



SECURITY COUNCIL REPORT UPDATE REPORT



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Ethiopia/Eritrea

Expected Council Action

The Council is considering a resolution that would end the mandate of the UN Mission in Ethiopia-Eritrea (UNMEE) but there are divisions on whether to establish a military observer group, on the Ethiopian side of the border as a replacement or to ask the Secretary-General for specific recommendations to set up a new mission at a later date.

Key Developments and Background

The UNMEE mandate expires on 31 July but Council members are keen to act on the issue well in advance of the expiry date. A draft resolution, circulated by Belgium, would “terminate” UNMEE’s mandate with immediate effect but emphasise the continuation of the obligations of both parties under the 2000 Algiers agreement. The draft also proposes two options for the future:

- deployment of a military UN Observer Mission for Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNOMEE), based in Ethiopia, until 31 December. Its mandate would be to report developments that could undermine the peace process promote confidence building measures and help mediate incidents along the border.
- request ask the Secretary-General to draw up proposals for a future UN presence.

Eritrea, in a letter on 18 June from President Isaias Afwerki, said the only issue was Ethiopian withdrawal from its territories, adding that the UN cannot have legal authority to legitimise occupation.” Ethiopian Minister Meles Zenawi, in a 17 June letter, said Ethiopia was open to a UN presence, providing it did not imply or signify a “continuation whatsoever of UNMEE under a new arrangement.” He said he doubted anyone “would quarrel with the idea that this whole episode has not been exactly edifying for the Council.” It seems that Ethiopia prefers two separate resolutions.

UNMEE was established pursuant to the Algiers Ceasefire Agreement which ended the 1998-2000 Ethiopian-Eritrean border war in which tens of thousands were killed.

In November 2007, the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (also established under the Algiers Agreement) dissolved itself, having delineated a “virtual” border in 2002. But it was

unable to demarcate the frontier on the ground because Ethiopia rejected the binding ruling that the disputed town of Badme should go to Eritrea. Eritrea subsequently blamed the United Nations for not enforcing the Commission's decisions.

In violation of the Algiers Agreement, Eritrea moved troops into the buffer zone, called the Temporary Security Zone. Ethiopia carried out exercises in areas adjacent to the 25 kilometre-wide zone. Asmara placed severe restrictions on the movement of UNMEE and in late 2007 cut fuel supplies for the peacekeepers. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in February relocated UNMEE troops out of Eritrea. Some remaining military personnel were relocated to Ethiopia.

In a report to the Council on 7 April, the Secretary-General presented several options. These included an observer mission in the border area, liaison offices in Asmara and Addis, or termination of the mandate. He warned, however, that the complete withdrawal of UNMEE could risk a resumption "of open hostilities". On 30 April, the Council in a statement said Eritrea's "obstructions" of UNMEE had undermined the basis for the UN mission, and urged both countries to refrain from threatening to use force against each other.

Key Issues

The underlying issue is the risk of resumed warfare between the two nations. The border dispute has progressively widened with conflict spilling over into Sudan, Somalia and very recently Djibouti—which serves as the main port for Ethiopian goods. (On 10 June, conflict erupted between Djibouti and Eritrea on the Red Sea shores. Djibouti reported at least 12 of its soldiers dead and 55 wounded. The Council issued a statement on 12 June condemning Eritrea's military action and urging both parties to resolve the dispute peacefully.)

Immediate issues include whether to simply terminate UNMEE or whether to look at a range of measures to resolve the underlying problem.

Options

The Council could press Ethiopia to accept the boundary commission decision by imposing sanctions. But this is unlikely. The Council could simply establish a UN buffer group of observers. Alternatively it could go further and begin to address the physical border demarcation issues and promote a dialogue between the two countries.

Council Dynamics

Council members seem equally divided between those favouring a military observer presence and those seeking a more far reaching strategy to address the underlying problems. Some are concerned that a failure to address the underlying issues will be interpreted as taking Ethiopia's side.

UN Documents

Selected Security Council Resolutions

- S/RES/1798 (30 January 2008) extended UNMEE's mandate until 31 July 2008.

- S/RES/1767 (30 July 2007) extended UNMEE's mandate until 31 January 2008.
- S/RES/1741 (30 January 2007) extended UNMEE until 31 July 2007 and approved the drawdown.
- S/RES/1710 (29 September 2006) extended UNMEE until 31 January 2007.
- S/RES/1681 (31 May 2006) extended UNMEE until 30 September 2006 and downsized the mission to 2,300 troops.
- S/RES/1640 (23 November 2005) demanded border demarcation and the lifting of restrictions on the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea.
- S/RES/1320 (15 September 2000) increased UNMEE and authorised it to monitor the Temporary Security Zone.
- S/RES/1312 (31 July 2000) established UNMEE.
- S/RES/1298 (17 May 2000) established an arms embargo against both parties.

Selected Security Council Presidential Statements

- S/PRST/2008/20 (12 June 2008) condemned Eritrea's military action against Djibouti.
- S/PRST/2008/12 (30 April 2008) condemned Eritrea's obstructions of UNMEE and urged both countries not to threaten to use force against each other.
- S/PRST/2008/7 (15 February 2008) condemned Eritrea's lack of cooperation with UNMEE.
- S/PRST/2005/62 (14 December 2005) agreed with the relocation of part of UNMEE's staff in Eritrea to Ethiopia.

Selected Secretary-General's Reports

- S/2008/226 (7 April 2008) was a special report on proposals for UNMEE.
- S/2008/145 (3 March 2008) was a special report on the relocation of UNMEE from Eritrea.
- S/2008/40 (23 January 2008) and Corr. 1 (24 January 2008) was the latest regular UNMEE report.
- S/2007/645 (1 November 2007) was the Secretary-General's UNMEE report on obstructions to peacekeepers.
- S/2007/440 (18 July 2007) was the Secretary-General's report which called for efforts to break the peace process stalemate.
- S/2007/33 (22 January 2007) included a strong response from the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission to criticisms made by Ethiopia in its November 2006 letter.
- S/2006/992 (15 December 2006) contained options for UNMEE and the November Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission decision.
- S/2005/142 (7 March 2005) contained the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission's appraisal of the stalling of the demarcation, a historical summary of the process, and the 2002 Demarcation Directions.
- S/2003/1186 (19 December 2003) detailed Ethiopia's refusal to allow demarcation and responses from Eritrea and the Eritrea-Ethiopia

Boundary Commission.

- S/2003/257 (6 March 2003) and Add.1 (31 March 2003) detailed the Ethiopian and the Commission's views on the border.
- S/2000/785 (9 August 2000) reported on the size and mandate for UNMEE.

Selected Letters

- S/2008/294 (5 May 2008) was Djibouti's complaint against Eritrea on border crisis.
- S/2008/287 (30 April 2008) was Eritrea's response to 30 April Council statement.
- S/2008/172 (10 March 2008) contained Eritrea's response to the Secretary-General's report on the relocation of UNMEE.
- S/2008/156 (4 March 2008) was the letter conveying Eritrea's response to the UN Secretariat's reports on Eritrea's conduct.
- S/2008/66 (1 February 2008) was the letter from the Secretary-General informing of Eritrea's continued restrictions of supply of fuel to UNMEE and his intention to send a technical assessment mission to the region.

Other Relevant Facts

Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Chief of Mission

Vacant, pending appointment; acting representative Azouz Ennifar (Tunisia)

Size and Composition

- Maximum authorised strength: 4,200 military personnel
- Strength as of 31 May 2008: 240 troops and 88 military observers
- Key troop-contributing countries: India, Uruguay and Kenya

Cost

Approved budget: 1 July 2007-30 June 2008: \$118.99 million

Duration

31 July 2000 to present; mandate expires 31 July 2008

Useful Additional Sources

- Human Rights Watch, *Collective Punishment: War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity in the Ogaden Area of Ethiopia's Somali Regional State*, 12 June 2008. <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2008/06/12/ethiop19029.htm>
- International Crisis Group, *Beyond the Fragile Peace Between Ethiopia and Eritrea: Averting New War*, Africa Report N°141, 17 June 2008 <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5490&l=1>