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**RECORD OF MEETING HELD BETWEEN**  
**H.E. DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE OAU**  
**AND**  
**PRESIDENT HASSAN GOULED APTIDON OF DJIBOUTI**  
**HELD IN THE PRESIDENTS OFFICE ON THURSDAY 28 MAY 1998**

**Secretary General**

: I thank you for the efforts you are deploying to find a peaceful solution to the dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea. There is no need for me to reiterate my concerns. The situation, if allowed to continue, will have disastrous consequences not only for Ethiopia and Eritrea, but also for the Region and Africa as a whole.

Therefore, we very much appreciate the time, the resources and the energy you are spending to find a solution to the crisis. By so doing, you are acting not only as the Chairman of IGAD, but also as an Elder Statesman of the Region and the Continent.

The situation continues to be a matter of concern. While efforts are being undertaken to find a solution, both sides continue to proceed with the military build up. There is a danger of escalation due to miscalculation or individual action which will have catastrophic and far reaching consequences. Everything should be done to reduce the tension and find a peaceful solution to the current tension. I have been in touch with Prime Minister Meles and, in fact, I was with him yesterday night. I have not been able to speak to President Issayas directly, due to communications problem. So far, I have contacted him through his Ambassador to Ethiopia and we have exchanged communications on the dispute. I would like to thank you for the assistance you have provided to enable me to go to Asmara.

Africa is concerned. Whatever can be done should be done to find a solution or bring about a solution. We will continue to lend our support to those efforts.

There seems to be an evolution in some areas. It is encouraging to note, for instance, that Prime Minister Meles and President Issayas have assured you and others of their determination to find a peaceful solution. On the issue of the demarcation of the boundary, both sides seem to agree. Prime Minister

Meles assured me that he would abide by the boundaries drawn up by Menelik and Italy which are consistent with the OAU and UN Charters. The issue of demilitarization is still unresolved in view of the need to return to the statu quo ante in Bademe as demanded by Ethiopia.

Sustained pressure will be necessary to avoid a Military confrontation. I have told Prime Minister Meles and President Issayas that none of them would gain from a war. The process of mobilizing soldiers and deploying them at the border is a very costly exercise that neither country can afford.

It seems to me that the position of Prime Minister Meles is more difficult than that of President Issayas. Unless there is a movement in Bademe, it will be difficult for him to make concessions. In the context of the internal politics of Ethiopia, people consider Meles as being too close to Eritrea and more specifically to Issayas. The confidence between the two countries has been shattered. The return to normalcy will not be easy at all.

I received a letter from President Issayas in which he stated that he had raised with you the possibility of convening an Extra Ordinary Summit of IGAD. This is a good idea. However, there is the need to ensure proper preparation of such a Summit. It was better not to have a Summit than to have one without results. The Summit is an ultimate weapon for the Region and if that weapon is lost, then there will be no other recourse.

All that I have stated are not new to you, Mr. President. But since you asked me to start first, I had to say something.

**President Hassan Gouled:**

We should put an end to the escalation of the tension. On 13 May, I went to Addis Ababa. Prime Minister Meles told me that the Eritreans had occupied Ethiopian territory. They had first to withdraw prior to any discussions. The following day I went to Asmara. The first day of my visit went well. President Issayas told me the Ethiopians are their brothers and that they would embrace themselves and move to Djibouti to reconcile with my blessing.

I went back to Addis Ababa. I told to Prime Minister Meles that I had good news from Asmara. He replied that the Eritreans should withdraw first, the discussion could start either within the UN, the OAU or IGAD.

I then went back to Asmara. I told to President Issayas that, during our meeting, he spoke about reconciliation and coming to Djibouti. He replied that the circumstances had changed and that pressure was being exerted on Eritrea. He sated that the area should be demilitarized and a settlement found within the framework of the UN, OAU and IGAD. In the afternoon, he gave me a letter asking that an Extra Ordinary Summit of IGAD be convened. I told him that I would be prepared to convene a Summit if Ethiopians would agree to a such a meeting. If not, such a Summit would serve no useful purpose. We had done our utmost Mr. Secretary General to find a solution. Now, it is the turn of the OAU and the UN to embark on the search for a solution. In the last 28 days, I have tried to find a solution within a family framework. Eritreans want a Summit, Ethiopians do not want one. There is a total deadlock. At my age, I should rest.

We Africans like to talk. We don't want to tell the truth and point the finger at the guilty party. Djibouti tried to calm down things. It was now the turn of the OAU to try to do something.

- Secretary General** : You should not think that the efforts you deployed were in vain. The fact that the two countries did not engage in war is already a big achievement.
- President Hassan Gouled:** We tried to avoid escalation. This gives you time to think about what could be done.
- Secretary General** : Family quarrels are more problematic than quarrels between Foreigners. We will continue our efforts. I appeal to you not to give up and continue to use your wisdom.
- President Hassan Gouled:** IGAD has failed. Even if there is a Summit, I don't think the participants will raise the real issue.
- Secretary General** : The Summit is not the only solution. You have your own personal role.

**President Hassan Gouled:**

We should not turn around the circle. The one who attacked on 12 May should withdraw, the other party does have responsibilities. It is disappointing to note that Africans prefer to listen to people from Europe, the US and Asia than listening to their African brothers. I am impatient to know the outcome of your discussion with Issayas, to see if it is encouraging or not.

The meeting ended at 9h30.