



SECURITY COUNCIL REPORT UPDATE REPORT



26 May 2006 No. 5

ETHIOPIA/ERITREA

The Council is expected to adopt a resolution on 30 or 31 May to downsize the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) to an observer mission with significantly less troops, and change the mandate.

There are divisions inside the Council on the precise number of personnel to be phased out, as well as the shape of the new mandate. The US has proposed that the final number of troops be 1,500 with an additional mandate on the demarcation of the border. But most Council members and troop contributing countries would prefer a number above that. The Secretariat has indicated that an additional mandate as proposed by the US with less troops would be difficult to implement.

The actual phasing out will take several months to be completed. Possibly this will offer the parties a window of opportunity to comply with Council demands. Some Council members consider that there would be incentives for both parties to avoid the downsizing, since UNMEE would not be able to patrol the temporary security zone and would not have enough resources to fully support demarcation activities.

On the other hand, UNMEE's downsizing will also contribute to a compromise to unlock additional resources for the UN Operation in Côte D'Ivoire.

The downsizing decision is the culmination of months of Council activity and successive technical rollovers of UNMEE. It represents a final reaction by the Council that, after all the warnings, not enough progress has been made on compliance with Council demands for the final demarcation of the border as well as on the lifting of restrictions against UNMEE.

Although the parties met again with the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) on 17 May, but no agreement was reached on the resumption of demarcation activities.

Eritrea reportedly sent a letter to the EEBC President, Sir Elihu Lauterpacht, stating that it would lift the restrictions on UNMEE if Ethiopia accepted the EEBC delimitation decision – “final and binding” according to the Algiers Peace Agreement – without preconditions, and took steps to ensure the final demarcation of the border according to that decision.

Ethiopia, on the other hand, reportedly stated that it accepted the delimitation decision, but added the qualification that the contested areas should be discussed as the demarcation proceeded.

UN Documents

Selected Security Council Resolutions

- S/RES/1678 (15 May 2006) extended UNMEE until 31 May.
- S/RES/1640 (23 November 2005) demanded border demarcation and the lifting of restrictions to UNMEE.
- 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.

Selected Presidential Statement

- S/PRST/2006/10 (24 February 2006) welcomed the meeting of the Witnesses to the Algiers Peace Agreement.
- S/PRST/2005/62 (14 December 2005) agreed with the temporary relocation to Ethiopia of part of UNMEE's staff in Eritrea.

Selected Secretary-General's Reports

- S/2006/140 (6 March 2006) is the latest report.
- S/2006/1 (3 January 2006) contained options for the future of UNMEE.
- S/2005/142 (7 March 2005) contained the EEBC's appraisal of the stalling of the demarcation, a historical summary of the process, and the 2002 Demarcation Directions.
- S/2004/973 Add. 1 (27 December 2004) contained the five-point Ethiopian proposal.

Selected Letters

- S/2006/126 (24 February 2006) contained the Witnesses' statement on the recent talks.
- S/2005/774 (9 December 2005) was a letter from Ethiopia's foreign minister indicating Addis Ababa's position on demarcation.
- S/2005/737 (25 November 2005) contained Eritrea's criticisms of resolution 1640.
- S/2000/1183 (12 December 2000) contained the Algiers Peace Agreement.
- S/2000/601 (19 June 2000) contained the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement.