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REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE
STRENGTHENING OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Letter dated 8 September 1980 from the Permanent Representative of
Ethiopia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Reference is made to a note verbale from the Permanent Representative of Somalia to the United Nations (A/35/292) issued on 11 July 1980 requesting the circulation under items 50 and 78 of the preliminary list of two resolutions ostensibly adopted by the 11th Conference of Islamic Ministers for Foreign Affairs at their meeting in Islamabad, Pakistan, from 17 to 21 May 1980.

The resolutions in question, misleadingly labelled "Assistance to the refugees in Somalia" and "Foreign intervention in the Horn of Africa: continued aggression against the Somali Democratic Republic", conceived, pushed through and propagated solely by Somalia, contain nothing but the all too familiar diatribe, calumny and slander churned out daily from Mogadisho.

In a singular demonstration of its unbridled opportunism, the Government of Somalia has unscrupulously manipulated a forum whose common denominator is religion and at which Ethiopia is not represented. Even then, several African and Middle Eastern States participating at the said conference voiced strong opposition and entered their most serious reservations to the manoeuvres of Somalia, on the ground that it clearly constituted an interference in the internal affairs of Ethiopia and as such represented, both in content and form, a gross violation of the principles of the Charters of the Organization of African Unity and of the United Nations.

The fact that Somalia could circulate its invectives under item 50 of the preliminary list of items to be included in the provisional agenda of the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly is not only regrettable, but could

* A/35/150.

also constitute an impediment for the co-operation sought between the Islamic Conference and the United Nations.

Inasmuch as item 50 of the preliminary list deals with "Review of the implementation of the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security", reference to it by Somalia perforce brings to mind the old adage that "nobody likes peace more than the aggressor". The aggressor wants to enter your country and occupy it unopposed. But should the victim mount resistance and throw the invader out, then that same aggressor calls the defender a war-monger.

Article 2, paragraph 7, and Article 51 of the United Nations Charter underline the principle of non-interference in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of States and reaffirm the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence in the event of an armed attack against a member of the United Nations. The provisions of these two articles together form a corner-stone upon which the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security is founded, and for which Somalia's respect is marked only by her persistent and impudent violation of the principles contained therein.

The thrust of the Declaration lies in its reaffirmation that States must respect the sovereignty of one another and refrain from acts, especially those involving overt or covert threat or use of force, and from any action aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and territorial integrity of other States. The Declaration further reaffirms the duty of every State to refrain from organizing, instigating, assisting or participating in acts of civil strife or terrorist acts in another State. Hence, the two resolutions which have been submitted and pushed through by Somalia, grossly abusing her membership in the Islamic Conference, are not only extraneous to the subject under reference, but run counter to the aims and purposes of the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security.

Given the reputation of Somalia - the problem child of Africa - for conflict-making, the highly irregular action taken by its Permanent Mission to the United Nations in requesting the circulation of resolutions of its Government's own making as official documents of the General Assembly, is but another proof, if proof is needed, of Mogadisho's perfidy and unbridled opportunism.

In the pursuit of its policy of territorial aggrandizement, the régime in Mogadisho unabashedly professes at one and the same time scientific socialism and Islamic fundamentalism. For Somalia, no stone is to be left unturned in the search for anything that could be exploited for the furtherance of its discredited expansionist policy and the internationalization of the resulting conflict for which it alone is responsible.

Conveniently ignoring the fact that, only as recently as 1975, more than 10 prominent religious leaders have been publicly executed for no "crime" other than daring to criticize Somali's Government for its deviation from the teachings of Islam, and its continuing aggression against Ethiopia, resulting in wanton killings of Moslems and Christians alike, and the destruction of mosques and churches, the

leaders of Somalia have now turned to the meetings of the Islamic Conference for staging their customary game of deception.

Manipulating a forum at which Ethiopia is not represented, the régime of Mogadisho obviously draws satisfaction from the passage of resolutions it pushed through, unmindful of the great disservice it has done to the reputation of the Islamic Conference. With this vicious act, Somalia's Government is also hoping to drive a wedge between Ethiopia and the Islamic world - a world with which Ethiopia shares strong historical, cultural, spiritual and religious ties. These bonds, which have their roots in the early history of Islam, are recognized in the teachings of Prophet Mohammed himself and in the Islamic traditions. Ethiopia's selfless gesture in providing protection and sanctuary to the persecuted followers of Islam has been underscored by the Prophet as an example for all generations of Moslems to emulate. Turning to contemporary history, it must be noted that one of the first measures taken by the revolutionary Government of the new Ethiopia was the separation of State and church thereby ensuring the equality of all religions. Today, Ethiopia, with a substantial Islamic community of her own whose number is actually many times over that of the entire population of Somalia, is relentlessly striving for the socio-economic advancement of her people on the bases of equality and justice for all.

This brings one to Somalia's latest ploy, relating to the question of the so-called refugees. Though not intending to honour the slander with a reply, we believe it is our duty to apprise the international community of the exact nature and content of the issue.

Inspired by a colonially conceived plot and a manifestly absurd myth called "Greater Somalia", successive rulers of Somalia have continued to entertain a dangerous illusion of annexing eastern Ethiopia, parts of Kenya and the whole of the Republic of Djibouti.

Hence, Somalia's assault on its neighbours has become a war to be waged on all fronts, for the one and only overriding political objective - the creation of the so-called "Greater Somalia".

To this end, Somalia has employed terror, subversion and even naked military aggression. It has seriously undermined the stability of the region and endangered international peace and security. The repeated military incursions into Ethiopia and Kenya, as well as the obstructionist and subversive role it has played in a futile attempt to prevent Djibouti from acceding to genuine independence, are all matters of public record.

By diverting and squandering scarce resources from real development needs to military adventures, the leaders of Mogadisho continue to aggravate the social and economic plight of the peoples of the region in general, but in particular those of Somalia.

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The pursuit of this destructive policy has, inter alia, forced some 300,000 of Somalia's own citizens to flee their country and go to the Middle East and another 200,000 to seek refuge in East Africa. The 1977-1978 aggression of Somalia alone has resulted in enormous loss of lives and destruction of property, not to mention the displacement of over two million Ethiopians. How many more innocent lives must needlessly be sacrificed before the world wakes up to the tragic situation resulting from Somalia's expansionist adventures?

Today, the claim of the existence of over one million of the so-called Ethiopian refugees in Somalia has become the mainstay of a sinister propaganda campaign on the part of the Government of Somalia. Regrettably, this fraudulent claim is being uncritically echoed by the mass media of certain countries, thus lending credence to a politically motivated campaign aimed at promoting Somalia's policy of expansion as well as facilitating fund-raising efforts for the same purpose.

It must be made clear at the outset that Ethiopia, herself a recipient of generous assistance from the international community, would be the last country to oppose humanitarian assistance to any nation, including Somalia. What Ethiopia opposes is, however, the attempt to blow the issue out of all proportion in order to facilitate the acquisition of humanitarian assistance which is being diverted for the prosecution of Somalia's war of expansion.

As early as February 1978, Somalia had claimed to be sheltering 30,000 so-called Ethiopian refugees. Shortly after that, the figure was increased to 270,000, then to 425,000 and, by the end of the same year, to 500,000. In August 1979, the Government of Somalia informed the Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees that over a thousand Ethiopian refugees were entering Somalia daily. By this reckoning alone, it should not be surprising if Somalia would soon claim that it is harbouring refugees well above its present estimated population of some three million.

In this regard, it must be pointed out that the population of the Ogaden is 575,000. Unless one were to assume that the Ogaden is completely depopulated, there is no way such a fabrication could have any semblance of truth. On the contrary, the population of the Ogaden, as of the other adjacent administrative regions of Ethiopia from which the influx of "refugees" is supposed to originate, is intact. This has been confirmed by a number of observers and may further be verified by the United Nations. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in May of this year and an interagency mission dispatched by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the war-ravaged administrative regions of Bale, Sidamo and Hararghe in July of this year have toured the areas in question, talked to the population and recorded their own observations.

Ethiopia, therefore, categorically rejects this unfounded allegation and urges the United Nations and its specialized agencies to take appropriate steps to verify the accuracy of the figures that are submitted to it by the Government of Somalia. Utmost caution should also be exercised by the United Nations to stop and

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prevent Somalia's abuse of international humanitarian assistance - an abuse which has already been widely reported in the press, including even those in the West.

Somalia's attempt to wrest financial subsidy from the international community by parading its own innocent children and helpless women as refugees in the hope of advancing its irredentist ambitions in the region should therefore be clear to all.

In July 1977, when Somalia launched its war of aggression against Ethiopia, thousands of innocent and defenceless Ethiopians were slaughtered by its army. Thousands others were also uprooted and made destitute and homeless. These include the 587,281 people in Bale, 230,000 in Sidamo and over 974,000 in Hararghe. Development projects worth billions of dollars have been destroyed in eastern and southern Ethiopia. Schools, hospitals, bridges, farms, power plants, churches, mosques and even United Nations financed settlement projects for nomads were not spared. Whole villages and towns were also razed to the ground.

Members of the diplomatic corps and representatives of international organizations serving in Ethiopia have already given an eye witness account of the consequences of Somalia's aggression.

The former Yugoslav Ambassador to Ethiopia, His Excellency Mr. Vojinovic, made the following observations:

"It was shocking to see so much public and private property deliberately put out of use. The sight of a mass grave at Kebri Dahar where we saw children, women and old men dumped in a quarry was so disturbing that we observed a minute's silence in memory of those innocent victims of such incredible atrocity."

The then Dean of the diplomatic corps, His Excellency Ambassador Dicko of Cameroon put it as follows:

"We saw vast damages to buildings, hospitals, bridges, water and electricity supply systems."

The Liaison Officer of UNESCO for Ethiopia, the OAU and ECA put his observations this way:

"I was very anxious to see Gode. UNESCO and UNICEF had been closely involved in projects for settlers in that area. For us, it was a very depressing experience to see what had happened ... all settlements were completely empty. Most of the buildings in the area had been destroyed, and schools had been blown up."

According to the UNHCR representative:

"... The mission was able to witness extensive destruction and damage to public buildings such as schools, hospitals, power plants, telecommunications, bridges, etc."

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As regards the thousands of Ethiopians who were victimized by the war, the following is what the UNDP resident representative reported as early as 1978:

"... People are in fact moving back to their towns. Almost 80 per cent of the people had returned to their homes ..."

On the other hand, Somalia's rampaging troops had kidnapped and forcibly abducted many Ethiopians to Somalia, where they continue to be kept in guarded camps and when necessary forced to pose as refugees for representatives of relief agencies and journalists. This has also been confirmed by those Ethiopians who risked their lives to cross the border and rejoin their families.

One Mohamed Ahmed Salah, who was kept for eight months at Karyole, told the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on 14 May 1980 in Degahabour the following:

"I was forcibly taken to Somalia by the invading army. There, I was engaged in forced labour and partly in military training. At last, when I was ordered to join a terrorist group bracing to create havoc in Ethiopia, I agreed and then managed to escape and join my family."

Sheih Hussein, a 33 year-old Ethiopian, informed the UNHCR delegation that:

"... When the invading troops of Somalia retreated, they herded together families from the area, took them to Somalia and kept them ... near Mogadisho. Citizens residing in Somalia all their lives were used as a means of soliciting aid from abroad under the pretext that they were Ethiopian refugees."

Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien, a prominent journalist and one-time United Nations official, after his recent tour of eastern Ethiopia, wrote the following in the 2 March 1980 issue of the Observer:

"... People who left as a result of the Ogaden war of 1977 have been steadily coming back ..."

"The Ethiopian authorities are clearly trying to help the people, though with inadequate means. Most of the local Ethiopian officials are themselves Somali and appear to be on good terms with the local population. What we heard in Somalia from host officials suggested a systematic Ethiopian policy of repressing, victimizing and expelling Somali people ... what we did not see, though we were on the alert for it, was any sign of present or recent repressive activity directed against the civilian population generally ..."

Why then has the Government of Somalia stage-managed the refugee farce? True to the adage that when things go bad internally you point an accusing finger at an outside force, Mogadisho wants to make Ethiopia a convenient scapegoat for its countless problems. But unfortunately, the weight of evidence is against Somalia. The truth is that Mogadisho Government's coffers are empty and that it wants to

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exploit a supposedly humanitarian problem for sinister political ends. The United Nations interagency mission which visited Somalia in December 1979, has, for instance, reported the following:

"... Most of the country is arid. It has had a serious drought in late 1979 and a poor harvest in early 1980. The decline in exports and the heavy reliance on the remittance of Somalis working abroad are disturbing trends... National food deficit is becoming greater each year ... Two-thirds of the country is affected by drought ... A massive human tragedy could easily develop if the spring rains do not come on time and if food assistance does not quickly and steadily arrive in Somalia."

Furthermore, the U.S. News and World Report of 3 March 1980, a paper which could hardly be accused of being anti-Somalia, has the following to say on the state of that country's economy:

"... Somalia's foreign exchange reserves have dropped to \$24 million, enough to pay for just four to six weeks of essential imports."

These and other similar difficulties identified by a FAO/WFP mission as early as 1977 are the real causes which compelled the Government of Somalia to issue a world-wide appeal for massive international assistance, and not the imaginary influx of the so-called "Ethiopian refugees" in that country.

It was further reported by the mission that out of the people displayed as refugees, 61 per cent were children, 30 per cent were women and 8 per cent elderly, sick or handicapped men. Since 91 per cent of those paraded as "refugees" were innocent children and women, the obvious question arises: Where are the able-bodied men?

Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien, who visited the so-called refugee camps in Somalia with the help of government interpreters who dutifully echoed the official line, had the following to say in the Observer of 23 March 1980:

"The ... drought in Somalia has distorted the way of life of the nomads. This situation had made the camps more attractive than the normal nomad encampments. These camps act as magnets: without them more nomads would be dying in the desert, mainly of natural causes..."

"I was skeptical about the regularity of these stories. What I was to see in the Ogaden seemed to be hard, indeed impossible to reconcile with the picture conjured up in the camps of a general Ethiopian effort at exterminating people.

"If you ask the women where their husbands are, their answers get vague..."

"Most of these people are nomads. And nomads mostly split up into two groups. Women and young children stay at desert encampment ... with one or two she-camels. The men and the older boys travel with the rest of the stock ...".

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Similarly, Jack Simons, Reuter's correspondent in Mogadisho, cabled the following on 28 May 1980:

"The few men to be seen in the camps are usually soldiers on leave ... Asked where the men are, the women reply that they are fighting."

Dr. Kevin M. Cahill, an avowed advocate of Somalia's expansionist policy and President Siad Barre's personal physician, in a testimony before the United States House of Representatives Sub-Committee on Africa of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, on 13 February 1980, also confirmed that the men were either killed or remained fighting in the Ogaden.

Is it, therefore, difficult to conclude that a substantial number of those paraded as refugees are indeed the orphans and widows of Somalia's regular troops who have lost their lives during Mogadisho's continuing war of wanton aggression against Ethiopia?

To lend credibility to its outrageous propaganda, however, the Government of Somalia consistently refers to the visit made by the UNHCR officials to the so-called refugee camps and the figures mentioned in a press release of the UNHCR.

But the statistical figures submitted by Somalia can hardly be endorsed. The whole world knows that the UNHCR does not possess the means with which to verify the accuracy of refugee figures submitted to it. It could not and does not involve itself in the task of analysing the financial, political or economic motivations of the Government of Somalia to present its own citizens as refugees, or to ascertain the true identity of nomads who trek with their camels and goats across barren lands searching for water and grazing.

It may be recalled that some 70 per cent of the population of Somalia is nomadic and trek seasonally across international frontiers in search of water and grazing land. Under such conditions, the task of adequate census-taking, to say the least, becomes difficult and the use of the term "refugee" questionable.

Thus, Somalia, in quoting the UNHCR, is actually quoting itself, since as indicated in the interagency report, the Government of Somalia is itself the source of the information.

Somalia is perfectly capable of committing a naked aggression and denying the aggression only to admit it later. If it is ingenious enough to convert its national army into what it calls a "liberation front", then it should not be surprising if it transforms its own citizens into "refugees" overnight. That is why the international community should view Somalia's propaganda with the hind-sight of Mogadisho's past performance and its well-earned reputation for deceit.

As has been pointed out, Somalia currently faces acute financial and economic problems that have been severely compounded by military adventures and mismanagement. These, together with the serious drought that has stricken the

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region, have put Somalia in a disastrous situation. As a result, the régime has chosen to herd Somalia's needy citizens into relief camps, and with characteristic cynicism call them "Ethiopian refugees". With all sympathy for the unfortunate people, Ethiopia once again categorically rejects this stage-managed farce, as well as Somalia's unscrupulous attempt to manipulate the genuine humanitarian concern of the international community for sinister ends.

In this context, it should be noted that, while Ethiopia is guided by the principles of the 1951 Geneva Convention, the 1967 United Nations Protocol and the 1969 OAU Convention relating to refugees, all of which she has duly ratified, Somalia has on the other hand, not only failed to ratify the OAU Convention, but has also made the following broad declaration on the United Nations Convention and Protocol, thus nullifying their very spirit and objectives:

"The Government of the Somali Democratic Republic acceded to the Convention and Protocol on the understanding that nothing in the said Convention or Protocol will be construed to prejudice and adversely affect the national status, or political aspiration of the displaced people from Somali territories under alien domination."

This declaration, to which Ethiopia has duly registered its objection, is clearly directed against the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all of Somalia's neighbours. Furthermore, it testifies to Somalia's doubtful commitment to the Convention itself.

Article III of the OAU Convention, for instance, declares that:

"Signatory states undertake to prohibit refugees residing in their respective territories from attacking any State member of the OAU, by any activity likely to cause tension between member states, and in particular by the use of arms, through the press or the radio."

Somalia, however, continues to violate both the spirit and letter of this Convention by instigating, organizing and conducting subversive and terrorist acts against Ethiopia. It should be obvious that Somalia's failure to ratify the OAU Convention is the result of the inherent contradiction between its declared policy of territorial expansion and the principles established by that Convention. The international community, therefore, should not allow itself to be used as an instrument for the realization of the policies of a well-known expansionist State which has been the cause of wanton destruction of life and property, and of the absence of stability and harmony in the region.

Members of the diplomatic corps and representatives of international relief agencies who recently toured eastern Ethiopia were able to observe that Somalia's troops who were captured by Ethiopian Security Forces were in possession of food supplies donated by the international community to the Government of Somalia. These included donations from WFP, the EEC and even corn furnished by the people of the United States of America with the label "not to be sold or exchanged". The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees who toured rehabilitation centres in

Hararghe and Bale has personally observed how such humanitarian assistance was being diverted by Somalia for military purposes, and the necessity for donor countries and agencies to exercise stricter control over the utilization of such assistance has been stressed to him.

Furthermore, since there is a movement of families and tribes along the border areas, resulting from ecological conditions, there should be a systematic checking of the true identity and social background of the so-called refugees, and that if settlement were required, these individuals be settled not along the border, but elsewhere, in accordance with existing conventions regarding refugees.

In this context, it is necessary to explain briefly the efforts of my Government regarding the voluntary repatriation of bona fide Ethiopian refugees in Djibouti and the Sudan.

As a result of the brutality of the invading army of Somalia and following the destruction of 24 bridges on the Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway, along with a number of economic projects in the area, thousands of Ethiopians have been forced to seek refuge in the Republic of Djibouti. However, as a result of the recent agreements reached between the Governments of Djibouti and Ethiopia, and with the assistance of the UNHCR, these people will soon be voluntarily repatriated. A proclamation to facilitate their speedy return has already been issued by the Ethiopian Government. We are confident that this measure will enhance the cause of peace in the region and reduce the human suffering in the area.

As regards those who sought refuge in the Sudan, Ethiopia, realizing that a solution to this problem will enhance the prospect of peace in the region as well as contribute to the successful implementation of the planned joint development projects, has granted general amnesty to all those who are willing to lay down their arms and join in the peaceful reconstruction of the country. This positive measure will, we believe, go a long way not only in solving the problem of the refugees themselves, but also in alleviating the burden imposed on the host country, the Democratic Republic of the Sudan. Already many Ethiopians have returned to their country and the process of voluntary repatriation is continuing satisfactorily. The final outcome of this process, however, would undoubtedly need the unreserved co-operation of the Government of the Sudan as well as the good offices and the financial support of the UNHCR.

I hope that this letter will put in proper perspective not only the so-called "refugee problem" in Somalia, but also the general situation of refugees and displaced persons in the Horn of Africa.

Finally, I would kindly request that this letter be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under items 50 and 78 of the provisional agenda.

(Signed) Mohamed Hamid IBRAHIM
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
