

1584379



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

UNMEE

21 January 2008

Dear Mr. President,

I am writing to bring to your attention the serious crisis facing the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) as a result of the stoppage of diesel fuel supplies to the Mission by the Government of Eritrea since 1 December 2007. If not addressed immediately, the fuel crisis could cause the Mission's operations to come to a complete halt in the coming few weeks.

As indicated in my periodic reports to the Security Council, since September 2006, the Eritrean authorities have maintained a series of restrictions on UNMEE, which included limiting UNMEE monthly allocation of diesel fuel to about 50 percent of the Mission's requirements. Given the location of most of the Mission's observation posts in the remote areas where electricity is either unavailable or unreliable and where UNMEE is heavily dependent on diesel powered generators for lighting, air-conditioning and running its communications systems, this restriction, together with others, compelled the Mission to introduce austerity measures and maintain reduced profile operations.

The most recent measure, which resulted in the complete stoppage of fuel supplies on 1 December 2007, a day after the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission announced the demarcation of the boundary between Ethiopia and Eritrea by map coordinates, has forced UNMEE to further curtail its operations. Its patrols and demining activities have been drastically reduced, while the construction of protection bunkers has had to be stopped and the provision of administrative support to team sites has been severely disrupted. The Mission has had to limit the use of generators in its camps and at some checkpoints to only two hours per day. Serious difficulties are being encountered by the Mission in sustaining its troops and military observers and in ensuring reliable communications with its posts in the field.

His Excellency
Mr. Giadalla A. Ettalhi
President of the Security Council
New York



Numerous démarches undertaken by UNMEE in Asmara, as well as the Department for Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support (DFS) in New York with the Eritrean Permanent Mission in New York, have not resolved this issue. UNMEE requested permission from the Government to import fuel from its reserves in Ethiopia or from the United Nations Mission in Sudan, but no authorization has been granted.

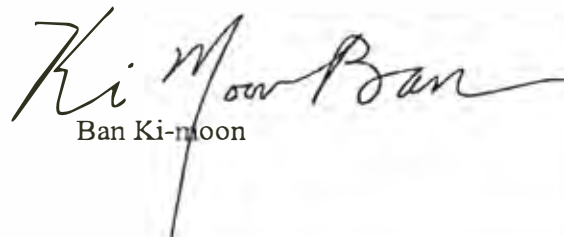
DFS estimates that if the fuel supplies do not resume immediately, UNMEE current stocks will be exhausted by early March 2008. Consequently, a decision to begin withdrawing UNMEE from Eritrea will be required in early February as consolidation of equipment and personnel for relocation would entail using up all of the Mission's fuel reserves.

I should point out that this drastic measure by Eritrea comes at a time when we have witnessed other disturbing trends. In this regard, I would like to inform you that I have not yet been able to appoint a new SRSG for UNMEE. It will also be recalled that my recent offer of good offices to assist the two parties to implement their obligations under the Algiers Agreements and to normalize relations did not receive a favourable response from Eritrea. Furthermore, I have noted that in his letter dated 15 January 2008, addressed to you, President Isaias asserted that since the boundary "is now demarcated", UNMEE has been left "after five and a half years, with no option than maintaining occupation".

As a last resort, I have sent the attached letter to President Isaias Afwerki of the State of Eritrea seeking his urgent intervention to facilitate the immediate resumption of the fuel supplies.

In light of the imminent decision concerning the possibility of relocating UNMEE personnel and equipment, I should be grateful if you could bring this urgent matter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

Please accept, Mr. President, the assurances of my highest consideration.


Ban Ki-moon

TO: SG

FROM:

Troy Setiawan

DATE: Tue Jan 22 2008 14:02 EST

1584379

01/22/2008 16:17 FAX 12129637878

SECURITY COUNCIL

001/004

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

21 January 2008

Excellency,

I am writing to bring to your attention the serious crisis facing the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) as a result of the stoppage of diesel fuel supplies to the Mission. I am very concerned that, if not addressed immediately by your Government, the fuel crisis could force UNMEE to halt its operations in the coming few weeks.

UNMEE has not received fuel supplies since 1 December 2007. The dwindling stocks have already compelled the Mission to reduce the number of its daily patrols and to limit the use of generators in its camps and at some checkpoints to only two hours per day. In addition, the Mission is now experiencing serious difficulties in sustaining its troops and military observers and maintaining reliable communications. As you know, UNMEE was already maintaining reduced profile operations as a result of other restrictions imposed by your Government since 2006.

UNMEE leadership has repeatedly approached your Government in an effort to resolve the critical fuel crisis. UNMEE proposed to the Eritrean authorities that it be allowed to import fuel from its reserves in Ethiopia or from the United Nations Mission in Sudan, but is yet to receive the requested authorization. The Secretariat has, on several occasions, requested the Permanent Mission of Eritrea to bring this matter to your Government's attention with a request to replenish the fuel supplies on an urgent basis.

We have now reached a point where the Mission's current fuel stocks will be exhausted in approximately one month. If this crisis is not resolved, I would be faced with the necessity of taking steps soon to begin the withdrawal of UNMEE. I therefore seek your urgent **intervention** to facilitate the immediate resumption of the fuel supplies.

His Excellency
Mr. Isaias Afwerki
President of the State of Eritrea
Asmara

TO: SG

FROM:

Troy Setiawan

DATE: Tue Jan 22 2008 14:02 EST

1584379

01/22/2008 16:17 FAX 12129637878

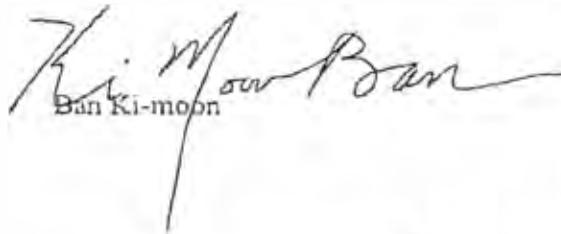
SECURITY COUNCIL

002/004

In the meantime, given the gravity of the situation, I have to bring this matter to the attention of the Security Council and alert the Council of the imminent need for a decision on the fate of UNMEE, if the crisis is not resolved by the end of this month.

I count on your cooperation and assistance in addressing this matter on an urgent basis. I also take this opportunity to emphasise that this situation underscores the need to deploy my Special Representative in Asmara. In this regard, I trust that you will have no objection to the designation of the candidate of whom the United Nations notified your Government through the usual diplomatic channels. I stand ready to assist your country and Ethiopia to implement their obligations under the Algiers Agreements as indicated in my letters of 20 and 29 November 2007 to you and Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.


Ban Ki-moon