

Remarks by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations on Eritrea at the Security Council Stakeout

December 23, 2009

I want to talk about the resolution we just adopted imposing sanctions on Eritrea. This was an African initiative. It was the consequence of a decision taken by the African Union. It was consistent with a prior resolution passed by this Council, 1862, that demanded prompt action by Eritrea with respect to Djibouti. Nearly a year later, that action has not been forthcoming. The Council acted today, not hastily, not aggressively, but with the aim quite sincerely of encouraging Eritrea to do as this Council and so many of its members have repeatedly called upon it to do, which is not to continue actions which destabilize Somalia, to halt assistance to those violent elements in Somalia that are working to overthrow the government and attacking AMISOM peacekeepers and to resolve peacefully and in accordance with Resolution 1862, the border skirmish and dispute with Djibouti.

From the United States' point of view, let me say that we have for many, many months sought a constructive dialogue with the government of Eritrea. We have sought to encourage quietly the government of Eritrea to take the steps that it claims it intends to take, but it will not take, and has not taken. And we still hope frankly that they will. We do not see this as the door closing on Eritrea, but on the contrary, we view this as another opportunity for Eritrea to play a more responsible and constructive role in the region. We did not come to this decision with any joy – or with anything other than a desire to support the stability of peace in the region.

The United States stands with the people of Eritrea who have fought long and hard for their independence and to build a country in which we have great hope for the future.