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**HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATIONS THAT REQUIRE
THE COUNCIL'S ATTENTION**

**Note verbale dated 13 March 2008 from the Permanent Mission of Ethiopia
to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the secretariat of the
Human Rights Council**

The Permanent Mission of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other international organizations in Switzerland presents its compliments to the secretariat of the Human Rights Council and has the honour to transmit herewith a communication* in reference to the statement made by Frank Belfrage, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, on 5 March 2008, to the Council during the High-level Segment of its seventh session, and requests that the document be distributed to the Council.

* Reproduced as received in the language of submission only.

Annex

The Ethiopian government takes strong exception to the statement by H.E. Mr. Frank Belfrage, the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, delivered on 5 March 2008, during the High-Level Segment of the 7th Ordinary Session of the Human Rights Council. Alleging that there is a 'grave and escalating human rights situation in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia'. The Government finds the statement by the State Secretary unsubstantiated and sweeping devoid of any specificity. This is indeed regrettable coming from a person at such a high level in government.

The allegation which is couched with excessive generality has clearly failed to highlight any specific incident warranting detailed rebuttal. However, its egregiously flawed characterisation of the situation in the Somali national regional state, however, should not be left unchallenged.

The fact of the matter is that the problem in the Somali National Regional State of Ethiopia stems from the destructive activities of a terrorist organisation which calls itself the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), which largely through the unconditional support it receives from neighbouring Eritrea, has killed innocent civilians, continues to disrupt the peace and is engaged in wanton destruction of property. It has used civilians as human shield during its unsuccessful military operations in the past. During 2005 and 2006, this terrorist organisation burnt houses and committed numerous other heinous atrocities in areas such as Fekew, Haloye, Korahda, Bedeno, Hadewe, Bare Kebele, Korinka, KodAde, Bargon and Gode in the Somali National Regional state. It will be recalled that on 24 April 2007 the terrorist group committed its worst act of terrorism murdering 74 innocent civilians including 7 Chinese workers engaged in a civilian project in the region. The terrorist group had the audacity to publicly claim responsibility for the dastardly act. The terrorist act was widely condemned by states and human rights organisations. It is difficult to believe that the State Secretary is unaware of this act by the terrorist group. It is untoward that the statement by the State Secretary does conveniently ignore facts which are even accepted by the group which committed the crimes. The reasons for the charges based on cherry picking and particularly against a government which is doing its level best to ensure law and order in the area and to bring perpetrators of egregious crimes to justice, while ignoring what is very obvious and a matter of public knowledge is inexplicable.

As to the situation in the area today thanks largely to the effective law and order measures the federal and the state governments have taken, the situation in the Somali National Regional State of Ethiopia has shown significant improvement. Representatives of diplomatic corps, journalists and civic society organisations have visited almost all the areas previously affected by ONLF criminal activities and have verified that the security condition has indeed improved. Working with its development partners, the Government is also working to ensure the distribution of amenities such as food to people who are displaced by the wanton activities of the ONLF.

It hardly requires emphasis that the Ethiopian Government remains seriously committed to the promotion and protection of human rights in the country. Both the federal constitution and its unique federal arrangement are clear manifestations of its unwavering commitment to the rights of peoples to run their own affairs and decide on issues that affect them. These significant human rights achievements cannot be clouded by fabrications continuously engineered by organisations which are sponsored and run by foreign elements bent on disrupting peace and development in Ethiopia. It is to be hoped that responsible foreign governments would not unwittingly give succour to terrorist organisations such as the ONLF bent on violating the human rights of innocent people in the pursuit of their destructive activities.
