



Security Council

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Letter dated 29 July 2020 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to paragraph 32 of Security Council resolution [2498 \(2019\)](#), in which the Council requested that I provide it with an update on any further developments towards the normalization of relations between Djibouti and Eritrea. The present letter is my third update to the Council on the issue since the adoption of resolution [2444 \(2018\)](#) in November 2018.

As I have mentioned in my previous correspondence on the issue, the 2018 rapprochement between Eritrea and Ethiopia and diplomatic overtures involving Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia changed the political dynamics in the Horn of Africa. It signalled that the region, with vast resources and some of the fastest growing economies in Africa, was ready for cooperation and compromise. Today, the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has added to existing challenges facing the region, such as food insecurity and the effects of climate change. With Member States understandably focused on addressing the consequences of COVID-19 and safeguarding the health of their populations, the pandemic has slowed down some of the regional engagements.

We are aware of ministerial-level contacts between Djibouti and Eritrea in the context of the Horn of Africa initiative meeting of finance ministers in Djibouti in February 2020, which was aimed at promoting economic integration and regional cooperation. Senior government officials from both countries also participated in the 23rd meeting of the Economic Commission for Africa's Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for Eastern Africa, held in Asmara in November 2019, which was similarly focused on regional integration. Cooperation between Djibouti and Eritrea on combating the ongoing desert locust invasion should also be noted, including the participation of the two countries in the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Central Region, a commission of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

While there has been welcome engagement in the context of regional activities and integration, we are not aware of any bilateral contacts at the senior level between the two countries since 2018.

The differences in the positions of both Djibouti and Eritrea, reported on during the previous briefing held in August 2019, remain. Djibouti considers the unresolved issues with Eritrea as a threat to its peace and security and remains of the view that the border dispute with Eritrea should be resolved through binding international arbitration. Djibouti also remains concerned over the fate of its soldiers missing since the border clashes of 2018. Eritrea maintains the view that Eritrea-Djibouti relations



do not pose any threat to regional and international peace and expresses its confidence in the region's capacity to support the normalization of relations. Eritrea continues to highlight the need for the United Nations and other international partners to recognize the ongoing positive trajectory in inter-State relations in the Horn of Africa and to pursue a comprehensive approach in supporting the efforts of the region to achieve durable peace and economic progress.

Notwithstanding these differences, Djibouti and Eritrea have continued to act responsibly and while there has been no apparent enhancement of bilateral relations, there have been no negative developments. I am pleased to note that the two countries have maintained peace and security along their common border with no reports of incidents.

I am hopeful that the spirit of regional cooperation shown in addressing common challenges, such as the desert locust invasion and the COVID-19 pandemic and its fallout, will further encourage the process of improving inter-State relations in the Horn of Africa region. I am further hopeful that as part of this process, and with the support of their friends in the region and beyond, Djibouti and Eritrea will fully normalize their relations. I would like to reiterate that my good offices remain available, should both parties request them.

I would be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) António **Guterres**
