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## REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE WORK OF THE ORGANIZATION

## HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS

Letter dated 23 November 1993 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i.  
of the Permanent Mission of Eritrea to the United Nations  
addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of Eritrea has the honour to draw the attention of the Secretary-General to the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission to Verify the Referendum in Eritrea (A/48/283), dated 11 August 1993, and the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/48/1), dated 10 September 1993, for certain inaccuracies of fact and observation.

I wish to assure you that the Permanent Mission of Eritrea to the United Nations makes the following observations in good faith and to protect the general credibility of the reports.

The following observations are made regarding A/48/283:

1. Eritreans struggled for their right to self-determination. There was never a time during the struggle in which they declared that they were fighting for a federation, as suggested in the last sentence of paragraph 3. Any such reference is incorrect.

2. Paragraph 5 implies that the newly formed Provisional Government of Eritrea made a commitment to holding a referendum on the future of Eritrea, for the first time, as a result of the London Conference. We wish to point out that the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), which formed the Provisional Government, had proposed a referendum in 1980.

3. In paragraph 30, the statement "... 2,000 Eritrean nationals wishing to register" is incorrect. The 2,000 persons are non-Eritrean residents who had duly registered for naturalization with the objective of making them eligible voters in the referendum.

4. The third sentence of paragraph 30 should also include the following countries: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Côte d'Ivoire, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Greece, Iceland, Iraq, Italy, Kenya, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Russian Federation, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe. They were omitted from the report.

5. In the first and second sentences of paragraph 31, the realistic figures are 60-65 per cent, not 50 per cent, and 1.1 to 1.3 million, not 1.5 to 1.75. These figures are borne out by accurate statistical evidence collected by the Referendum Commission of Eritrea.

6. In connection with the first sentence of paragraph 33, we wish to elaborate that the Referendum Commission informed UNOVER that the Government was already committed to allowing all political and non-political prisoners who had not yet been convicted by a lawfully recognized court of law to vote. This in effect makes the third sentence unnecessary.

7. In paragraph 35, the figure cited represents the actual combatants and not the freedom fighters serving in a civilian capacity.

8. In paragraph 38, we feel that it is worth qualifying the second sentence by stating that members of EPLF had been campaigning as ordinary citizens, in an individual capacity, not representing EPLF and bearing no arms, often travelling in small groups around the countryside.

9. In paragraph 40, the second sentence should include Afar, Kunama and Tigre, because the radio broadcast in those languages also.

10. In the fourth sentence of paragraph 64, the words "when Eritrea became first a part of the Ethiopian Federation" might lead to the understanding that Ethiopia had been a federal State. We believe that "when Eritrea was first federated with Ethiopia" would better explain the point made in that regard.

The following observations are made regarding A/48/1:

1. There are two factual errors in the first sentence of paragraph 466. The "25 years of civil war" should actually read "30 years of war".

2. It is to be recalled that the substance of the second sentence of that paragraph was the cause of a protracted diplomatic intercourse between the United Nations and the then Provisional Government of Eritrea. Considering the letters exchanged between the competent authorities of the United Nations and the Provisional Government, we are convinced that paragraph 7 of document A/48/283, quoted here, better explains the point made in the second sentence:

"In a letter dated 13 December 1991, Mr. Meles Zenawi, President of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia, informed the Secretary-General about the decisions of the Conference on Peace and Democracy. President Zenawi noted that both the Transitional Government of Ethiopia and the Provisional Government of Eritrea had registered their commitment to respect the results of the referendum in Eritrea. He asked that the United Nations play an active role in verifying a free and fair referendum. In May 1992,

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the Referendum Commissioner of Eritrea invited the Secretary-General to send a United Nations delegation to observe and to verify the freedom, fairness and impartiality of the entire referendum process which was to begin in July 1992 and end in April 1993".

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 10 and 114.

(Signed) Ghirmai GHEBREMARIAM  
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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