

ADDRESS OF
THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF ERITREA
H.E. OSMAN SALEH
AT
THE ISTANBUL CONFERENCE ON SOMALIA
ISTANBUL, TURKEY
21-23 MAY 2010

Mr. Chairman
Honourable Heads of State and Government
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first thank the Secretary General of the United Nations and our gracious host, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey, for organizing this important forum to provide the opportunities and augment the prospects of finding an enduring solution to the crisis that has bedeviled Somalia for the past twenty years. In this spirit, allow me to restate in a concise form and without going into details, the views of my Government in regard to the fundamental ingredients of a lasting settlement.

First, there can be no military solution to the conflict in Somalia. This is borne out by the experience of two decades of violent internal conflict as well as external military interventions. The evidence is so overwhelming that it is difficult to argue against the basic premise with any conviction. And yet the notion that more money and arms, better training and a well organized military offensive can bring change is still with us. Clearly this approach will lead to the intensification and prolongation of the conflict, further death and

destruction, and as similar previous efforts, end in failure. Hence, the urge to once again go down a ruinous path must be strongly resisted

Second, the only real prospect for a lasting resolution of the Somali problem lies in an inclusive political process. This process should not exclude any party, for success demands that it brings on board all the critical actors, the main protagonists in Somalia. Obviously, this will be a difficult, complex and drawn out process. But, since there is no workable alternative, it is imperative that we prioritize the political approach and earnestly engage all the parties, with the aim of encouraging a political settlement.

Third, two decades of experience has conclusively shown that a durable solution for Somalia can only be the outcome of a Somali owned and driven process, one that respects the choice of the Somali people. Again, this will be difficult to achieve, but it is the only way out of this crisis. External facilitators can help, but they must remember that their role is only supportive and focused on enhancing the environment for Somalis to sort out their problems and find arrangements that they can live with in peace and stability.

Excellencies,

Intractable as it may seem, the Somali problem can and will be solved. I hope that this timely forum will spark honest discussion and fresh ideas and will be followed up by sustained and constructive efforts, thereby making a significant contribution to the achievement of peace and stability to Somalia.

I thank you.