



# SECURITY COUNCIL REPORT

## UPDATE REPORT



5 June 2006 No. 2

## ETHIOPIA/ERITREA

On 31 May, the Council adopted resolution 1681, authorising the downsizing of the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) from 3,277 to up to 2,300 troops, including 230 military observers, and extending UNMEE's mandate until 30 September.

The downsizing represented the materialisation of threats against the parties should they refuse to comply with Council demands for the demarcation of the border without preconditions and for the lifting of restrictions against UNMEE.

There were divisions on the precise number and whether this should be accompanied by changes to the mandate. Early discussions focused on a US proposal that UNMEE be downsized to 1,500 troops and the mandate changed to include security for the staff of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC), *inter alia*, and to reflect the reduction in UNMEE's monitoring capabilities.

Some delegations – the US and France in particular – see the downsizing also as a way to unlock resources on behalf of the UN Operation in Côte D'Ivoire (UNOCI).

However, most members (Russia, China and the UK in particular), troop contributing countries (TCCs) and Ethiopia were not comfortable with the proposal.

There were concerns with the balance between size and mandate, as well as with the integrity of the temporary security zone (TSZ). The Secretariat expressed concern with reductions resulting in numbers below the minimum necessary for UNMEE's tasks. Some members were also reluctant to make any changes to the mandate either as a matter of principle or so as to avoid setting precedents for similar situations.

The final compromise kept the original mandate and reduced the troop ceiling to 2,300.

It is expected that phasing out will start soon and will take some months to fully implement. In addition to developing military plans, time is expected to be needed for the Secretariat to consult with TCCs as well as to make the arrangements to transport troops and equipment.

This process may offer the parties a window of opportunity for progress on the final demarcation of the border and the ongoing restrictions on UNMEE's freedom of movement. But resolution 1681 does not mention whether the Council would be willing to review UNMEE's troop cap in the event progress is made on those issues.

1

And the prospects of success in the upcoming EEBC meeting (now scheduled for mid-June) are unclear. There is also a possibility that the meeting may be postponed, perhaps until September. Eritrea has voiced criticism of the Council for not taking action against Ethiopia's refusal to allow the demarcation without preconditions under the EEBC delimitation decision, and Ethiopia has accused Eritrea of endangering the TSZ and has supported the view that further dialogue is needed on the issue of the final demarcation.

## UN Documents

### Selected Security Council Resolutions

- S/RES/1681 (31 May 2006) extended UNMEE until 30 September and downsized the mission to 2,300 troops.
- 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 TSZ.
- S/RES/1312 (31 July 2000) established UNMEE.

### Selected Presidential Statement

- 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.