



# SECURITY COUNCIL REPORT UPDATE REPORT



20 July 2009 No. 2

## DJIBOUTI/ERITREA

### Expected Council Action

On Tuesday 21 July Council members will meet in closed consultations to discuss the situation between Djibouti and Eritrea. A briefing by Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe is expected. Eritrea has not complied with the Council's demands in resolution 1862 that it withdraw its forces from the disputed area, acknowledge the dispute, engage in dialogue and abide by its obligations as a UN member state (the original deadline was 18 February). No immediate Council outcome is expected.

(For further background information, please refer to our March 2009 *Forecast*.)

### Key Recent Developments

The Council's last discussion on Djibouti/Eritrea took place on 7 April when it heard a briefing by Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe on the situation. The Secretary-General had said on 30 March in a two page letter responding to the Council's request for a report that Eritrea had not complied with the Council's January demands. He also stated that he intended to pursue his contacts with the parties as well as with relevant regional organisations to assist in the implementation of the Council's decision.

There was no Council statement following the April consultations. In a letter to the Council on 6 April Djibouti had called for implementation of resolution 1862 but said that pending a final report from the Secretary-General, there was no need for any new Council statement "as such action would tend to compromise the significance and integrity of the resolution." The Council agreed, however, that the Council president, which was Mexico at the time, would request a meeting with Eritrea's permanent representative to express the Council's concerns and that Pascoe would continue his good offices efforts and report back to the Council at a later stage.

Following the meeting between the Council president and Eritrea in April, in which Eritrea reiterated its previously expressed position, there has been no further action in the Council. The Secretariat has apparently been seeking additional time to engage with Eritrea before reporting back to the Council.

Djibouti has become increasingly concerned as time has passed. In a letter to the Council dated 19 June Djibouti recalled that a year had passed since the border conflict started on 10 June

2008, but Eritrea was still occupying the disputed area. Referring to resolution 1862 it requested that action be taken as soon as possible.

Issues relating to Eritrea are also separately featuring on the minds of Council members, in particular the role of Eritrea in Somalia where it has been accused of supplying arms and providing other support to the insurgents fighting the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG). Both the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the AU have called on the Council to impose sanctions on the government of Eritrea for its role in the Somali conflict. The Council asked the Somalia Sanctions Monitoring Group in a statement in May to investigate reports that Eritrea had supplied arms to insurgent groups.

### **Key Issues**

The key issue for the Council is that persuading Eritrea to withdraw its forces from the disputed border area and engage in a dialogue with Djibouti to solve the conflict peacefully sits against the background of wider regional issues involving Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia and in a sense all the issues have connections.

A second issue is whether there is any prospect of the Secretary-General's good offices efforts being productive.

A third question is whether stronger measures such as sanctions should be considered, or whether the Secretariat or some other intermediary should still be given more time to pursue contacts with Eritrea.

A related issue is the Council's credibility. Five months have passed since the deadline established by resolution 1862 expired.

Another issue for the Council, which also bears on the Council's credibility, is whether to approach the problems in the Horn of Africa as compartmentalised or as part of a wider regional dimension. Eritrea has consistently drawn attention to Ethiopia's failure to meet Council requests regarding the unresolved issue of its border dispute with Ethiopia. The accusations against Eritrea related to its interference in the Somali conflict, and particular the calls for sanctions, add another dimension to the Council's discussions on the Djibouti/Eritrea situation.

### **Options**

Council members are likely looking to see if Pascoe's briefing will provide any guidance on whether further efforts to engage with Eritrea are believed to be useful or not. Options for the Council include:

- encouraging the Secretary-General to continue his good offices efforts, thus continuing to buy more time;
- deciding to adopt a more regional approach by addressing all other relevant issues; and
- moving towards targeted sanctions on Eritrea.

### **Council Dynamics**

There seems to be a considerable amount of frustration among Council members with Eritrea's behaviour on the border conflict with Djibouti and its refusal to comply with the Council's demands. But at the moment they seem much more concerned with Eritrea's interference in Somalia, where the TFG is being seriously threatened by the insurgency. It seems therefore

likely that discussions on any further measures against Eritrea will focus on its role in Somalia, but may also address the Djibouti border dispute.

France is the lead country on this issue in the Council.

## UN Documents

<p><b>Selected Security Council Resolution</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S/RES/1862 (14 January 2009) demanded that Eritrea withdraw its forces to the positions of the status <i>quo ante</i> within five weeks and requested a report from the Secretary-General by 25 February.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Selected Security Council Presidential Statements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S/PRST/2009/15 (15 May 2009) called on the Sanctions Monitoring Group to investigate reports that Eritrea had supplied arms to insurgent groups in Somalia. (It also condemned the renewed fighting by Al-Shabaab and other extremists in Somalia and demanded an immediate end to the violence.)</li> <li>• S/PRST/2008/20 (12 June 2008) called for a ceasefire between Djibouti and Eritrea.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Letter from the Secretary-General</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S/2009/163 (30 March 2009) was the Secretary-General's response to the Council's request in resolution 1862 for a report on the situation and the parties compliance with their obligations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S/2009/319 (19 June 2009) was a letter from Djibouti requesting action on its border dispute with Eritrea as soon as possible.</li> <li>• S/2009/217 (23 April 2009) was a letter from Djibouti submitting to the Council decisions of IGAD, AU, the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference calling for the implementation of resolution 1862.</li> <li>• S/2009/180 (6 April 2009) was a letter from Djibouti calling for the implementation of resolution 1862 and asking the Council to refrain from making any further statement "as such action would only tend to compromise the significance and integrity of the resolution."</li> <li>• S/2009/28 (12 January 2009) was a letter from Eritrea expressing disappointment at the discussions in the Council to adopt a resolution.</li> <li>• S/2008/766 (4 December 2008) was a letter from Djibouti refuting Eritrea's statements on the crisis.</li> <li>• S/2008/700 (10 November 2008) was a letter from Eritrea criticising the Council for considering action against Eritrea and, referring to Ethiopia, accusing the Council of double standards.</li> <li>• S/2008/690 (4 November 2008) was a letter from Eritrea drawing attention to Ethiopia's occupation of Eritrean territory and calling on the Council to act.</li> <li>• S/2008/673 (24 October 2008) was a letter from Eritrea, referring to the circulation of the report from the Eritrea-Ethiopia Border Commission as a document of the Council on 3 October, accusing the US of orchestrating the Eritrea/Djibouti conflict as a "diversionary scheme".</li> <li>• S.PV.6000 (23 October 2008) was a Council debate in which Djibouti's President Ismail Omar Guelleh participated.</li> <li>• S/2008/635 (3 October 2008) was the note from Djibouti requesting that its</li> </ul>

president be allowed to address the Council.

- S/2008/602 (11 September 2008) was the report from the fact-finding mission that was dispatched at the Council's request.
- S/2008/446 (7 July 2008) was a letter from Eritrea stating that Djibouti's accusations and the Council's presidential statement of 12 June were part of an attempt at diverting attention from Ethiopia's acts of aggression against Eritrea.
- SC/9376 (25 June 2008) was the Council press statement on Djibouti and Eritrea requesting that a fact-finding mission be sent to the region.
- S/PV.5924 (24 June 2008) was a Council debate in which Djibouti and Eritrea presented their views on the crisis between the two countries.
- S/2008/294 (5 May 2008) was a letter from Djibouti bringing the border situation to the Council's attention.

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