Thirty-sixth session

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

Letter dated 31 December 1980 from the Permanent Representative of
Ethiopia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I wish to refer to the letter dated 24 November 1980 from the Permanent
Representative of Somalia addressed to you and circulated as General Assembly
document A/C.1/35/12. Had the letter under reference been limited to the usual
diatribe of the Permanent Representative of Somalia, I would not have considered
it as deserving a reply. But, inasmuch as an attempt is made in that letter to
distort facts, I feel compelled to state the following to set the record
straight.

In his letter the Permanent Representative quotes, partially and out of
context at that, the former Prime Minister of Ethiopia in a futile attempt to create
the impression that the principle of respect for boundaries existing at the time
of decolonization does not apply to Somalia. What the former Prime Minister of
Ethiopia actually stated was the following:

"In fact this resolution is meant to recall to us the exact content
of our Charter which we all signed. On the one hand, there is respect
for territorial integrity, therefore, respect for frontiers, for if frontiers
are violated, territorial integrity is not respected, on the other hand,
paragraph four of article three of the Charter orders 'peaceful settlement
of all differences through negotiation, mediation and arbitration'.
Consequently, we believe this resolution has no bearing on the disputes
we have, for example, between Somalia and Ethiopia and which we have,
according to article three, paragraph four of the Charter, decided to
settle peacefully through negotiation, mediation and arbitration. We
therefore agreed to meet around a table for negotiations. But here we simply
affirm article three of the Charter: 'respect for territorial integrity and
respect for frontiers'. Truly, I do not see how this could impede our

* Reissued for technical reasons.
negotiations, unless one of the parties has aimed a blow at territorial integrity ... Consequently, we support this resolution, this manifestation, while really accepting on the other hand to pledge ourselves to do all within our means to settle our disputes or conflicts with our brothers of Somalia through negotiations ... This is a completely independent question which concerns all countries which have or do have conflicts ... Nobody can stop two states from altering their frontiers through negotiation if they so wish, but they should also respect the frontiers they have." [AHSG/PV/SR.(I) PART IV, pp. 102-103]

It must be noted here that the statement quoted above was in response to the observation made by the representative of Somalia to the effect that adoption of the resolution on the respect of boundaries existing at the time of independence "would prejudice certain bilateral talks which are to take place between the three countries ..." meaning Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia. It is thus clear that the former Prime Minister of Ethiopia in the above statement was making a distinction between the principle and the procedure for its application. The statement was aimed at allaying the concern expressed by Somalia that the adoption of the resolution would render superfluous efforts then under way to seek negotiated solutions to the existing problems among African States.

It is also in this spirit that Their Excellencies Presidents Julius Nyerere and Kwame Nkrumah made their remarks in response to the representative of Somalia. Furthermore, I believe that the comment of His Excellency President Nyerere, the sponsor of the resolution, underscoring the need and the rationale for a resolution on the respect for frontiers, would bare the self-serving assertion of the representative of Somalia.

"I think it is obvious that we have already boundary disputes, otherwise this problem would not have arisen at all; it would not have come here. We already have boundary disputes and we all hope, as I have expressed on a different occasion, we all hope that amicable solutions would be found to these existing boundary disputes, but Mr. Chairman, this should not prevent us from affirming a principle, which is already part of our Charter ..." [AHSG/PV/SR.(I) PART IV, p. 96]

Just before the adoption of the resolution, the Chairman of the Summit Conference stated the following in summing up the discussion on the item:

"The Conference is invited to solemnly reaffirm the principles already set out in the Charter, and these principles are not merely concerned with the actually existing conflicts but those of all the Member States of the OAU." [AHSG/PV/SR.(I) PART IV, p. 104]

In conclusion, I would like to observe that if the Cairo resolution on the inviolability of frontiers existing at the time of independence did not apply to the disputes between Somalia and her neighbours, then why is it that the representative of Somalia, after the adoption of the resolution, felt compelled to state: "[That] my Government does hold all reservations on this resolution and does not consider itself bound by it".
I should be grateful if you would kindly have this letter circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under the item entitled "Review of the implementation of the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security".

(Signed) Mohamed Hamid IBRAHIM
Ambassador
Permanent Representative