



Security Council

Sixty-third year

5924th meeting

Tuesday, 24 June 2008, 3.30 p.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Khalilzad/Mr. Wolff	(United States of America)
<i>Members:</i>	Belgium	Mr. Grauls
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Viločić
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Spatafora
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Ettalhi
	Panama	Mr. Arias
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Quarrey
	Viet Nam	Mr. Hoang Chi Trung

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

Letter dated 11 June 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Djibouti to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2008/387)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.40 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

Letter dated 11 June 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Djibouti to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2008/387)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Djibouti and Eritrea, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I request the Protocol Officer to escort His Excellency Mr. Dileita Mohamed Dileita, Prime Minister of Djibouti, to a seat at the Council table.

Mr. Dileita Mohamed Dileita, Prime Minister of Djibouti, was escorted to a seat at the Council table.

The President: On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to Mr. Dileita Mohamed Dileita, Prime Minister of Djibouti.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. João Honwana, Director of the Africa Division of the Department of Political Affairs.

It is so decided.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mrs. Alice Mungwa, Adviser in the Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union.

It is so decided.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Yahya Mahmassani, Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in response to a letter dated 11 June 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Djibouti addressed to the President of the Security Council, which is contained in document S/2008/387.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. João Honwana, Director of the Africa Division of the Department of Political Affairs, to whom I now give the floor.

Mr. Honwana: At the request of the Council, I have the honour to present an update on the latest reports we have received about the situation on the border between Djibouti and Eritrea. At the outset, I would like to reiterate that the United Nations does not have a presence in the area and that this briefing relies only on reports we have received. I look forward to hearing the Prime Minister's briefing for greater detail.

Since the Secretariat's last briefing to the Council, all our interlocutors have described the situation at the border as calm but tense, with military regroupings on either side of the border. Apparently, the de facto ceasefire that Djibouti and Eritrea have observed since last week continues to hold. According to local Somali radio, Eritrea has reportedly deployed heavy military equipment in Ras Doumeira, north-east of Obock. Another source reported the reinforcement of Eritrean troops near the town of Daddato, located north-west of Obock. That may indicate tensions in the north-west and the north-east of Djibouti. A Somali newspaper also reported that, on 15 June, an Eritrean gunboat was sunk after being hit by a missile. All the crew of the gunboat are believed dead and it is not known whether the missile was fired by a French warship or the Djiboutian navy.

While the local press and other sources report that Djiboutian forces have reoccupied lost ground and have massively regrouped near the border, other reports indicate that they have in fact retreated to a position about four kilometres from the border in order

to be out of range of Eritrean mortars. We also understand that there is a new Ethiopian military presence on the Ethiopian side of the meeting point of the borders between Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti.

Reportedly, some 300 French troops have been placed in the north-east of Djibouti to provide medical and logistical support to the Djiboutian army. The State Secretary of the French Ministry of Defence was expected to arrive in Djibouti today. He is expected to meet with President Ismail Omar Guelleh to discuss the border crisis and to visit French troops.

On 11 June, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Eritrea issued a press statement accusing Djibouti of conducting hostile anti-Eritrean campaigns and “concocted animosity”. On 12 June, Eritrean State radio in the local Tigrigna language blamed Djibouti for the border issue and accused the United States of inflaming regional conflicts. That was in response to a United States State Department press release issued earlier that condemned “Eritrea’s military aggression against Djibouti”.

On the same day, during an emergency meeting, the League of Arab States called on Eritrea to withdraw its forces from the border area. France and Egypt have also urged Eritrea to allow mediation efforts into the conflict. In addition, on 12 June, the African Union joined the United Nations in calling for talks between Eritrea and Djibouti to end the border clashes. In a statement, the African Union Peace and Security Council urged the two countries to show maximum restraint, resort to dialogue to resolve any bilateral disputes and give their full cooperation to all efforts in that regard.

The Secretariat remains in close contact with our colleagues in the region and regularly meets with the Permanent Representatives to receive views from both sides. In a meeting with me on 19 June, the Permanent Representative of Eritrea acknowledged that skirmishes had occurred in the border area a few days before, but he said that Djibouti had initiated the attack and that Eritrea had only reacted in self-defence. He blamed the United States for creating wars in the Horn of Africa region. He also reiterated Eritrea’s peaceful intentions towards Djibouti and questioned the Security Council’s hastiness in issuing a presidential statement last week. He furthermore mentioned that the African Group would hold a meeting on the border issue with the League of Arab States, as well as the

Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Eritrea, in New York on 23 June. He claimed that Djiboutian dramatization and internationalization of the border incident had gotten out of hand.

In turn, on the same day, the Permanent Representative of Djibouti said that the situation at the border was very risky and could ignite into a war at any minute. Many soldiers had died as a result of the fighting and there were numerous troops and heavy equipment present at the border. He said that Eritrea had thus far failed to explain the reasons for its military presence in the area and refused to resume dialogue with Djibouti. Eritrea had also rebuffed the President of Yemen’s offer to act as a mediator. The Permanent Representative added that Djibouti had never had any intention of waging war, but had been forced to respond to the attacks by Eritrea on the ground. He stated that the current state of affairs was costly to Djibouti and that both countries needed to return to the status quo ante.

The Secretary-General had an excellent meeting with the Prime Minister of Djibouti yesterday. The Prime Minister reiterated that this was a war situation involving massive military regrouping on either side of the border. They agreed on the urgent need to resolve the situation through dialogue and confidence-building and a return to the status quo ante. We believe that the ceasefire should be consolidated, the matter should be settled peacefully and the status quo ante should be restored.

The President: I thank Mr. Honwana for his briefing. I now invite the Prime Minister of Djibouti, His Excellency Mr. Dileita Mohamed Dileita, to take the floor.

Mr. Dileita (Djibouti) (spoke in French): First of all, I would like to present to the Council my Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, who has travelled here with me today.

At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the manner in which you have been leading the work of the Council and for your delegation’s efforts last week throughout the consultation process, designed to draw the attention of the members of the Security Council to the great urgency of the conflict between Djibouti and Eritrea. I would also like to extend my thanks to Mr. João Honwana for his briefing to the Council today.

I am pleased to meet again with members of the Council whom I met during their visit to Djibouti within the framework of inter-Somali peace talks, which produced the peace accord that has given rise within the international community to great hope and that is a solid basis for a lasting peace in Somalia. I would also like to state how pleased we have been, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and myself, to have spoken with most of members of the Council in a climate of confidence and brotherhood since our arrival here in the New York.

May I remind members of the Council of the origins of this latest crisis in the Horn of Africa, which has had more than its share of war, destruction and regression of all types, and which we could have, in our view, done well without. The relations between Djibouti and Eritrea since the independence of Eritrea in 1993 have encountered difficulties that, thus far, have been overcome thanks to a determination to settle any misunderstanding through dialogue. The conflict which today has already caused many casualties since Eritrean troops attacked positions of the Djibouti army on 10 June, forcing it to defend its territory, is deserving of the attention of the members of this important United Nations body, the mandate of which is the maintenance of international peace and security, pursuant to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

I am not here simply to make unfounded allegations against Eritrea; it would not be a good idea to make such a long trip with the intention of discrediting Eritrean leaders. We have never and will never be part of an anti-Eritrean front. Quite the contrary, we have always tried to maintain pragmatic relations with that country. We believe that the international community should be well informed of the ins and outs of this conflict because the situation on the ground remains of great concern.

The current crisis is very different from the preceding ones for several reasons. First of all, it is different in its form because, for the first time, Eritrean troops have not only violated Djiboutian territory, but they have occupied it and have even begun construction work on our soil. Furthermore, it is different as to substance because while all previous attempts were more or less avowed claims of an important part of our Djiboutian territory, the current motivations are still obscure and suspect in the eyes of Djiboutian authorities.

In the absence of a clear explanation on the part of the Eritrean leaders, our Government has strong suspicions that they are guided by greed caused by the avowed ambition of Djibouti to become a regional cross-border maritime hub with the construction of a new modern port and infrastructure projects. Thanks to the confidence of investors and our position in this area of the Red Sea which is highly strategic for world navigation, Djibouti has embarked upon the path of growth and development in order to become a regional trading centre.

But also we think that the Asmara authorities are pursuing their confrontation with Ethiopia through a conflict with Djibouti, through which transits most of the merchandise headed for Ethiopia. Thus, it is without question an attempt to regionalize the conflict.

The Council is not at all ignorant of how much the impasse in the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea constitutes a major source of instability in the Horn of Africa, in particular for peace in Somalia. The international community must therefore bring all its weight to bear until Eritrea begins to take into account the minimum international standards involved in relations between nations.

Finally, we cannot pass over in silence the fact that the attack of the Eritrean army took place immediately following the signing in Djibouti of an agreement between part of the opposition in Somalia and the Somali Transitional Government under the aegis of the United Nations. At this stage, we are entitled to ask legitimate questions about the role supposedly played by the Asmara authorities and the use that they have made of the Somali conflict which, in our view, should not be used as a tool.

As for the Eritrean authorities, they are indeed remaining mysterious as to their true objectives and are hiding behind a total denial of the dispute, or when they implicitly deign to admit the existence of the dispute that they make unfounded and unreasonable allegations by referring to external interference that would supposedly be the cause of all the tensions in the region. Of course, we believe that this attitude of denying reality is irresponsible since the media throughout the world have reported an outbreak of hostilities, and armed conflict has in fact been initiated by the Eritrean armed forces.

But any arguments from the Eritrean authorities fall short when one examines the situation on the

ground because the Djibouti military forces have indeed been attacked solely by Eritrean forces; we have not seen any other force involved on the field of battle. Moreover, all the reasons given remain inadmissible to our Government and for our entire country, which is prepared to defend in every way possible its political and territory integrity.

Our country is not, in principle, a country with an aggressive culture; even less so are our people bellicose. However, we should not be seen as being weak, hesitant, or capable of intimidation. The Republic of Djibouti will not at all hesitate once again, if necessary, to exercise its right to legitimate self-defence accorded under the Charter to any country in order to guarantee its national sovereignty.

The basic pillars and principles of Djiboutian diplomacy in the region and throughout the world are no longer a secret. As a long-standing haven a peace in a troubled region, our country has been a refuge for all the victims of fratricidal wars in the region and is in a good position to assess the value of peace and the practice of tolerance. More particularly, our regional policy is fundamentally based on respect for good neighbourly relations and non-interference in the internal affairs of the countries of the region as well as neutrality, friendship and cooperation with a view to economic development for the benefit of all the peoples in the region.

Guided by these values, we have taken all necessary steps in order to find a diplomatic way out of the current crisis with Eritrea in order to avoid being drawn again into a conflict that we found and still find to be useless.

Djiboutian diplomacy has been very active bilaterally as well as multilaterally. Mediation has been proposed by friendly countries and by regional organizations, such as the African Union and the League of Arab States. Finally, we have come before the Security Council through our letters dated respectively the 5 and 9 May and 11 June 2008.

While all of our attention and all of our efforts have been devoted to a quest for a diplomatic solution to the crisis, Eritrea has rejected all mediation and has persisted in denying the existence of any problem. Of course, at the same time, it has taken advantage of this situation to make further territorial gains and to strengthen the positions of its army. All of these manoeuvres were clearly designed to unleash a war

that we would like to avoid until the last minute, as is proven by the attack of 10 June. My country was precipitously forced into a fratricidal war which we detest.

In this regard, I would like to thank the members of the Council, who have heeded our appeal and have acted in an expeditious way, as required by the urgency and seriousness of the situation. The preservation of human life and the cessation of the unjustified hostilities — which are also unjust for the peoples of Djibouti and Eritrea — are and remain an absolute priority for my Government. My country cannot conceive of a scenario of indefinite impasse. That would surely try our patience, our morale and our resources.

We welcome the Council's presidential statement (S/PRST/2008/20) unequivocally condemning Eritrea's military action against Djibouti in Ras Doumeira and Doumeira Island, as well as the statements issued by all regional and subregional organizations. They confirm our initial view of a settlement of the crisis, that the use of force cannot, in any way, be an alternative to dialogue or diplomacy.

We reaffirm our confidence in the capacity of the Council, consistent with its functions and power under the Charter, and we express the hope that a settlement of the dispute with Eritrea will come about by peaceful means in accordance with the principles of justice and international law.

The failure of the authorities of that country to honour all of the obligations they have undertaken under the Charter is clear, because the use of force and the violation of our territory are a reality. No pretext can exempt Eritrea from its obligations to the international community. Furthermore, we note the persistent defiance with regard to all the good offices missions that have been undertaken, including the attempt at mediation with the head of State of Eritrea by Mr. Louis Michel, European Commissioner for development and humanitarian aid, following the summit meeting of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which yielded no better result than previous initiatives.

For its part, the Republic of Djibouti is entirely ready to honour its responsibilities, as it has always done, and will continue tirelessly its efforts to engage in dialogue with a view to establishing lasting peace

and stability throughout the region and throughout the world.

Peace and the security of shipping throughout the region are the key stakes in this conflict. As the Council is already aware, the Bab al-Mandab Strait at the southern part of the Red Sea is a strategic strait separating the Arab peninsula from East Africa and is a key passage for international trade and for bringing oil to Europe and Asia. Moreover, analysts today agree that control of the strait will be vital in this conflict. All of our initiatives to prevent conflict have been in vain. Although military hostilities have ceased since 12 June, the consequences would be disastrous if there were to be no reasonable and proportionate response from the Security Council and the international community in the face of this explosive and dangerous situation, which is developing rapidly.

Indeed, since the Council's 12 June condemnation, there have been no positive developments, and there has been no sign of goodwill regarding a peaceful settlement of the dispute from the Eritrean authorities. Quite the contrary: as I address the Council, whereas our army has withdrawn several kilometres since 12 June, Eritrean troops have once again infiltrated the territory of Djibouti. This massive incursion into our country by Eritrean troops, who are present all along our common border without any valid justification should not be taken lightly by the Council; it must be given the importance it deserves.

For lack of any strong international intervention based on dialogue and the disengagement of forces, we are faced with a dilemma: choosing between the status quo and war. Clearly, neither of these two options can be contemplated by our Government. The Security Council, in a word, must be aware of the danger of inaction, which would be appeasing a bellicose and unpredictable leader. It would be, in fact, ill-advised, through negligence or lack of attention, to let this situation remain as it is. Action by the Council to prevent a resumption of fighting between the armed forces, which are now within firing range of each other, would be, we feel, wiser and more realistic. That would prevent an escalation of violence and widespread conflagration, the results of which could not at all be predicted.

Unfortunately, this scenario is well known to the peoples of our region. The only certainty would be a spiral of war and tragedy with great loss of human life.

I would add that, if the situation of extreme tension were to continue because of the disdainful attitude of the Eritrean authorities, who have turned a deaf ear to all expressions of goodwill, the latest being a proposal for mediation by the President of the Republic of Yemen, His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Ali Sallah, which was rejected by the Eritrean authorities, for who the only option remains war. We truly hope that Eritrea does not misjudge the determination of Djibouti and the indignation and growing impatience in the face of its tactics and its aggressive behaviour.

In conclusion, my Government is prepared to cooperate with the Security Council and the Secretary-General in their efforts to resolve this unfortunate unilateral military adventure, which merits the Council's urgent, serious and great attention.

The President: I thank the Prime Minister of Djibouti for his statement.

I now give invite the representative of Eritrea to take the floor.

Mr. Desta (Eritrea): In the interests of time, I will read a shortened version of my statement. I kindly request that the full text be circulated in the Council Chamber.

I wish to thank the presidency and the Council for according my delegation the opportunity to share its views on the current developments between Eritrea and Djibouti. Eritrea observes with great regret that the Government of the Republic of Djibouti has chosen to engage in the levelling of incessant and baseless accusations against the Government of Eritrea for the past two months. Eritrea has made no incursion into the territory of Djibouti, and it does not have any territorial ambitions in the region.

There have been numerous contacts between officials of the two Governments, including at the highest level. The two leaders spoke about the current development and decided to address it in a calm and quiet manner that takes into account the sisterly relationship between the two countries and the need to ensure peace and security in the subregion.

However, for reasons that are best known to the authorities of Djibouti, the understanding reached by the highest officials of both countries was put aside and the matter was taken to the public arena, with totally unwarranted hostile anti-Eritrea campaigns. Attempts to drag the Government of Eritrea into animosity

continued, but, Eritrea did not respond to the hostile campaign. Instead, it chose the path of restraint and patience. This was for profound reasons, because Eritrea is keenly aware that the provocative campaign originates from — and is designed and packaged — elsewhere. Indeed, Djibouti and its people cannot, by any stretch of imagination, have any interest in this affair. The issue is not in reality an agenda or any other matter that regards Djibouti.

The fact is there is no territorial or other dispute between Eritrea and Djibouti. Djibouti's unwarranted hostile campaign is underpinned by, and synchronized with, other ulterior motives and regional developments.

Allow me to elaborate further on the dimensions and ramifications of this manufactured crisis.

On 22 April this year, a few weeks before the onset of this unwarranted campaign, the Ethiopian regime set up a new military camp on Mount Musa Ali. Ethiopia built a network of winding roads up the mountain and deployed offensive long-range artillery and heavy equipment directed at Eritrea, with the apparent knowledge and acquiescence of its major backers.

Musa Ali is perched at the intersection of the borders of the three countries: Djibouti, Ethiopia and Eritrea. The Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) has, in the course of its delimitation and demarcation awards of the Eritrea-Ethiopia boundary, determined the respective sovereignties of both countries at that trilateral junction. Ethiopia's actions, six years after the EEBC award, are in flagrant violation of those determinations.

In spite of those illegal acts of destabilization, Eritrea chose to keep silent so as to pursue its established legal approach with a higher focus. But Eritrea's restraint in the face of that provocation only aroused further frustration in the forces that wanted to stir up trouble by trampling the rule of law. A hostile campaign was set in motion, and on 10 June the Government of Djibouti was pushed to launch a provocative military attack on our units on the border. The attack by Djibouti started at approximately 7 p.m. and continued to 11 June. To avoid the attack, Eritrea pulled its forces back. On 12 June, Djibouti again continued its attack, accompanied by helicopters. At that time, Eritrea responded and defended itself. However, Djibouti first cried foul, accusing Eritrea of the very acts that it had perpetrated. As a local proverb

says, "a slingshot hits its target and emits a shrill cry first". Djibouti thus did not only launch an unprovoked attack, but levelled a trumped-up and well-orchestrated accusation against Eritrea.

What was more surprising was the unbalanced and unwarranted presidential statement that the Security Council adopted on 12 June on the basis of one side's information. In spite of all those adversities, Eritrea did not relax but instead heightened its restraint.

As I pointed out earlier, the underlying objective of the military provocation, using Djibouti as a Trojan horse, is to divert Eritrea from the main agenda — its legal pursuit to ensure Ethiopia's eviction from its sovereign territories in accordance with the final and binding determinations of the EEBC — and to embroil Eritrea on another front. The whole idea is to entangle us in mutual recriminations with Djibouti. That would lead to endless mediation missions and the aggravation of putative regional crises.

In that light, the new campaign this week in the Security Council is highly regrettable. Why has Djibouti been prompted to submit an accusation against Eritrea at this level? Why has the Security Council been summoned to discuss a dubious and irresponsible accusation against a Member State with such hastiness? When the Security Council has kept silent or shown little, if any, concern regarding Ethiopia's flagrant violation of international law and its occupation of sovereign Eritrean territories, how has it been persuaded now to discuss a territorial dispute that does not exist and where no territory has been occupied? Why is an unwarranted skirmish, which Djibouti provoked in the first place, being misconstrued as an act of aggression that deserves prompt consideration and action by the Security Council? Why is the issue being blown up out of all proportion? We could ask endless questions.

The Government of Eritrea wishes to underline again that it will not be plunged — through provocations, enticements or other mendacious accusations — into a crisis to become a scapegoat for misguided policies in our region. It will continue to value close cooperation with Djibouti, as demonstrated by the signing of several bilateral ventures recently in the areas of trade, health, fishing and infrastructure.

Indeed, if the Security Council is to maintain regional peace and security, it must look elsewhere. It

cannot and must not target the victim. I wish to call on countries with global reach and influence in the region to take a careful look at their policies to ensure that they become a positive force for development, peace and security for the people in the region.

I also wish to draw the attention of the Council to Eritrea's commitment to exercising restraint and remaining politically committed to solving peacefully any problem that might arise between Djibouti and Eritrea.

The President: I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make comments or ask questions.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like first of all to thank Under-Secretary-General Honwana, for his briefing. I welcome the presence here today of the Prime Minister of Djibouti, the Permanent Representative of Eritrea, and the representatives of the African Union and the Arab League. Those two organizations have an important role to play in resolving this crisis.

I would like to highlight two points. First, the border dispute between Djibouti and Eritrea has become an international issue. The Council has already discussed, in informal consultations, various border disputes between Djibouti and Eritrea.

In May, the Secretariat advised the Council of tensions between the two countries on the issue of the promontory and Doumeira Island following various defensive exercises undertaken by Eritrea. France made a statement to this Council, as it had already done in its national capacity, condemning that violation of Djibouti's sovereignty. At the time, the Council welcomed the positive gestures made by Eritrea, which had withdrawn from certain positions. We had hoped that the two parties, with the help of the Chair of the African Union, the Arab League and other interested States, were on the verge of engaging in dialogue in order to find a diplomatic solution to their dispute.

The Council was, however, forced to react to the new situation created by the bloody confrontations of 10 and 11 June. On 12 June, in a presidential statement, the Council condemned the military action conducted by Eritrea against Djibouti and called on the two parties to implement a ceasefire, exercise restraint and — with regard to Eritrea in particular — withdraw its forces and return to the status quo ante.

The situation on the ground seems to be stable, but it could still degenerate very rapidly in an area where the rugged landscape forces the two armies to face each other at close proximity. The parties, in particular Eritrea, must imperatively abide by the presidential statement of 12 June. In particular, that means that Eritrea must retreat from its defensive installations that it has started building on the southern flank of the promontory leading to the crest of the hill and that the two parties withdraw from Doumeira Island. The troops from Djibouti have done so; they have withdrawn. The Eritrean troops have not.

The Security Council will therefore continue to follow this question very closely, as will the African Union and the Arab League.

The second point that I would like to highlight is that the two parties have a new window of opportunity to find, with the support of the international community, a diplomatic solution to their dispute. France welcomes the role being played by the European Union Commissioner, Louis Michel, who is in contact with both parties. We must not underestimate the difficulties facing us, but the Horn of Africa has already had its share of conflict, and it is in the interests of the two parties to avoid a new one.

I would like to emphasize that we believe that Djibouti plays a stabilizing role, especially by welcoming the holding on its territory of negotiations between the Transitional Federal Government and the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia. That region is very important to the stability of Africa as a whole.

Djibouti and France have established a relationship of friendship, cooperation and trust that dates back many years. In that regard, France fully intends to respect its commitments to Djibouti. Neither a large-scale conflict nor a frozen conflict is a satisfactory alternative.

I should now like to return to the issue of the border, which is at the heart of the problem and to which the parties must find an agreement. The border was delimited by a Franco-Ethiopian agreement of 1897 and, subsequently, by Franco-Italian protocols in 1900 and 1901. Other later agreements have not been ratified. The border has never been defined. With regard to Doumeira Island, the Franco-Italian protocol provides that the two parties would eventually determine sovereignty over the island and that, in the

meanwhile, they would not deploy troops there on a permanent basis.

Several relevant documents of long standing therefore exist, none of which has been signed by the States that are currently parties to the conflict. That uncertainty twice led to tension between Eritrea and Djibouti during the 1990s. France therefore hopes that the two parties — along with a third party of their choosing, if they so desire — can find a negotiated solution and that the border of Doumeira can be definitively demarcated.

Along with the African Union, the League of Arab States and Qatar, we have expressed to the two parties the readiness of France to support them in such an undertaking. We have in particular proposed the sending of an envoy or a legal team to facilitate the parties' discussions. I should like today to reiterate our readiness to do that.

Lastly, I should like to underscore the fact that the two points I have raised — internationalization and a call for dialogue between the parties — are in no way mutually exclusive. To the contrary, it is clear that it is not up to the international community, and especially not the Security Council, to define the border for the parties. However, we must together help the parties to find a negotiated solution that is their own. My delegation therefore believes that it would be useful today for the Security Council to send some specific messages. We regret that Eritrea did not respond to the calls contained in the Security Council presidential statement of 12 June. We call on the two parties, especially Eritrea, to withdraw their forces and to return to the status quo ante.

We would like to thank the regional and subregional organizations involved in helping the two parties to find a negotiated solution.

It would be very helpful for the Secretary-General to deploy a fact-finding mission to the region, which should have the full cooperation of both parties. The Secretary-General could also keep the Security Council apprised of developments in the situation as soon as he has a report from the mission we are calling for.

I think that this is a useful and unifying message from which you, Sir, could draw when you meet the press following this meeting.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): Let me start by welcoming the Prime Minister of Djibouti, Mr. Dileita Mohamed Dileita, and his delegation to the Security Council. I should also like to thank you, Sir, for organizing this meeting in a timely manner in response to a request by a Member State, which, under Article 35 of the Charter of the United Nations, may bring any dispute to the attention of the Security Council. We appreciate the statements and explanations that have been given by the representatives of Djibouti and Eritrea. We also thank Mr. Honwana for the briefing he has given us.

The recent clash between Eritrea and Djibouti along their shared border deeply concerns us, as it is a breach of international peace and security. Above all, we are also very troubled at the prospect of a further aggravation of the already volatile situation in the Horn of Africa. It may be that neither side has the intention to allow the situation to slide into full-fledged conflagration. Notwithstanding their intentions, the situation could in fact develop in an unanticipated direction due to the chain of action-and-reaction and perception-and-misperception, and spiral towards wider confrontation. The resort to military force is unacceptable. We view this situation as very serious and warranting our continued vigilance.

We strongly encourage the parties to resort to peaceful dispute settlement mechanisms, in accordance with Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations, which urges that parties seek diplomatic and judicial approaches to dispute settlement, as well as the resort to regional agencies or other peaceful means of their choice.

Security and the sense of security are holistic and indivisible. Obviously, there is urgency to develop a sense of mutual security, both bilaterally and regionally, as one country's security cannot be achieved at the cost of another country's insecurity. Both Djibouti and Eritrea need to feel safe for security to be preserved.

We call upon both parties to move forward to resolve this dispute expeditiously in accordance with international law, including the acceptance of third-party mediation as necessary. We are cognizant of the importance of finding a mutually acceptable solution to the border conflict for both countries and recognize that their bilateral relations have been peaceful in the

past. There is therefore still hope for a solution and all appropriate avenues should be pursued.

We appreciate and commend the role played by the African Union and the Arab League, as well as by third countries, as they assist in the conflict resolution and dispute settlement processes.

Ultimately, peace and stability along the border must be maintained. That quest for peace is even more critical in the light of the volatility in the Horn of Africa and the strategic value of the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait.

Finally, my delegation wishes to reiterate the sentiments expressed in the Council's presidential statement of 12 June 2008.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of my delegation, I would like to welcome the Prime Minister of the Republic of Djibouti, who has been kind enough to meet with us this afternoon, illustrating his belief in the importance of the matter we are addressing today.

Before I begin my statement, I should like to thank Mr. Honwana for the briefing he has just given us on the dispute pitting Djibouti against Eritrea.

In its presidential statement of 12 June, to which Ambassador Ripert referred a few moments ago, the Security Council expressed its concern about the serious incidents that have taken place on the border between Djibouti and Eritrea, which resulted in casualties to the Djiboutian army. The Council also called on the two parties, and on Eritrea in particular, to exercise restraint, withdraw their respective forces and return to the status quo ante. It also called for negotiations to begin without delay in order to put an end to the conflict.

My country categorically condemns the use of force and reiterates that there exists an obligation on States to demonstrate mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We continue to be concerned about the ongoing tension between the two countries. It therefore seems to us that it is the duty of the Security Council to urge them to refrain from any action that could lead to an escalation of the conflict. It is also crucial that it emphasize dialogue over military action. It is therefore essential that Djibouti and Eritrea agree to the offers of mediation made to them, notably by the African Union,

the League of Arab States and other friendly countries. It goes without saying that Burkina Faso, out of a desire for peace, welcomes these initiatives and these efforts, which we hope will continue.

With regard to the rather disturbing situation in the Horn of Africa, everything should be done to help these two States to overcome their dispute because it is crucial to spare their respective populations from the agony of a new confrontation with unpredictable consequences. Therefore, we hope that the two countries will agree to cooperate fully with the subregional and regional organizations and agree to the assistance of friendly countries with a view to finding a final solution to their dispute. We also urge the international community to assist in this endeavour.

In conclusion, we would like to thank the French delegation for the draft of a statement to the press that it submitted to us. We would like to say that we fully support it.

Mr. Dolgov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation at today's meeting of the Prime Minister of Djibouti and we are grateful to him for the evaluation he gave us. We have also listened carefully to the statement by the Permanent Representative of Eritrea.

The Russian Federation is seriously concerned over the serious rise in confrontation that took place on the border between Djibouti and Eritrea earlier this month. Russia fully agrees with the statement made by the President of the Security Council adopted in connection with this incident, which includes a condemnation of the hostilities begun by Eritrea against Djibouti in Ras Doumeira and Doumeira Island. We call on both sides to take upon themselves the obligation of observing a ceasefire, show maximum restraint and return to their previous positions.

Russia is carefully observing the developments in the situation on the border between Eritrea and Djibouti. We believe that the border problems must be settled only through negotiations. We call upon both sides to cooperate and undertake diplomatic efforts for a peaceful settlement and in strict conformity with the rules of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

We support the efforts undertaken by the African Union and the League of Arab States and the various interested parties in order to achieve an early solution

to the confrontation and a settlement between Djibouti and Eritrea. We call upon both sides to cooperate in this endeavour. We are counting on the implementation of what has been called for by the Security Council and of the recommendation of the Secretary-General to make use of his good offices in coordination with regional organizations. The aim is to initiate bilateral negotiations between Djibouti and Eritrea that may engender greater trust and bring about a peaceful settlement to the situation on the border between these two countries.

The Security Council will doubtless continue to follow the momentum in the situation in the interest of supporting stability and of preventing a destabilization in this important region of the Horn of Africa.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the holding of this emergency meeting of the Council. We would like to thank Mr. Honwana for his briefing.

On behalf of the Chinese delegation, we welcome Prime Minister Dileita of Djibouti to this meeting and thank him for his statement. I would also like to welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative of Eritrea and thank him for his statement. We also welcome the presence of the representatives of the African Union and the League of Arab States at today's meeting.

China is attentively following the recent border dispute between Djibouti and Eritrea. We find developments in the border areas to be worrisome. We call upon the two parties to proceed from the greater interests of relations between the two countries and of peace and security in the Horn of Africa. We also call upon them to exercise restraint and prevent the situation from worsening further. China hopes that the two parties will resolve their differences through dialogue and negotiations.

China supports African Union and League of Arab States and other regional organizations and countries of the region in playing an active mediation role. The Council should continue to play an active and constructive role in promoting the resolution of the differences of the two parties through dialogue and negotiations. The Council may strengthen its contact and communication with Djibouti and Eritrea, listen to the views and requests of the parties concerned and coordinate with and support the good offices of the African Union and other regional organizations.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Allow me also to welcome the Prime Minister of Djibouti and thank him for visiting us in New York. We still have very fond memories of the hospitable and gracious way in which the Government of Djibouti treated us when we visited that country. We are very thankful for that. We also welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Djibouti and thank him for also having come to this meeting. We are pleased with the participation in this meeting of the representative of Eritrea and the representatives of the League of Arab States and of the African Union.

The situation that is being faced by the Council, and indeed by the African Union, is a very difficult one. That is why we support the holding of this emergency meeting today.

We wish to appeal to both Djibouti and Eritrea and to emphasize that the use of force in resolving disputes is both unworkable and indeed unsustainable. We join others in expressing our concern over the escalation of tensions in the Horn of Africa and condemn the use of force to solve disputes. Unfortunately, this involves part of our continent, which has seen its own share of troubles.

We appeal to both parties to exercise restraint. We support the call of the African Union for the parties to immediately return to the situation prevailing before this dispute began. We urge the parties to engage in dialogue in an effort to resolve their differences. We encourage the efforts of the Secretary-General and thank Mr. Honwana for his briefing. We believe that the good offices of the Secretary-General must be encouraged to help these two friendly neighbours resolve their dispute.

We also wish to point out that both the League of Arab States and the African Union have also offered their good offices in this dispute. We can only express the hope that the two countries will heed the call of the international community, not allow their differences to balloon into major disputes and do everything in their power to resolve their problems in a peaceful manner.

Mr. Hoang Chi Trung (Viet Nam): At the outset, I wish to thank to Mr. Honwana for his briefing to the Council this afternoon. My delegation also wishes to welcome the participation of His Excellency the Prime Minister of Djibouti, as well as the presence of the Permanent Representative of Eritrea and the representatives of the African Union and the League of Arab States at the Council's meeting today.

My delegation notes with concern the escalation of tension on the border between Eritrea and Djibouti, most notably the serious incidents that occurred on 10 June 2008 along the frontier between the two countries. We wish to underline the fundamental principle to be applied to such situations, namely that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States must be fully respected and that every dispute and conflict should be resolved through peaceful negotiations in a manner consistent with international law and with the United Nations Charter. We therefore call upon the two parties to show utmost restraint, to refrain from any threat or use of force, to strengthen the current ceasefire and to intensify dialogue to de-escalate the tension.

It goes without saying that the primary responsibility to resolve the conflict rests with the two parties themselves. Viet Nam, however, commends the efforts undertaken by the African Union, the Arab League and the Organization of the Islamic Conference to facilitate the settlement of the dispute. In that connection, we welcome the decision made by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union at its 136th meeting, held on 12 June 2008, on the situation on the border between Djibouti and Eritrea, as well as on the development in relations between the two countries.

My delegation also wishes to encourage the Secretary-General, in coordination with regional efforts, to use his good offices and to reach out to both parties to promote dialogue on arrangements for the immediate return to the situation prevailing at the common border between the two countries before the incidents leading to the current tension, including the withdrawal from the border of all forces that have been positioned there since February 2008, and for the development of confidence-building measures to resolve their bilateral dispute in a peaceful manner.

Mr. Ettalhi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to join those who spoke before me in welcoming to the Council His Excellency Mr. Dileita Mohamed Dileita, Prime Minister of the State of Djibouti. I take this opportunity to thank him for the warm welcome and generosity with which he received the Security Council mission in Djibouti earlier this month, as well as for the facilities offered to the mission for its meetings with the Somali parties. We thank His Excellency the Prime Minister for his statement to the Council today, and we also express our gratitude to the representative of Eritrea for his

statement. Our thanks also go to Mr. Honwana for his briefing.

The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya expresses its deep sorrow and concern over the military confrontations that have recently taken place between two neighbouring countries that not only have ties of geographic proximity but also numerous other ties, so numerous that it is difficult to imagine any recourse to arms or force in order to resolve even the most profound differences.

Africa in general and the Horn of Africa in particular have long been paying a high price as a result of armed conflicts. That price has been paid in the lives of its men and women, in human suffering and in lost development opportunities. It is also unfortunate that while armed conflicts are receding everywhere else in the world, even in Africa, armed conflicts in Eastern Africa are only spreading and growing more intense.

Libya hopes that the Security Council, in cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, as the organ with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, will work towards putting an end to these conflicts and preventing their escalation by assisting the conflicting parties to reach a peaceful solution. I do not wish to say that the Council's inability to settle the dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea or to put an end to the instability and insecurity in Somalia might be among the reasons for the threat posed to peace along the border between Eritrea and Djibouti.

My country strongly condemns the use of force and the resort to arms. My country calls on the two friendly countries Djibouti and Eritrea to turn to dialogue, and we ask them to heed the call at the 136th meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, as well as the Arab League resolution dated 12 June 2008 and the presidential statement (S/PRST/2008/20) issued by the Security Council at its 5908th meeting. We call upon both parties to return to the status quo on the borders before the crisis erupted.

My country reaffirms the principle of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and stresses that any attempt to undermine that concept constitutes a threat to peace and security. My delegation reaffirms and recalls the need for African States to respect the borders inherited from the days of colonialism, which they voluntarily agreed to do within

the framework of the Organization of African Unity, now the African Union.

We hope that the Council will look into resolving this issue by helping both parties to reach a political settlement.

In closing, we thank the French delegation for preparing the main elements of a verbal presidential briefing to the press, and we support them.

Mr. Arias (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to join in welcoming to this Council His Excellency Mr. Dileita Mohamed Dileita, Prime Minister of Djibouti, and in acknowledging the presence here of the Permanent Representative of Eritrea and the representatives of the African Union and of the League of Arab States. I should also like to express our thanks for the briefing we have received today from Mr. João Honwana of the Department of Political Affairs.

The Council is meeting today at the request of the Government of Djibouti for the purpose of assessing the serious situation on the border between Djibouti and Eritrea, where confrontations have recently occurred between the armed forces of the two countries.

In that connection, allow me to outline Panama's position. The United Nations and each and every one of its Member States are called upon to respect the territorial integrity of States, and that includes respecting their borders. When two neighbouring States dispute the location of borders, the dispute should be resolved through bilateral negotiations. If an agreement cannot be reached between the two parties, they should submit the dispute to the International Court of Justice. In the event of any dispute that might jeopardize international peace and security, this Council is called upon to act to prevent the dispute from escalating into armed conflict. To that purpose, the Security Council should use all means at its disposal, including dialogue, participation and collaboration between Member States.

We thus appeal to both parties to withdraw the military forces that have recently been deployed on the border and immediately to initiate bilateral dialogue, making use of the good offices and mechanisms provided by the United Nations and other relevant international bodies. Likewise, Panama considers it appropriate for the Secretary-General to keep the

Security Council informed of any developments in the situation.

Mr. Quarrey (United Kingdom): We join others in warmly welcoming the Prime Minister of Djibouti today and also the representatives of Eritrea, the African Union and the League of Arab States. We thank Mr. Honwana for his briefing.

Of course, we welcome reports that the situation is calm at present, but we are also concerned by other reports of regroupings and reinforcements. The situation clearly remains fragile in an already very troubled region. We would reiterate all the concerns that were set out in the presidential statement of 12 June, including condemnation of the Eritrean military incursion, deep regret at the loss of life and the need for maximum restraint.

Like others, we welcome the efforts of the African Union, the League of Arab States and third countries to help the parties find a peaceful way forward. We would urge both parties, and especially Eritrea, to engage fully with those efforts. We agree with France that the Council should send a message today through a statement to the press. We thank the French delegation for the elements that it circulated yesterday, which we fully support.

Mr. Spatafora (Italy): I thank Mr. Honwana for his briefing. I join others in extending a very warm welcome to Prime Minister Dileita and to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Djibouti. We strongly appreciate that they have come from Djibouti to give us first-hand accounts. I wish to thank Prime Minister Dileita and the Permanent Representative of Eritrea, Ambassador Desta, for their decision to take part, together around this table, in this important and extremely timely meeting, in order to convey their national perspectives to this Council and to clarify their respective positions.

As we have heard, there are conflicting perceptions and positions, but it is important that those conflicting positions be expressed around a table, not on the ground. I thank the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States, Mr. Mahmassani, and the representative of the African Union because their role, as has been stated already, will be crucial in the future.

I mentioned the importance of the dialogue around the table. In fact, Italy's expectation is that this meeting — and this is important — will serve as the beginning of a renewed engagement by both parties to

exercise restraint and resolve their differences through dialogue, international law and diplomacy, thereby demonstrating their attachment to peace and security in the wider region. To the extent that we will be able to catalyse and sustain that positive dynamic, fully and promptly placing the United Nations political machinery at the disposal of the parties, as expressed in our presidential statement of 12 June, we will have paid a significant service to our common cause of advancing the role of the Security Council as an instrument of conflict prevention, as mandated by Article 34 of the United Nations Charter. In addition, as recalled by Article 33 of the Charter and shown by the African experience on a number of occasions, the key to conflict prevention ultimately lies in the hands of interested Member States, as has already been stated by others.

Adopting a bottom-up approach, looking at events from the ground and lending the strongest possible support to the good offices or mediation offices offered by the African Union and the Arab League should be retained as essential elements of our involvement. Cooperation with regional and subregional organizations and Governments will be particularly crucial in the coming weeks, as we will need to acquire a more accurate and detailed picture of the situation. The first account of events, as we have heard, confirms the seriousness of current tensions between the two countries. The crisis indeed has the potential to become a threat to regional stability.

However, a number of elements will need to be further investigated and brought to light. That is why we strongly support the urgent launch of a fact-finding mission by the Secretariat, which would provide essential elements for this Council to develop its position and approach to the issue. We feel that it is equally important that the Security Council President bring to the attention of the international media the perceptions, assessments and concerns that have been expressed by members of the Council. Here, we fully recognize our position in the language that has been proposed to the presidency by the French delegation, which we thank. We fully recognize ourselves in those elements.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate our thanks to the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Djibouti and express once more Italy's trust in their Government, as well as in Government of Eritrea, and in the governing will and capacity to agree on a way

out of this crisis using the tools of diplomacy and cooperation.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin by welcoming Mr. Dileita Mohamed Dileita, Prime Minister of Djibouti, and his Minister for Foreign Affairs, and by acknowledging the presence of the Permanent Representatives of Djibouti and Eritrea and the representatives of the League of Arab States and the African Union.

The Horn of Africa cannot afford yet another conflict. That region cannot afford to resort to violence to settle yet another dispute. Brother nations must find solutions around the table of dialogue rather than in the trenches and with the use of weapons.

Although it is only natural that different countries have different views regarding their respective interests, particularly where colonial borders have not been consolidated, we feel that it should be pointed out that solutions that emanate from peace be based on caution and common sense and allow for areas of growth for brother countries. The conflict between Djibouti and Eritrea has its roots in the issue of borders that have never been defined and that are disputed. Such questions should be settled, in our view, through consultations and negotiations between the parties that explore ways of reaching new agreements through arbitration, mediation and the possibility of appealing to higher courts, such as the International Court of Justice. The use of specialized tribunals should also be considered as an option.

Costa Rica believes that, with respect to this situation, regional organizations can offer very valuable support. We are therefore grateful for the efforts of the African Union and the League of Arab States, and urge them to continue to provide forums for a peaceful and consensual settlement of the situation. Of course, we also appeal to Djibouti and Eritrea to resume dialogue and to seek a solution to their differences through negotiation, making use of the appropriate instruments and bodies, and promptly to end the dispute between them.

We thank the delegation of France for the points it circulated yesterday, which we can support for inclusion in a statement.

Mr. Grauls (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes the Prime Minister of the Republic of Djibouti and the representatives of Eritrea,

the African Union and the League of Arab States. We also thank the Secretariat for its briefing.

Belgium shares the concern expressed around this table regarding the border incidents that took place from 10 to 12 June in Ras Doumeira and Doumeira Island. Those incidents caused numerous deaths and much damage, and could have quickly degenerated. The situation continues to run a serious risk of escalation that is not limited to the countries concerned but potentially threatens the entire region.

The Security Council reacted speedily on 12 June by reminding both countries of their commitment to dialogue, if necessary with the assistance of other countries and regional organizations. That appeal remains valid.

Belgium thanks all those who have helped in the search for a settlement to the crisis. It is in the interests of neither country to prolong the current situation of confusion. Belgium encourages the two countries themselves, first and foremost, as well as others involved, including the Secretary-General, to pursue their efforts. Belgium supports the dispatch by the Secretary-General of a fact-finding mission and encourages him to consult with the African Union and the League of Arab States with respect to the conclusions from their respective initiatives.

Finally, my delegation wishes to thank France for submitting elements of language for a statement to the press.

Mr. Vilović (Croatia): First of all, let me join previous speakers in welcoming and thanking the Prime Minister of Djibouti for being here with us, as well as the representative of Eritrea and the representatives of the African Union and the League of Arab States.

For some time now, we have been carefully monitoring the escalation of the incidents between the two neighbouring countries, and we fully share the grave concerns expressed by all member States on the seriousness of the situation. It is even more serious given the fragile and sensitive situation in the region.

Having said that, we welcome today's debate as timely. We also value the opportunity to hear from the parties themselves, as well as from the regional organizations involved in helping them to de-escalate tensions. We appreciate their efforts and hope that they will yield concrete results shortly.

My delegation would like to use this occasion to renew the call on the parties, in particular Eritrea, to exercise restraint, to withdraw their forces to the status quo ante, and to resolve the dispute through dialogue and peaceful means, including through third-party mediation. In our opinion, any military option is not acceptable; we strongly condemn any use of force and stress the importance of respect for the territorial integrity of States. In that respect, we welcome the announced press statement as a timely and welcome action of the Council.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the United States.

I, too, would like to welcome the presence of Prime Minister Dileita at this meeting. We also welcome the participation of Ambassador Desta, the Permanent Representative of Eritrea, and the representatives of the African Union and the League of Arab States.

The United States remains extremely concerned with the situation along the Djibouti-Eritrea border. Today, I would like to make the following two points.

First, on 12 June, the Council adopted a presidential statement that condemned Eritrean military action against Djibouti, called upon the parties to commit to a ceasefire and show maximum restraint, and urged both sides to cooperate and engage in diplomatic efforts to resolve the matter peacefully. While no new violence has occurred, Eritrea remains in an aggressive military posture towards Djibouti and refuses to engage with Djibouti directly or through a third party to negotiate a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

We reiterate our call on both sides, and particularly on Eritrea, to withdraw their military forces from the common border area and to engage in a diplomatic process to resolve the matter peacefully, in accordance with international law, as the representative of Italy and others have urged. If Eritrea fails to engage in a peaceful solution and pull its forces back from its border with Djibouti, the Security Council should consider appropriate actions or measures.

Secondly, the Security Council cannot condone Eritrea's regional destabilization, especially when it comes at such a great cost to its neighbours. The conflict with Djibouti occurs against a backdrop of destabilizing behaviour elsewhere by Eritrea. In

Somalia, the Eritrean Government has supported extremist groups, including the Al-Qaida-affiliated Al-Shabab, which refuses to negotiate on a peaceful political solution in Somalia. Eritrea has worked to discredit and disrupt the recent discussion between Somali parties in Djibouti. The Government of Eritrea restricted the activities of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) — a force it freely and voluntarily invited to its country — preventing it from executing its mandate. Finally, the Eritrean Government stopped all fuel delivery to UNMEE, and consequently the United Nations was forced to withdraw UNMEE from Eritrea, which further destabilized an already dangerous situation.

For Eritrea, even now it is not too late to resume its place as a responsible Member of this Organization and to resume its status as a good neighbour. We will be watching Eritrea's actions closely and we will insist that Eritrea be held accountable for its actions.

Finally, my delegation can support the elements for use in the press statement proposed by the French delegation.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to Ms. Alice Aghenebit Mungwa, Adviser to the Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union.

Ms. Mungwa: On behalf of the Commission of the African Union, I would first of all like to thank you, Sir, for inviting us to participate in this important meeting and to convey the apologies of the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, who has already travelled to Sharm el-Sheikh for the meetings of the upcoming eleventh ordinary session of the African Union taking place at the end of the month. She therefore could not attend this meeting in person. It is on me that the great honour and privilege have fallen today to convey the remarks of the African Union Commission to the Council today.

In view of the challenges that the situation between Djibouti and Eritrea may present for the already challenged region of the Horn of Africa, your initiative, Mr. President, to organize this timely and important meeting once again illustrates the continuing attention of the Security Council to matters of concern to Africa and highlights the growing cooperation between the Security Council and the Peace and

Security Council of the African Union in dealing with common agenda items. Allow me also, Sir, to take this opportunity to convey our deep gratitude to you and to all other members of the Council for the special focus placed on Africa during your presidency.

We would also like to join in welcoming His Excellency the Prime Minister of Djibouti, His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the other members of their delegation. We thank the Prime Minister for the very informative briefing he gave the Council today. We would also like to thank Ambassador Desta of Eritrea for his statement to the Council. The presence of the representatives of these two countries in the Council today is a clear sign that both are willing to give priority to the path of dialogue, and we wish to commend them for that choice.

We also thank Mr. Honwana for his statement. Our appreciation goes as well to all members of the Council for their statements today.

As members are aware, Eritrea and Djibouti are two important and valued States members of the African Union, and the surprising occurrence of the regrettable incidents under consideration in the Council today was never expected — even remotely — despite the persisting tensions in the Horn of Africa as a whole.

We would like to recall that at its 121st and 125th meetings, held on 24 April and 2 May respectively, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union exchanged views on relations between the State of Eritrea and the Republic of Djibouti, following a letter sent to the Peace and Security Council on 24 April 2008 by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Djibouti regarding the situation at the border between the two countries.

For its part, the Commission of the African Union formally wrote to the two countries to gather as much information as possible about the situation at their common border and about the steps they may have taken to resolve the situation amicably. Further to the recommendation of the Peace and Security Council, the Commission also dispatched a mission to assess the situation on the ground and to consult with the two countries. The mission was received by authorities of Djibouti and is still waiting to be received by Eritrea.

In the light of the disturbing tensions unfolding between Djibouti and Eritrea — in particular the incidents between the armed forces of the two countries — since Tuesday, 10 June 2008, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, at its 136th meeting, held on 12 June 2008, strongly condemned the use of force and stressed the imperative need to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of member States, in conformity with the Constitutive Act of the African Union. The Council called for the immediate return to the situation prevailing at the common border between the two countries before the current tension began, including the withdrawal from the border of all forces that have been positioned there since 4 February 2008. The Peace and Security Council again urged the two countries to show utmost restraint, resort to dialogue to resolve any bilateral dispute and give their full cooperation to all efforts made to that end. Furthermore, the African Union's Council decided to meet in due course at the appropriate level to consider the situation and to take necessary decisions.

We are pleased to confirm to the Security Council today that the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, in implementation of that decision, will discuss the situation between Eritrea and Djibouti at the level of heads of State and Government on 29 June 2008, on the margins of the eleventh ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, to be held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

In that regard, and pursuant to the provisions of the Protocol of the Peace and Security Council, Eritrea and Djibouti have been invited to that summit. We would like to take the opportunity of their presence in the Security Council today to underscore the importance of their participation at the summit meeting with a view to finding a peaceful and lasting solution to their differences.

We would also like to reiterate the appeal of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to the two countries; we hope that all parties will act positively and constructively for the restoration of peaceful and cordial relations between them, in the interest of peace and security for the Governments and the peoples of both countries, and for the subregion and Africa as a whole. We are confident that the deliberations of the Security Council today will contribute to that process.

The President: I thank Ms. Mungwa for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Yahya Mahmassani, Permanent Observer for the League of Arab States

Mr. Mahmassani (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish at the outset to thank you, Mr. President, for inviting the League of Arab States to participate in this meeting. I welcome the presence in the Council Chamber today of His Excellency Mr. Dileita Mohamed Dileita, Prime Minister of Djibouti. I thank the Permanent Representative of Eritrea for his statement and the representative of Department of Political Affairs for his briefing.

The Security Council is meeting today to consider a new crisis confronting the Horn of Africa. Since February, the Government of Djibouti has reported to the League of Arab States concerning a gradual massing of Eritrean troops along the border between the two countries, including fortifications and trenches and encroachments by Eritrean soldiers on Djibouti's side of the border, overlooking Red Sea shipping lanes.

Following a letter from the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Djibouti addressed to the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States with a view to addressing the tensions between Djibouti and Eritrea by peaceful means, the League sent a fact-finding mission to the Ras Doumeira area in the Republic of Djibouti, whose visit occurred from 9 to 11 May 2008, in order to seek a settlement of the crisis. The mission met with officials in Djibouti and sought a meeting with officials in Eritrea, but the Eritrean side did not respond to its request.

The Council of the League of Arab States met on 12 June to discuss the situation between Djibouti and Eritrea. It adopted a decision which stressed the importance of respect for Djibouti's sovereignty and territorial integrity and rejected any aggression against that country. It called upon Eritrea to withdraw its forces immediately from the border with Djibouti. The Council of the League renewed its call for respect for the principle of good-neighbourliness between the two countries and respect for the post-colonial borders. It called upon the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States and the Arab Peace and Security Council to continue their efforts to deal with the issue, and it mandated the League secretariat to undertake necessary

contacts with the Government of Eritrea with a view to addressing the situation, easing the tension and ending the confrontation along the border between the two neighbouring countries.

The current situation along the border between Djibouti and Eritrea is a source of concern, because there are many potential repercussions. A crisis of this kind cannot be resolved by military means or by the use or threat of use of force. The only way to resolve the crisis is through peaceful negotiations between the parties concerned to find a solution. The territorial integrity and stability of States must be respected, and Arab-African cooperation must be deepened.

We call on the parties to show restraint and to take no measures to escalate the situation. A peaceful outcome to the crisis requires the parties to commit to implementing the agreements between them, to

maintain good-neighbourly relations, and to refrain from intervening in each other's affairs.

The Horn of Africa continues to experience numerous upheavals and instability. It certainly does not need any new such situations. The crisis must therefore be addressed and contained expeditiously. We believe that the role of the Security Council, the main body responsible for international peace and security, is pivotal in that regard.

The President: I thank Ambassador Mahmassani for his briefing.

There are no other speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.