

**RECORD OF THE SECOND MEETING BETWEEN THE OAU HIGH LEVEL MISSION**  
**AND PRIME MINISTER MELES ZENAWI OF ETHIOPIA**  
**AT THE NATIONAL PALACE IN ADDIS ABABA**  
**HELD ON 19<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 1998**

In attendance

- **President Campaore,  
Current Chairman of the OAU and President  
of the Republic of Burkina Faso**
- **President Robert Mugabe,  
past Chairman of the OAU and President  
of the Republic of Zimbabwe**
- **President Bizimungu,  
President of the Republic of Rwanda**
- **Mohamed Moussa Chehen  
Foreign Minister of Djibouti**
- **Dr Salim Ahmed Salim  
Secretary General of the OAU**

**OAU CHAIRMAN PRESIDENT CAMPAORE**

We are reassured by the confidence you have imposed on us in facilitating these peace efforts. We have listened to both sides. We learnt a lot and we did understand that this is a conflict that must be resolved at all cost with everyone contributing - both Parties and Africa. Ethiopia is the symbol of the unity of Africa and it will be unfortunate if this country were to be involved in war with another country. It would be misleading if we were to tell you that we have been able to resolve this situation within such a short period. We still require flexibility and restraint from you. We require more information on

the problem from you. We need maps, we need to send Observers to the affected areas to verify the situation on the ground.

We will require some kind of cessation of hostilities for a limited period to enable us continue with the work that we have started. We also need to take on board the humanitarian situation affecting civilians from both sides.

### **PRESIDENT MUGABE**

We would like to express appreciation for all that has been done to enable us undertake the mission given to us by the OAU.

We started by informing you on the content of the Mission and the concerns of Africa. In your message, were assurances of reconciliation and good neighbourliness. We also elicited from your statement, the principles which have guided your actions and which should be adopted by all i.e. whenever and wherever aggression takes place, it should not be rewarded, we bore in mind the fact that you like us, felt that a demarcation of the borders should take place under circumstances where there is a reduction of hostilities. We also noted your firm position on the return to the *status quo ante*. In Asmara, President Isaias also gave us his own perspectives and a background to the problem. He traced the inception of the problem to August 1997 when he first alerted you to the existence of problems on the border caused by the cross border movements of your forces. He availed us of copies of the correspondences exchanged between both of you and his proposals on how the then problems could be resolved, bilaterally.

We requested to know from him, his commitment to peace and the cessation of hostilities. In response, he answered us that there is room for direct dialogue between both Parties. He felt we should take into account what others had done and consolidate these efforts by building on the positive aspects. But he felt that the role of the Facilitators is over. He wanted an effective OAU role. We welcomed those views.

President Isaias produced maps and documents which indicated where they felt that the border between Eritrea and Ethiopia lies. He claimed that all the territories in dispute are Eritrean territories. The validity and authenticity of the maps is something that can be looked into subsequently. We were limited in our work because we did not obtain similar documentation from you, to back up Ethiopia's claims. If the same areas are claimed by both sides, how do we move forward. We think that Technical Teams should look into the history, geography and culture of the disputed area and submit a report to us to see how to move the process forward. The problem is that you have consistently called for a withdrawal from the occupied territory while President Isaias claims that he never invaded and that he is in Eritrean territory. We would feel indebted to you if we were to be privileged to have copies of your own maps on the area in dispute. Meanwhile we estimate that we will need about 4 weeks to work on this issue, during which time we will require some kind of cessation of hostilities.

We also appealed to President Isaias to ensure that measures which have been put in place and which harm the civilian population, be moderated, especially those measures affecting the nationals of both sides. President Isaias denied that he had expelled any Ethiopians and that apart from interrogations occasioned to facilitate the Peace Process, he had not harassed any Ethiopians. He indicated that for now, there is no actual fighting or hostilities on the ground. We urged him not to provoke any hostilities, the need to suspend hostilities was really felt not only because we wanted to operate, but because of the trauma it is causing both sides. We think that the period of four weeks suspension of hostilities is sufficient for the work of the Mechanism we want to put in place to deal with the dispute. Even though we have not dealt with the leaders in this area before under such circumstances, we do know that when a President gives his commitment, that commitment is sacred.

#### **PRIME MINISTER MELES ZENAWI**

The Mission is based on the decision of the OAU Summit. I will want to see what correspondences have been submitted to you by way of correspondences between us. We had border problems but we did not have any conflict between us. There was not a

single bullet fired between Eritrea and us since May 1991, not even by accident. I am puzzled by all of this. Whatever the Eritrean map says about Badme, no one can dispute that, we administered Badme up till May 12, when they invaded to change the situation on the ground by force. The issue is that they have invaded an area administered by us and changed the *status quo*. If they have maps which proves that the area belongs to them, let us go to arbitration. We agreed with the Facilitators on the need to undo what happened on May 12. We will provide maps and Treaties to a Technical Body of Experts, which can deal with this matter. We are not objecting to binding international arbitration. We object to changing the *status quo* by force. They are trying to obliterate an invasion and cover it up with so-called border dispute. Except for Eritrea, border disputes should not entail invasion, on the contrary, it entails taking such disputes to an International Body for arbitration. We insist that the illegitimate invasion of our territory by Eritrea be reversed first before we can state which piece of rock belongs to which country. This issue was dealt with by the Facilitators. They did so after shuttling between Ethiopia and Eritrea for three weeks. We will provide Maps and Treaties to a Body that can deal with the issue of delimitation and demarcation of the border. To provide you with maps now is simply to confuse the issue. When the unacceptable action by Eritrea on May 12 is reversed, Eritrean claims on Badme or any other part of Ethiopia can be addressed even if they want to claim that half of Addis Ababa belongs to them. Just because Eritrea claims part of our territory, does not give it the right to invade Ethiopia.

We have accepted OAU's Decision. When in Ouagadougou the OAU decided that the two Parties should accept the recommendation of the Facilitators, it was in effect making those recommendations its own and asking both Parties to implement them. Why did the Eritreans reject the proposals, because they were asked to withdraw from Badme, to where they were on May 6 and that the civilian administration be restored. They want a new Initiative because they know that such Initiatives will not have the time that the Facilitators had, to uncover the details and would be dealing with generalities such as peace in the Region. How can the OAU Mission undermine the decisions that were taken by an OAU Summit.

The recommendation of the Facilitators is no longer their proposal but the OAU's. This does not mean that a comma or a dot here and there can not be changed, but the OAU should not renegotiate the four points proposed by the Facilitators. At one point, the Eritreans claimed that the proposals are not controversial but that there are questions of details and implementation – why can't they discuss these details. There will be no Hannish in Ethiopia. I don't want to mislead you, we are not ready to accept or allow Eritrea to occupy our territory by force and get away with it.

We have been restrained since day one. We shall continue to be restrained as long as it is possible to do so and there is light at the end of the tunnel. We are prepared to submit ourselves to a binding resolution of this problem. We can go to the International Court of Justice, we can go to the UN Cartographic Unit or any other Expert Body set up by the OAU. We welcome OAU's continued involvement and we will work with you to the maximum extent.

#### **PRESIDENT CAMPAORE**

We all agree with the OAU Charter provision that border problems should be resolved through dialogue and negotiations. It is true that in Ouagadougou we took over the ownership of the document as ours. But as you know, recommendations are one thing while implementation is a different thing. What we are asking you to do is to provide us with more facts to enable us ascertain the truth better and therefore organize the implementation of the salient points contained in the proposals of the Facilitators. We agree that borders should not be changed by force.

#### **PRESIDENT BIZIMUNGU**

We are encouraged by statement of Prime Minister Meles to continue to exercise restraint. Also, we appreciate his offer of cooperation with the OAU to facilitate the work of the Mission. We are not confusing the issue of border dispute with invasion. President Isaias also claims that Ethiopia has modified the borders since 1997 and that Ethiopia is

the one that invaded Eritrean territory. There are claims and counter claims from both sides.

### **PRIME MINISTER MELES**

If we invaded Eritrean territory in 1997, why is Eritrea only raising it now. Eritrea is not known to be shy about such things. They raise this bogus issue of invasion to confuse their own invasion. What is the point of studying the May 6 incident that is supposed to have triggered an invasion. Whatever triggered it, nothing can justify an invasion.

This process should not be allowed to be diverted and go astray by bogus claims. If Eritrea wants peace, let it withdraw from Badme, if not, it would mean they are not ready for peace and I will take note of it.

In terms of Badme and withdrawal by Eritrea, I have no more room for maneuver, I have gone as far as possible. The issue of demarcation of boundaries is the work of UN Cartographers. It is not the work of Heads of State. There was a Border Commission which was supposed to resolve all border problems peacefully. It had no specific terms of reference.

### **PRESIDENT CAMPAORE**

The current cessation of hostilities should be maintained so that we can work with you, obtain documents and send observers on the ground. Even if we have agreed that there should be no forceful change of borders, we have heard from both sides claims on each other's territory. We need to send Observers to the border to ascertain the facts on the ground. We asked President Isaias who administered Badme on May 12 so there is confusion as to who did what. He told us Eritrea has always been in its territory including Badme.

**PRIME MINISTER**

I did not know that President Isaias would go that far. You can send a fact-finding team to investigate who administered Badme. Talk to the UN and other Agencies how they channeled support to the Badme area. But I will not send my best friend to the area in dispute. It is a war zone and anything can happen. We have Parliamentarians from the area, we have the District Officers who administered the area, you can talk to them. If after the fact-finding it is established that Ethiopia was administering the area before May 12, nothing should stop you from calling on the Eritreans to withdraw from the territory it forcibly occupied as the Facilitators did.

**PRESIDENT ISAIAS**

1. We need to create conditions that will enable both sides to engage in dialogue

Given the claims and counter claims on Badme, we will ask the Secretary General to ascertain who administered Badme before May 12. Thereafter we shall request the Party that illegally occupies the territory, to withdraw after that we shall move into the second phase of the process involving the demarcation of the borders to allow UN Cartography and OAU representatives to deal with the technical issues of the border dispute. In the interim, both sides should exercise restraint and avoid any action that can escalate the problem.

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**RECORD OF THE REVIEW MEETING OF THE OAU HIGH LEVEL MISSION**  
**HELD ON 19<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 1998 AT THE SHERATON HOTEL**  
**IN ADDIS ABABA**

In attendance were:

- **President Campaore,  
Current Chairman of the OAU and President  
of the Republic of Burkina Faso**
- **President Robert Mugabe,  
past Chairman of the OAU and President  
of the Republic of Zimbabwe**
- **President Bizimungu,  
President of the Republic of Rwanda**
- **Mohamed Moussa Chehen  
Foreign Minister of Djibouti**
- **Dr Salim Ahmed Salim  
Secretary General of the OAU**

This matter is not an easy one in view of the history and colonial past of the two countries. The issue of the border is a lengthy one which should be dealt with within the framework of demarcation and other legal technical frameworks. The immediate concern should be how to avoid any further escalation of the problem.

**PRESIDENT MUGABE**

Our second meeting provided us with substantial information which veracity is yet to be proved. Before we can have any specific geographic picture of the area of conflict, we will need the Ethiopian side to provide us with documentation on the geographic areas in dispute, so that we can compare those arguments with the Eritrean information.



The issue of Badme needs a more careful examination. There seems to be differences on where Badme really is, between Ethiopia and Eritrea. After identifying the areas of dispute, you can then go into the historic nature of the area i.e. to whom does Badme really belong. On both sides, it is argued that there is ample evidence of Treaties signed during, the colonial times. If these are available, they should be handed over to the Experts who have to look into this matter. I am not satisfied with the quantity of evidence given by the Ethiopian side, we did not ask for such evidence and I don't know whether it will be prudent for us to ask for such evidence from the Prime Minister, but it will help us to check the veracity of the Eritrean claims. On the other principles, we have tried to uphold, demarcation, cessation of hostilities, delimitation of borders, and end to the harassment of the population. Both Parties gave commitments to exercise restraint. On the Ethiopian side, the government is insistent that before any further action on the implementation of the Peace Plan proposed by the Facilitators, there has to be a withdrawal by Eritrea of the territory they occupied on 12 May 1998. This point is sticky because President Isaias insists that they are not occupying Ethiopia's territory. Is there any way of satisfying Ethiopian demands even if it is a commitment to withdraw as Prime Minister Meles says. But President Isaias will ask us from where we want him to withdraw. We need to get Ethiopia to identify what it calls its own territory, so that we can compare and establish that the dispute is over the same territory.

#### **OAU CHAIRMAN – PRESIDENT CAMPAORE**

The problem is quite difficult. The history of the border was not done in one day. We have been shown maps but we can not attest to their validity because maps can be drawn anytime. What we need is to take time to study them before we can pronounce ourselves on them. If this seeming cease-fire could be maintained for at least one month, we could set up a committee under the auspices of the OAU, including legal experts. We could then deploy observers and send legal and cartographic experts to the ground who will report to us and then we shall get back to the two Parties.

**PRESIDENT BIZIMUNGU**

We should appeal for a one month cease-fire. We should appeal to both sides to stop the harassment of each other's nationals. We should set up a Committee. We need documentation from both sides in order to establish the sequence of events from July 1997 and May 1998 because if before July 1997 the territory was under the administration of Eritrea, then there is a problem with Ethiopia's claims. But if there are proven to be wrong or if since Independence it was assumed that the territory was under Ethiopian administration, then we would have a problem with the Eritrean claims. The Secretary General should establish the veracity of the claims of both sides.

We need to know the terms of reference of the Joint Committee whose mission was to look into the border dispute, this will shed some light. Meanwhile, we have to insist on

- A cessation of hostilities;
- Documentation to establish who administered territory in July 1997;
- Dispatch a fact-finding mission if the security situation will allow such a mission to visit the border areas.

**FOREIGN MINISTER OF DJIBOUTI**

The problem is complex. The problem is one of the demarcation of the border. How do we maintain the cease-fire while dealing with the issue of demarcation. The leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea have prepared their arguments for the demarcation and negotiations. The OAU Mission should confine itself to securing a cease-fire for a specific period. Unfortunately, the current truce seems to facilitate the mobilization by both sides, in preparation for further fighting. The Ethiopian Prime Minister was very clear on what it wants to see done. President Isaias's claims go well beyond the May 6 incident. If both Parties want to use dialogue to resolve the conflict, why do they prepare for war. There is need to deploy Observers, if there is a cease-fire. But both sides seem

to have different understanding of what a cease-fire should achieve. The Mission should send very strong appeals to both Parties to respect the OAU Heads of State and make a gesture to the Mission.

**DR SALIM AHMED SALIM**

The problem is complicated. It would have been inconceivable to emerge with a breakthrough after only one meeting. The points of contention are clear. For Ethiopia, there has to be withdrawal before negotiations can take place. For Eritrea, the problem of Badme is peripheral. It is diversionary. The real issue is demarcation of border. I feel that there has been a hardening of attitude on the part of President Isaias on the question of withdrawal from Badme. When I met him before the Summit, he told me that within the framework of a phased process of demilitarization, he would be willing to withdraw his forces from Badme and allow the return of Ethiopian civilian administration. Before May 6, the general view was that Ethiopian administration was in place in Badme. President Isaias claims Africa does not understand its position, but I told him that he does not explain himself sufficiently, which probably is why he has submitted all the documents to this Mission. The Facilitation is dead as far as the Eritreans are concerned. President Isaias raised a number of questions and doubts. We must find a way to raise those questions with Prime Minister Meles. On the border, there are points of convergence, respect for inherited borders, go for arbitration if necessary.

The temporary cessation of hostilities should be maintained. Make the point of avoiding attacks on civilian population. On the issue of expulsion of nationals, both have been defensive but it is a fact that expulsions have taken place. In Ethiopia, it is done in a more systematic manner, while in Eritrea, it has not been so systematic. The issue of Military Observers will make a lot of sense if both Parties agree. The value of the OAU initiative lies in the level of the Mission. This level of involvement should be maintained. But you cannot have the leaders being involved in working out details. A Mechanism could be established, made up of the Ambassadors of the countries involved in the Mission engaging in a day to day follow-up of the Mission's task. The Ministers should also remain seized as well as the Heads of State themselves. The Secretariat and

Ambassadors lack technical expertise, so we should be able to seek expertise from within and outside Africa.

### **PRESIDENT BIZIMUNGU**

A deployment of Observers would be difficult without negotiating a cease-fire. On the hardening of positions, it is not only Isaias, but also Meles. On 6 May, Eritrean Officers were killed. They decided to retaliate irrespective of the merits of the case or the reality of the problem. The Facilitators put pressure on Isaias because it felt that the Eritrean side was in a better position to make a concession, but events on the other side changed the situation.

### **OAU CHAIRMAN PRESIDENT CAMPAORE**

If we agree on the one month cease-fire, the Ambassadors of the Central Organ should work out details and the Secretary General should set up a Legal Task Force to deal with this issue. Initially, work with the countries involved and then involve the Central Organ later.

### **PRESIDENT MUGABE**

Even if there is no physical fighting, there are activities which are undertaken by both countries against each other, expulsion of nationals, blockade of air etc.