

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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CONTENTS

	Page
Agenda item 41:	
Question of the frontier between the Trust Territory of Somaliland under Italian administration and Ethiopia:	
Reports of the Governments of Ethiopia and of Italy (continued)	521

Chairman: Mr. Frederick H. BOLAND (Ireland).

AGENDA ITEM 41

Question of the frontier between the Trust Territory of Somaliland under Italian administration and Ethiopia: reports of the Governments of Ethiopia and of Italy (A/4030, A/4031) (continued)

1. Mr. VITELLI (Italy) said that, after carefully considering the statement made by the representative of Ethiopia at the 836th meeting and the report of the Ethiopian Government (A/4031), he adhered to the statement which he had made at the 836th meeting.

2. His delegation was greatly disappointed both by the Ethiopian representative's statement and by the report. He felt that, at a stage when the two Governments had succeeded to some extent in carrying out the recommendations of the General Assembly, his delegation was entitled to expect a different approach to the question. He had deliberately refrained from engaging in polemics, but he could scarcely have failed to notice the way in which the Ethiopian representative had interpreted the meaning of various Italian statements, quoted out of context, in order to suit certain Ethiopian assumptions, notably that Italy was opposed to direct negotiation and to arbitration. A third assumption—that what the Ethiopian representative had described as the "New Italy" was not really prepared to reach a solution of the problem—was no doubt at the root of the unfortunate reference, in paragraph 23 of the Ethiopian Government's report, to the "stratagem of Penelope". There were no grounds for attributing ulterior motives to his country in its endeavours, under the Trusteeship Agreement, to settle the frontier question. Somaliland was to be independent in 1960 and was entitled to every assistance in solving its only existing international problem.

3. In the course of his statement, the Ethiopian representative had quoted a passage from the Italian Government's memorandum of 30 September 1954, which was to be found in document A/C.4/277. Members of the Committee would find on reference to paragraph 1 of the memorandum that the quotation was incomplete. He would also invite their attention to paragraphs 3, 6 and 8 of the memorandum.

4. Again, the Italian delegation to the Italo-Ethiopian Boundary Commission had been quoted by the Ethiopian

representative as having stated on 12 July 1957 that it had rejected the compromise proposed by the Ethiopian delegation on a juridical ground. In the original text, however, the words "juridical ground" were immediately followed by the words "because the compromise proposed on the provisional administrative line was in itself to be considered rather like a *de facto* situation and a *de facto* solution was not quite becoming of the welfare of the populations concerned and somewhat in contrast with the spirit of the 1908 Convention, which recalls our thoughtful attention upon the ethnical rights of the tribes settled along the line considered by the Convention, and evidence of this was also given by the Visiting Missions of the United Nations which were sent on the spot just to control the situation according to many claims concerning the easing of the situation". The whole quotation was taken from the records of the meeting of the conference on the frontier held at Addis Ababa on 12 July 1957.

5. The Ethiopian representative had also quoted from the records of the Boundary Commission's meeting of 5 August 1957 the words "the Italian delegation would be entitled to avoid continuing discussions upon a question which has already been discussed between our two Governments half a century ago and settled in its final and proper form through the 1908 Convention". In the original text, however, the word "Convention" was followed by the clause: "the provisions of which have up to now ruled the whole situation in the region extended from Dolo to the Uebi Scebeli in an undisputed way". The complete quotation showed that the inference drawn by the Ethiopian representative that the Italian Government had agreed to consider the 1908 Convention as the only possible basis of negotiation of the frontier question was wholly unwarranted, since the Italian delegation in question had been referring only to the undisputed part of the frontier.

6. In the course of his statement, the Ethiopian representative had informed the Committee that his Government had submitted a second list of jurists from which the "independent person" mentioned in General Assembly resolution 1213 (XII) could be selected. That was a new development which his delegation was prepared to take into consideration, but it would be necessary for him to await instructions from his Government. No mention of it was made in the Ethiopian report of 5 December 1958 (A/4031).

7. He would ask the representative of Ethiopia to realize that the Italian position in the matter was not dictated by ulterior motives. It was Somaliland that was in question, a Territory to which the United Nations gave particular attention. The differences of opinion between the parties should not prevent them from seeking and reaching a final agreement, now that they had agreed on recourse to arbitration. If the question of the "independent person" and later that of the terms of reference were tackled with patience and

understanding, success would undoubtedly be achieved, particularly if the Committee were to give its assistance. What both countries were seeking was the final, just, equitable and friendly settlement of the question referred to in General Assembly resolution 854 (IX), bearing in mind the interests and welfare of the Trust Territory.

8. Mr. FARAH ALI OMAR (Italy) said that he welcomed the Ethiopian representative's statement concerning the spirit of brotherhood in which his Government wished to conduct its relations with the future independent State of Somalia. The Somali people felt that it was precisely the absence of such a spirit which had prevented the solution of the frontier problem in the past. That problem had been and still was treated as though it were a matter of concern and importance exclusively to Ethiopia and Italy rather than to Ethiopia and Somaliland, as it should be in the interests of African brotherhood. The Somali people were grateful to Italy for its efforts to represent their point of view but they were convinced that much more could have been accomplished if the Ethiopian Government had acted in a spirit of brotherhood from the beginning without insisting for two years that the only possible line of demarcation was the administrative frontier and without rejecting the Italian proposal that Somali representatives should participate in the direct negotiations. If the problem was now approached in a spirit of African brotherhood and if Ethiopia was prepared to regard it as a problem concerning itself and Somaliland rather than itself and Italy, he was confident that a solution could be found.

9. Miss ANDERSON (United States of America) said that her delegation's views with regard to the perplexing question of the border between Somaliland and Ethiopia revolved round certain essential points upon which it felt that attention should be focused. It recognized that of all international disputes those concerning the fixing of demarcation lines were the most thorny

because they involved problems of a geographical, economic and political nature which were easily aggravated by the swiftly changing conditions of the modern world. The United States, which had the greatest respect for the rights of those involved and for the interests of both parties, had no ulterior motives in concerning itself with the problem but wished only to stress its willingness to be helpful and to make known to all the parties concerned that they could count on its assistance in seeking a reasonable solution.

10. Her delegation was encouraged to note that during the past year the Italian and Ethiopian Governments had partially succeeded in implementing the provisions of General Assembly resolution 1213 (XII) by naming two of the three arbitrators the resolution called for. It had hoped that they would also be able to report agreement on the "independent person" without whom the machinery contemplated in that resolution could not be set in motion. Similarly, it was hard to see how arbitration could proceed before the problem of terms of reference had been solved. Her delegation would therefore be attentive to suggestions emanating from any quarter which were addressed to the problem of enabling the procedure of arbitration to be applied. The present session of the General Assembly would not have discharged its duties as a party to the Trusteeship Agreement unless the result of its discussion was to give renewed hope to the parties concerned that they could solve the remaining difficulties and report to the fourteenth session, if not a definite solution, at least an assurance that the arbitration formula had been applied and that it gave promise of leading to an acceptable recommendation for the settlement of the problem prior to the date on which Somaliland was to obtain its independence. Her delegation did not think that there was anything to be gained by attributing responsibility for the lack of progress to either party.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.