both countries, to assist and support the two countries in resolving their differences. My good offices remain available, should both parties request them.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) António **Guterres**
