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

Letter dated 24 November 1980 from the Permanent Representative of Somalia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The letter dated 15 October 1980, addressed to you by the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia and circulated as General Assembly document A/C.1/35/6 is yet another attempt by Ethiopia to mislead the international community about the status of negotiations by the Good Offices Committee of the Organization of African Unity set up to resolve differences between Somalia and Ethiopia.

Written in uncouth style and lacking in diplomatic propriety, the letter also misrepresents the nature of the Somali/Ethiopian dispute and the situation in the Horn of Africa as a whole. It is therefore imperative, once again, that the record should be set straight.

First of all, it must be emphasized that the Good Offices Committee is not composed of foreign ministers but of eight heads of State. The task of the foreign ministers who attended the meeting of the Committee in Lagos from 18 to 20 August 1980, was to hear representations from Somalia and Ethiopia and to report back to their heads of State. Since the eight heads of State have not even met, and so could not have formulated or issued a recommendation, it is clear that the unqualified assertions which appear throughout the Ethiopian letter to the effect that the Good Offices Committee has "adopted recommendations" and "carried out its mandate successfully" are deliberate falsehoods.

Secondly, it must also be emphasized that in breaching the confidentiality of the Foreign Ministers Meeting, with the obvious intention of undermining the process of negotiation, Ethiopia has violated the fundamental principles of good offices procedure. The Permanent Representative of Ethiopia himself admits that the Lagos meeting was held in camera, but in attempting to justify Ethiopia's action in circulating so-called recommendations he fails to explain why Ethiopia should arrogate to itself the right which belongs solely to the Organization...
of African Unity Committee of Heads of State, to issue any statements or recommendations which might emerge from current negotiations.

The circulation by Ethiopia of letters containing fraudulent claims abuses not only the good offices procedure but also the right of Member States to circulate documents under the auspices of the General Assembly.

As far as co-operation with the Good Offices Committee is concerned, it is Ethiopia, not Somalia which continually used manoeuvres to delay the convening of a meeting from 1973 until last August when the Foreign Ministers meeting was finally convened at the insistence of the Chairman of the Good Offices Committee. Dr. Siaka Stevens, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone and current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, rightly expressed regret, in his statement to the General Assembly on 24 September 1980, that the meeting was not successful and that tensions between Ethiopia and Somalia have increased. But his reference to the problem was not meant to indicate that the heads of State, who have yet to meet, have adopted a decision on the matter. There was nothing in his speech to suggest that the work of the Good Offices Committee had been concluded. But nothing would seem to stop the Ethiopian régime from misrepresenting even the Chairman of the Organization of African Unity in its attempt to mislead international public opinion.

The Ethiopian letter repeats customary slanders about Somalia's attitude to international treaties and to resolutions of the Organization of African Unity and of the United Nations. It must be made clear, therefore, that the only treaties which Somalia rejects are the illegal, expansionist treaties entered into at the close of the last century by colonialist Ethiopia and the European Powers, in contravention of prior agreements between the Somali leaders and those Powers and without the knowledge of the Somali people.

Somalia strongly supports the universally accepted principles of the United Nations and of the Organization of African Unity, such as non-interference in the internal affairs of States, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the inviolability of legally recognized boundaries and the recognition of territorial integrity, which are mentioned in the Ethiopian letter. There was no mention in that letter, however, of the equally important principle of the right of colonized peoples to self-determination and national independence. If the principles being relied upon by colonialist Ethiopia to perpetuate her domination of subject peoples had been used to extinguish the inalienable right of self-determination, millions of African peoples now enjoying nationhood would still be labouring under colonial bondage. Western Somalia and Eritrea are subject territories of the Ethiopian empire-State and they have the same right to decolonization which was exercised by scores of other African peoples over the past two decades.

With regard to the principle of respect for borders inherited on decolonization, this can only be applied to Ethiopia when, like other colonial powers, it has carried out the decolonization of its colonial possessions. Indeed, one may well ask the question as to when did Ethiopia attain independence and what were her borders then?
When the resolution containing this often-quoted principle was adopted by the Organization of African Unity Summit held in Cairo in 1964, a number of countries expressed strong reservations on the matter. Of even more importance is the fact, which is not often recalled, that the Somali/Ethiopian dispute over the decolonization of Western Somalia and other disputes still under adjudication were explicitly excluded from the scope of that resolution. The proposer of the resolution, President Nyerere of Tanzsnia (then Tanganyika and Zanzibar) emphasized that his proposal was aimed at avoiding future disputes and that those under negotiation would not be affected by it. President Nyerere said at the time: "I believe my proposal has nothing to do with negotiations currently taking place with Somalia and other countries between which border disputes exist". This position was supported by President Nkrumah and even by the then Ethiopian Prime Minister, Aklilou Hapte Walde who stated:

"Briefly this resolution reminds us of what we have exactly indicated in the Charter which we have all signed. On the one hand there is a respect for the territorial integrity of the States, i.e., respect of the borders... On the other hand, paragraph four of Article Three of the Charter refers to the peaceful settlement of any conflict through negotiations, mediation and arbitration. Therefore, this resolution, in my humble opinion, has nothing to do with the dispute that exists between Somalia and Ethiopia for example. We agree, according to article three, paragraph four of the Organization of African Unity Charter which refers to peaceful settlement through negotiations, mediation and arbitration. Accordingly, we have agreed to meet on a round table to negotiate"

In the light of the above, the question of Western Somalia which was clearly excluded from the scope of the Organization of African Unity resolution on colonial borders has yet to be settled on the basis of negotiation. This process will certainly continue to be unsuccessful until the right of self-determination is taken into account. Obviously it is a basic condition of the peaceful settlement of disputes that all aspects of a problem be considered.

Finally, I must register my astonishment that the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia should presume to accuse Somalia of escalating tension in the Horn of Africa and threatening the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the States of the region, when his own country has invited super-Power intervention in a local conflict involving the right to self-determination and independence; has given the Soviet Union unfettered use of its military and civil airports; has allowed the establishment of Soviet naval bases at the ports of Massawa and Assab and on the Dahlak Islands; has allowed the permanent stationing of tens of thousands of Soviet and Cuban forces on its territory and, for its own colonial purposes, has fostered Soviet hegemony in the Horn of Africa to the detriment of the stability of the area and of established principles of the Organization of African Unity.
I am sure that Member States will have no difficulty in understanding that it is the Ethiopian empire-State which has the primary responsibility for the dangerous situation which currently obtains in the Horn of Africa and will discard the repeated and self-serving attempts of its officials to distort the truth.

I request that this letter be circulated as an official document under agenda item 50 of the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Ahmed Mohamed ADAN
Ambassador and
Permanent Representative
to the United Nations