

U.S. Policy in the Horn of Africa

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Thank you for inviting me to join you here in San Diego. I want to thank the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice, the University of San Diego, and the Ogaden Voice for Peace for this opportunity to discuss U.S. policy and engagement in the Horn of Africa, especially as it addresses Ethiopia's Ogaden. In the Horn as elsewhere in Africa, our policy is to support good governance and prosperity for all Africans. These goals entail working to support democracy and Africa's full participation in the world economy, and, in today's world, containing international terrorism.

The Horn of Africa

As all of you know -- some much better than I -- the Horn of Africa is beset with challenges. It has been plagued with revolutions, guerrilla wars, and international conflicts since the post-colonial era began. It is a region that has historically suffered poor governance -- one need only point to the brutality of Ethiopia's Derg, authoritarian one-party systems in much of the region until the 1990s, and Somalia's lack of government until very recently. Winner-take-all politics and violent regime change have been the norm. The Horn's often adverse

political and security climate has been a profound impediment to the region's economic development.

The Horn ranks near the bottom according to most human development indicators. The region is socially, environmentally and economically challenged. Most of its countries are lagging on the path of economic development. Despite these longstanding challenges, there are many signs of progress.

Djibouti has held peaceful elections, its port has become an economic hub, and its government has become an international partner in the fight against terrorism. Somalia's Transitional Federal Government, despite its ongoing challenges, offers the best hope for peace and stability in that tragic country for the past 20 years. Kenya has achieved strong rates of economic growth and investment as its vigorous civil society helps to fortify democratic institutions. Despite setbacks, Ethiopia continues to struggle toward democratic governance and effective anti-poverty programs. All of these countries and governments are increasingly close partners of the United States. The exception to this broadly favorable picture is Eritrea. Eritrea is increasingly authoritarian, its economy continues to worsen, and it now has established a record of interference in the affairs of its neighbors. Nonetheless, while progress is incremental, the overall trajectory of the Horn is positive.

Our Embassies in the Horn are the U.S. government's principal platforms for promoting effective cooperation, governance reform and sustainable development. We also have a great asset to support the people of the Horn in the U.S. Central Command's Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa, based in Djibouti. This Task Force is contributing to the professionalization and improved effectiveness of national armed forces in the Horn.

Eritrea

I'll now address key U.S. interests and concerns for each of the countries of the Horn, beginning with Eritrea. Eritrea is in the throes of ongoing economic decline led by a short-sighted and oppressive government. It is sorrowful to consider what has become of Eritrea in

the 14 years since it gained independence. Its praiseworthy constitution has yet to be promulgated -- a sad index of the country's failed promise. President Isaias has become increasingly isolated in the region as he actively seeks to destabilize the Horn by fueling insurgencies among his neighbors and supporting groups linked to international terrorists.

Eritrean government policies have choked the Eritrean economy and consolidated power among a small group surrounding President Isaias. The government actively blocks humanitarian assistance from international donors and interdicts economic development projects, despite the enthusiasm of the international donor community to help Eritreans emerge from poverty and dependence on remittances from the Eritrean diaspora. Eritreans who flee the country's economic morass or its political repression risk their families' imprisonment and heavy fines. President Isaias permits no political opposition and no independent media. Any senior government official who dares to speak out is subject to severe punishment.

Eritrea pursues expensive and dangerous adventurism in the Horn. Eritrea materially supports extremists to undermine the internationally-supported Transitional Federal Government in Somalia. While other nations of the Horn and the wider international community pursue a common strategy for lasting peace and stability there, Eritrea encourages unending violence, especially in Mogadishu. Eritrea is also believed to support Ethiopian insurgents, including the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF).

President Isaias is leading Eritrea toward ever-worsening repression and hardship, and has made exacerbated regional instability an Eritrean national priority. Our relations with Eritrea are increasingly strained by these policies.

Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary

Eritrea's boundary dispute with Ethiopia remains an imminent threat to the tenuous peace between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and is symptomatic of the deep divisions between them. The Eritrea-

Ethiopia Boundary Commission (the EEBC), was established by the Algiers Agreements which brought an end to the 1998-2000 Ethiopia-Eritrea war. The EEBC's mission was to define the border between them.

The EEBC issued its delimitation determination in 2002. That determination established the boundary defined by earlier treaties and agreements. Owing to its inability to achieve physical demarcation of the border since 2002 -- that is, by placing physical boundary markers along the border -- the EEBC attempted to fulfill its mandate through demarcation by map coordinates (sometimes called 'virtual demarcation' since no markers are placed), then declared its own dissolution on November 30 of this year. It is now up to both parties, Eritrea and Ethiopia, to implement physical demarcation of their common border in consultation with each other.

The U.S. government has consistently called on both parties to cooperate with the EEBC and meet their commitments as spelled out in the Algiers Agreements. We believe it is essential for the parties to undertake direct discussions to resolve how to do so, as well as address the other issues that divide them. We will continue our efforts and support those of others to resolve this issue.

Djibouti

Djibouti celebrated 30 years of independence in June. Those thirty years stand in stark contrast to Eritrea's experience, and epitomize both the promise and the challenges of the Horn.

Djibouti has moved beyond violent civil conflict since 2000, with the end of fighting between the government and the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy and the return of the Front's leader to Djibouti. General elections in 1999 and 2003 were orderly and peaceful, although marred by a boycott by the major opposition coalition. Despite that boycott, opposition members are represented in local and regional councils. More needs to be done to ensure that all citizens have a voice in government, but Djibouti's transition from civil war to a peaceful democratic political process has been a great step forward.

Djibouti remains a poor country. Its annual per capita income is still below \$1000. However, its vision for development of its key assets – that is, its port and strategic location along major sea routes -- offers great promise. Tonnage at the Port of Djibouti tripled after the 1998 Eritrea-Ethiopia war, when Ethiopia lost access to the Eritrean port of Assab. Afterwards, tonnage increased 30 per cent each year between 2002 and 2004.

The United States has long enjoyed very positive relations with Djibouti. We have seen this partnership continue to deepen. Djibouti's port is increasingly used by U.S. shippers. Djibouti has hosted the Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa since 2002, with great benefit to both Djibouti and other nations of the Horn. Djibouti plays an increasingly important diplomatic role as a bridge to other countries of the Horn and between African and Arab states.

Somalia

I'll now turn to Somalia. The United States continues to support efforts to achieve lasting peace and stability in Somalia and bring economic development to its people. This goal is a priority for the United States. We believe that the key to long-term stability in Somalia and the key to protecting Somalia from serving as a safe haven for terrorists is inclusive political dialogue between the Transitional Federal Government (the TFG) and key Somali stakeholders. This kind of dialogue will permit resumption of the transitional process outlined by the Transitional Federal Charter and the full deployment of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

With the recent appointment of Nur 'Adde' Hassan Hussein as Prime Minister, the TFG has a fresh opportunity to revitalize efforts toward lasting political resolution and the program for national elections in 2009, outlined in the TFG's Charter. We continue to encourage TFG leadership to reach out to all Somalis who seek lasting peace and stability.

We work through the United Nations and NGO partners to improve governance in southern and central Somalia, including programs to re-establish effective judicial, legislative, and administrative institutions under the TFG. We hope that Prime Minister Nur Adde will draw on his personal experience in Somalia's security and legal sectors to rebuild Somali civic institutions, address the needs of the country's million and a half displaced persons, and eliminate impediments to international humanitarian assistance.

The United States is the largest bilateral donor of humanitarian assistance to Somalia, and has provided more than \$180 million in humanitarian and development assistance in the last two years. Working with the United Nations and our NGO partners, the United States provides assistance for internally-displaced persons and other vulnerable populations inside Somalia.

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is a critical component of regional and international efforts to stabilize Somalia and support political dialogue and reconciliation, including creation of conditions necessary for withdrawal of Ethiopian forces from Somalia. AMISOM is now staffed by 1600 Ugandan soldiers. Deployment of 700 Burundian soldiers has begun, and we anticipate deployment of additional contingents from Burundi, Ghana, and Nigeria in the coming months. The United States has provided \$60 million in support of AMISOM deployments and follow-on logistical requirements.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice met with Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles and foreign ministers from the Horn in Addis Ababa on December 5 to review progress in Somalia. At that meeting she emphasized ongoing U.S. humanitarian and development assistance to Somalia and stressed the urgency of timely deployment of additional AMISOM contingents to bring greater stability and security. She also emphasized the U.S. commitment to a regional approach to resolving the crises in Somalia.

Kenya

Kenya is an African success story. Kenya is beginning to enjoy the fruits of its stability and openness. Its economy has grown by more than 6 per cent annually in recent years. It enjoys a growing middle class. Lack of transparency in government spending and regulation slows its vibrant economy, so we continue to urge more focused leadership from the Government of Kenya to end corruption. Kenya stands out as one of Africa's strongest economies -- an economy driven by a diverse mix of industrial production, services, and commercial agriculture, and one which we believe has potential for much greater growth.

Kenya's Northeast Province is home to ethnic Somalis with ties to clans in Somalia. Kenya's Somali community is a magnet for Somali refugees fleeing violence in Somalia and Ethiopia's Ogaden. Kenya closed its border with Somalia in January, but more than 1,000 refugees still arrive each month. A significant number of Oromos reside in northern Kenya as well. Oromos are the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, which further ties northern Kenya to Ethiopia.

Kenya's 2002 elections were an important step on Kenya's path to full democracy. This year's national elections on December 27 should consolidate those gains. The U.S. is providing elections training to civil society organizations, political parties, and youth and women candidates, as well as supporting the Electoral Commission of Kenya ensure that these elections are smooth, free, fair, and transparent.

Nairobi hosts the largest U.S. diplomatic mission in sub-Saharan Africa. Our Mission there has responsibilities for U.S. goals and objectives in Kenya and across the Horn. Our bilateral assistance program for Kenya is more than \$500 million for 2007. Cash and commodities from the U.S. to Kenya from public and private sources amount to about \$1.5 billion each year.

We work closely with the government of Kenya on a broad range of regional concerns, including the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to resolve hostilities in Sudan and the International Contact Group and bilateral initiatives on Somalia. In its capacity as Chair of the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) -- the regional sponsor of Somalia's Transitional Federal Government -- Kenya plays

a leading role in promoting peace and stability for all the Horn of Africa.

Ethiopia

With a diverse population of more than 80 million and borders with all the other countries of the Horn, Ethiopia, like Kenya, is a key strategic partner for the United States for the Horn as well as Africa as a whole. We work together on a wide range of economic and social development initiatives to buttress regional stability.

We systematically promote progress toward democracy and democratic institutions in Ethiopia. As you know, the runup to Ethiopia's May 2005 national elections was the most open, free, and genuinely competitive political campaign in Ethiopia's history. Opposition candidates enjoyed unprecedented opportunity to rally support and campaign against ruling party opponents.

Unfortunately, democracy suffered a reverse in the contentious aftermath of the 2005 vote. The opposition turned out in force to demonstrate against official election results. 200 demonstrators, bystanders, and policemen died in these demonstrations. Hundreds of opposition members and their leaders were jailed. Much of the independent media was shut down. With the release of opposition leaders this past summer after lengthy mediation by respected elders, Ethiopia's political leaders have a new opportunity to go forward with democratic reforms.

The U.S. insistently and urgently encourages the full range of Ethiopians to remain engaged in a democratic political process. U.S. programs bring together leaders from across the political spectrum to address critical questions of national governance and the future of the country, build the capacity of parliament, and bolster judicial independence.

Democracy in Ethiopia is still embryonic. Key issues, including the media law and political party funding, remain to be addressed. We encourage Ethiopia's leadership to insure that legitimate opposition enjoys access to media and the ability to campaign freely in the

months remaining before local elections in April 2008. Our Embassy in Addis Ababa, in partnership with other donors, is building the capacity of the Ethiopian National Electoral Board and supports its training outreach to NGOs that will conduct voter education campaigns.

We continue a broad program of U.S. humanitarian and development assistance for Ethiopia. Overall, we will provide half a billion dollars in assistance to Ethiopia this year – on par with our assistance to Kenya. \$160 million in humanitarian assistance will help Ethiopia break the cycle of famine and ease the impact of drought and other natural disasters. We are providing over \$300 million to the health care system in Ethiopia, especially to help Ethiopia combat HIV/AIDS. In conflict-prone areas, U.S. programs bring together representatives from diverse communities to build understanding and prevent new conflicts from erupting. We are working with the Ethiopian National Defense Force (the ENDF) to assure that it remains a professional and apolitical defense force. We are confident that, working together with all stakeholders, we can help Ethiopia become more secure, more democratic, and more prosperous.

The Ogaden

The Ogaden area of Ethiopia's Somali Region has historically been marginalized and underdeveloped. It now faces a humanitarian crisis owing to drought and especially an active insurgency led by the Ogaden National Liberation Front (the ONLF). The ONLF insurgency is regional as well as internal to Ethiopia, since the ONLF uses Somalia as a safe haven to evade Ethiopian forces. The ONLF receives support from other anti-Ethiopian groups connected to terrorism. It appears clear that the ONLF receives support from Eritrea, including weapons and training. The growing ONLF insurgency has brought on harsh counterinsurgency operations, severe restrictions on commerce to interdict supplies for insurgents and avoid land mines, and forced relocation of communities.

The ONLF has been fighting the Ethiopian government since well before the current government took power in 1991. Over the past year ONLF attacks have become much more deadly. In April 2007

the ONLF attacked a Chinese oil exploration facility. Nine Chinese oil workers and 77 Ethiopians died in the attack. The ENDF responded to the unprecedented April 2007 attack with an aggressive counterinsurgency campaign beginning in May of this year. The ENDF undertook search and destroy missions and restricted humanitarian food aid and commercial shipments in much of the Ogaden to deny insurgents food, weapons, and munitions. Human rights abuses by both sides have been reported since this campaign began, including razing of villages and forced removal of populations. According to the UN, land mines have recently been laid by the ONLF. On July 29 three aid workers were killed when their vehicle hit a recently planted mine. Another occasionally violent ethnic movement, the Oromo Liberation Front (the OLF), may have links with the ONLF as well. There have been reports of Ethiopian soldiers of Oromo background deserting to the ONLF, then joining the OLF in eastern Oromiya.

Commercial deliveries from Somalia normally provide 80 per cent of the Ogaden's food. Commercial traffic from Somalia began to decline in January 2007, before the current ENDF campaign, but recently-imposed restrictions have reduced commercial food shipments to a trickle. Food prices have doubled in most of the Ogaden. Prices for livestock -- whose sale is a primary component of household income for many Ogadenis -- have been severely depressed since herders have been unable to ship animals to markets in Somalia. NGOs have curtailed operations in the Ogaden because of security risks, and medical supplies have become increasingly scarce.

Humanitarian conditions in the Ogaden have reached crisis levels. A UN assessment team traveled through the Ogaden in early September, and other NGO and a USAID team have also made assessments. There is general agreement in the donor community that at least 800,000 individuals in the Ogaden will need humanitarian assistance, especially food aid, in coming months.

U.S. response to current conditions in the Ogaden

On August 24 our Ambassador in Addis Ababa announced a \$19 million humanitarian assistance program for the Somali region. In

early September Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer visited Gode, the major base for relief operations in the Ogaden, to see first hand how the humanitarian needs of the area are being met. Our Embassy has been working diligently to coordinate NGO and international donor operations with the Ethiopian government to address the crisis in the Ogaden.

Our Embassy was decisive in encouraging the Ethiopian government to allow UN, NGO, and USAID assessment missions into the Ogaden. On November 24 USAID Administrator Fore announced in Addis Ababa that the U.S. government has allocated an additional \$25 million in food assistance for the Ogaden. Total U.S. food assistance for the Ogaden is now \$44 million.

We continue to work for greater humanitarian access to the Ogaden at the highest levels. Several NGOs and UN offices have resumed or are planning to resume operations there. 19 NGOs have been authorized to resume work in the Ogaden, and two UN offices have reopened -- one in Kebre Dahar and another in Degahabur.

UN Under Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes visited the Ogaden in late November to facilitate return of UN relief agencies. He told reporters that Prime Minister Meles agreed to a joint assessment of humanitarian conditions in the Ogaden with the UN; we expect a joint World Food Program and Ethiopian government assessment mission to begin December 17. We will continue to be primary contributors to assistance operations that follow that assessment. Humanitarian and commercial shipments have brought food to major towns in the Ogaden, although distribution to smaller settlements remains a challenge. The Ethiopian government recently increased the number of food distribution sites in the area to 174. We understand that limited commercial food deliveries have recently resumed.

The only immediate solution to the humanitarian crisis in the Ogaden is a credible cessation of hostilities by the ONLF so that food and medical supplies can be delivered at levels necessary to meet the region's urgent needs, both through humanitarian efforts and through commercial channels. A credible cessation of hostilities will permit commerce to resume, including both food deliveries to the Ogaden

from Somalia and shipment of Ogadeni livestock to markets in Somalia. We are eager to support a cessation of hostilities in the Ogaden.

When security conditions have stabilized, the Ethiopian government and the Ogadeni people must begin effective dialogue to end the insurgency permanently and to address Ogadeni aspirations. Prime Minister Meles, when he spoke to the Ethiopian Parliament in October, underscored his government's willingness to open discussions with the ONLF. The ONLF has stated its willingness to begin such discussions with the Ethiopian government as well. When the humanitarian needs of Ogadenis have been met, a path must be found to bring lasting peace, security, and prosperity to the Ogaden.

In her recent meetings in Addis Ababa, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stressed our partnership with the Ethiopian government to support Ethiopia's economic development, address humanitarian concerns, and further Ethiopia's pursuit of democracy. For the Ogaden, she promised further substantial U.S. food and medical assistance and pressed for full resumption of commerce to ensure that adequate food deliveries reach the people of the region. The U.S. government is determined that the crisis in the Ogaden be quickly and effectively addressed.