

UN Security Council Tightens Sanctions against Eritrea and Condemns its

Destabilizing Role in the Horn of Africa

On Monday (December 5, 2011), the UN Security Council passed-- without any votes against-- Resolution 2023, which condemns Eritrea's destabilizing role in the Horn of Africa.

The Security Council expressed grave concern at the findings of the Somalia/Eritrea Monitoring Group Report of July 18, 2011. Among other things, the Report underlined Eritrea's planned terrorist attacks to disrupt the January 2011 African Union Summit held in Addis Ababa, by targeting visiting dignitaries and civilians as part of a plot to turn Addis Ababa into Baghdad. The Report also confirmed that Eritrea was providing political, financial and logistical support to terrorist groups such as Al-Shabaab, which undermine efforts to bring peace and stability in Somalia.

Resolution 2023 reiterates the Security Council's call upon all states "to ensure strict implementation of the arms embargo" established by resolution 1907 (2009) and expresses the Council's intention to increase the number of individuals and entities subject to a travel ban and asset freeze. Furthermore, resolution 2023 condemned the Eritrean government's use of a "Diaspora tax" levied on individuals of Eritrean descent living overseas to finance the supply of weapons and other support to opposition groups in Somalia and other countries in the region. The resolution also urged all states to introduce due diligence guidelines to prevent the provision of financial services which would contribute to Eritrea's violation of relevant Security Council resolutions.

The international community has been forced to take these measures given the Eritrean regime's failure to heed repeated calls for it to cease its destabilizing activities and its support for terrorist groups. The Eritrean regime's replies to the international community's exhortations have been characterized by intransigence and prevarication. Asmara has consistently tried to derail and evade efforts at censure by playing victim. A recurrent theme articulated by Eritrean officials is that international rebuke of its illicit activities is the result of a western conspiracy against Eritrea-- this resolution unambiguously puts such fatuous claims to rest.

It is to be recalled that Resolution 2023 was initially drafted by IGAD and tabled by Gabon and Nigeria, both of which have played a constructive role as members of the United Nations Security Council and the African Union. IGAD and Ethiopia express their unreserved gratitude to Gabon and Nigeria for effectively discharging their responsibilities towards the promotion of peace and stability in our sub-region.

The passage of resolution 2023 not only highlights the increasing isolation of the Eritrean government, but demonstrates the cooperative spirit pervading IGAD and our continent as a whole. In a show of regional unity, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia, President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed of Somalia, President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti, Foreign Minister Moses Wetangula of Kenya and the Ugandan and South Sudanese Ambassadors to the African Union, jointly addressed the Security Council by video link and expressed support for the sanctions. The collaboration between IGAD member states exemplifies their unanimous stance with regard to the need to curb Eritrea's destabilizing activities.

The Security Council's members have spoken loud and clear. Eritrea's destabilizing activities must be reigned in and efforts to ensure peace and stability in our region intensified. The passage of the resolution will hopefully go a long way in ensuring peace and stability in the sub region. In light of the international community's unequivocal message, both Ethiopia and IGAD expect the Eritrean government to mend its ways and comply with international law and all applicable UN resolutions. Ethiopia, for its part, will work toward full implementation of resolution 2023.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

December 6, 2011