

The Honorable Senator Inhofe 97th Visit to Africa: Excerpts from his senate floor speech on April 1, 2008

“...Two days ago, I made my 97th African country visit. The last country we were in this last week--there were some five countries--was Ethiopia, a very significant...”



(EPRDF-SF April 04 2008): - The above quote is taken from Senator Inhofe advocacy speech for AFRICOM and Senate Resolution 480. Senator Inhofe a long time friend of Ethiopia recently visited Ethiopia. His views reflect the new paradigm that is well underway in Ethiopia. He recognizes the implications Ethiopia has in bringing peace to the Horn of Africa. The Senator shares his view with his colleagues in the following context, “It is only a year ago that we embarked upon this idea that we were going to be holding up Africa and supporting it. A lot of people do not realize the significance of Africa, that Africa is the area where, as the squeeze takes place in the Middle East on terrorism, a lot of it goes down through the Horn of Africa, through Djibouti and that area, and spreads out throughout Africa”. The Senator unlike Congressman Donald Payne clearly understands the imminent danger of terrorism in the Horn of Africa.

Senator Inhofe enunciates to his colleagues about the danger the Eritrean regime poses not just to Ethiopia but the Horn region at large and gives emphasis to the role Ethiopia is playing in that region. He eloquently said, “...In February, the United Nations ordered its regional force to withdraw after the Eritrean Government cut their field supplies. I have had occasion to be in Eritrea several times. It is probably the least known country in Africa. It is becoming better known because of all the atrocities that are taking place there. Let us keep in mind it was Eritrea, when we had the problem in Somalia that went down and sided with the terrorists. It was, of course, Ethiopia that joined us, as well as other countries such as Uganda and Burundi”

When describing the importance of Africa he gave prominence to AFRICOM and said the following “other countries are realizing how important it [AFRICA] is. They are doing something about it. The new French President, Sarkozy, said during a recent trip to South Africa that Africa should have at least one permanent seat in the U.N. Security Council and that France would no longer accept major world affairs being discussed without a leading African country being involved.” The Senator is a good friend not only to Ethiopia but also to Africa in general. He was one of the first to caution that a terrorist defeat in Iraq would transpire the congregation of the same forces in Africa. He said the surge in Iraq is clearly working and as the surge works, a lot of the terrorist activities get situated in the most convenient places and the most vulnerable, and that is the continent of Africa. The HR2003 and its champions like Donald Payne are dining with ONLF and the Eritrean regime, the two forces that harbor terrorists. But to those who look at Ethiopia and the region objectively it is easy to see the enormity of terrorist danger in the Horn region. However, with a stable government like Ethiopia and a friend like Senator

Inhofe the principles of peace will be materialized and the focus for the people of Ethiopia will continue to be a fight against poverty.

Senator Inhofe with clear understanding on where terrorists are hiding said, "...It has been reported terrorist networks in Somalia and Eritrea work together, increasing their capability." The pattern of disruption has been fully understood by Senator Inhofe and he has understood which actors and agents of terror are continually trying to disrupt the peace in the region. He recognizes the various forces that have an impulse to undermine peace but he is ready to give a hand and stand tall to promote a shared vision and interest.

Senator Inhofe recognizing the work of the government and activists in the fight against HIV/AIDS and Malaria in Ethiopia he had this to say: *"I had occasion last week to be with the First Lady of Zambia. The First Ladies all throughout Africa are the ones who are doing the most to combat HIV/AIDS. The First Lady of Zambia has put together a group of First Ladies who are significantly having an impact. President Gbagbo's wife Simone in Cote d'Ivoire is very actively attacking the problem there. Janet Museveni in Uganda has been honored in the United States for her work on HIV/AIDS. Most recently, the one I think is really doing the best job is the wife of the Prime Minister of Ethiopia. Prime Minister Zenawi's wife Azeb is heading up a group that is having great positive impact on HIV/AIDS. So they are helping themselves"*. Change agents as the Senator put it must be recognized and applauded. It is in that spirit that he mentioned the First Lady Azeb Mesfin who has indeed been one staunch advocate and one who works tirelessly. She has been a key player and has made a concerted and effective campaign for AIDS awareness in Ethiopia. US organizations have recognized her for her magnificent work. Her outreach campaign and her dedication are exemplary and invigorating. We are glad the Senator has recognized her work too.

In conclusion we would like to acknowledge the work of Senator Inhofe in recognizing the significant gains Ethiopia has made to date. He has gone over and beyond to make time to visit in the spirit of enhancing the good relations of Ethiopia and the US and for his genuine efforts we thank him