



## Security Council

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### Letter dated 18 February 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 \(2018\)](#), in which the Council requested that I keep it informed of developments towards the normalization of relations between Djibouti and Eritrea. This is my first opportunity to do so since the adoption of the resolution in November 2018.

We are witnessing a historic moment in the Horn of Africa. The rapprochement between Eritrea and Ethiopia, begun in July 2018, has created a positive momentum for peace and security in the region and beyond. The subsequent engagement between Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia led to initial senior-level contacts between Djibouti and Eritrea in September 2018 in Djibouti. Furthermore, facilitation by Saudi Arabia resulted in an initial short encounter between the leaders of Djibouti and Eritrea, also in September 2018, in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. We are not aware of any other bilateral contacts between the two countries at a senior level since that time. However, the recently-concluded African Union Summit commended the Presidents of Djibouti and Eritrea for their efforts and commitments to normalize relations between the two countries, in the framework of relevant Peace and Security Council communiqués and United Nations Security Council resolution [2444 \(2018\)](#).

We are informed that the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia maintains close contact with his counterparts in Djibouti and Eritrea, including with respect to advancing the normalization of relations between the two countries. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Ethiopia for its efforts in bringing the two countries closer.

The positions of the two parties remain divergent, although I believe that their differences do not call into question their commitment to the normalization of their relations. Djibouti and Eritrea have both expressed their satisfaction with the positive developments in the Horn of Africa and their interest in advancing peace and economic integration in the region.

Djibouti maintains that its unresolved differences with Eritrea constitute a threat to Djibouti itself, and to international peace and security. Therefore, Djibouti wishes to have its border dispute with Eritrea resolved through a binding international arbitration. Djibouti also remains concerned about the fate of its soldiers still missing as a result of the border clashes between Djibouti and Eritrea from 10 to 12 June 2008. Djibouti has clearly communicated its interest in a meaningful bilateral dialogue aimed at reaching an agreement on these issues. Eritrea has been keen to stress the complexity and difficulty of regional transformation and its determination to avoid errors, after two decades of difficulties, while emphasizing a holistic approach to the



normalization of all inter-State relations in the Horn of Africa and hoping for more progress in this regard, including in its relations with Djibouti.

In the meantime, it is important to note that Djibouti and Eritrea have continued to act responsibly and have maintained peace and security along their common border. The two countries have not engaged in any negative rhetoric or any unfriendly acts towards each other. Moreover, they have engaged in some symbolic and practical gestures to build confidence and enhance people-to-people relations. These gestures include an agreement to allow civilian flights between the two capitals, as well as a sports competition, planned for April 2019, in which Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia would participate.

We hope that, with the support of friendly countries in the region, 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 region. I remain available, should both parties request it, to offer my good offices.

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

*(Signed)* António **Guterres**

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