

Thursday, 6 July 2006 - Strasbourg

Somalia (debate)

Ana Maria Gomes (PSE), author . - Mr President, the Horn of Africa is plagued by disastrous political failures, not just of the making of local powers, but also compounded by a series of misguided international actions and mostly inactions.

The failed state of Somalia is just the most glaring example. The procrastination of the Ethiopian regime in solving the border question with Eritrea and the awful human rights, democracy and development records of the regimes in both Asmara and Addis Ababa are another sad example of international neglect of the region. So it is no wonder that international terrorists are taking advantage of so much conflict in such a lawless region. It looks as though they are getting more of what they want for their murderous purposes.

Rumours are spreading that the government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi is dragging IGAD into violating the arms embargo imposed by the UN Security Council in Somalia. He is sending hundreds of thousands of troops into Baidoa. Last week I was in Washington and New York and I got confirmation from important sources within the administration and the UN that preparations by the Ethiopian army to march even further towards Mogadishu are under way. They are backed and blessed by the US in a very misguided policy. It is as if the lesson has not been drawn from the latest fiasco that drove the Islamic Courts into power in Mogadishu.

This will provide even more grounds for the terrorist actions of al-Qa'ida. There could be a reignition of the Eritrean-Ethiopian border conflict not just in Somalia but in the region as a whole. There could be more rebellions inside Ethiopia, leading to disintegration. The EU has to take a stand on that, and I would urge the Council and the Commission to warn against this interference and to ensure that the Somalia Contact Group be given all the support it needs to work towards a political solution that does not fail, as the previous 14 attempts have done.