

Statement by Abdullahi Issa,
Representative of the Somali
Youth League and Hamar Youth Club,
Before the First Committee, General
Assembly, United Nations, October 7, 1949.

Mr. Chairmān, Honourable Members:

It gives me great pleasure, indeed, to have the privilege and opportunity of addressing once again this august Assembly. I venture to say that no delegate here present, no government or people here represented, awaits more anxiously than we Somalis your judgment on the future of our country and our people. We hope, therefore, that such a final decision be a just and fair one based on the fundamental principle of self-determination of peoples.

That is the reason why we are again here, thousands of miles from our people and home, pleading for justice and for the cause of freedom--causes which are very dear not only to our hearts but also dear to many hearts here that have experienced in the past the pangs and sorrows of exploitation and subjugation and all its attendant evils.

At the outset we wish to extend our deepest thanks to all those nations who made possible, in May of this year, the rejection of the plan known as the Bevin-Sforza agreement.

From the experience gained during the debate on the question of the former Italian colonies in the last session, we now know that colonial powers have every opportunity, even in this General Assembly of the United Nations, to gain strong support of their evil schemes to exploit and subjugate weak and oppressed countries like Somaliland. The Bevin-Sforza agreement, and especially that part regarding the future of Somaliland, supported the survival of colonialism of the worse type. The greatest surprise to our people was to note the strong

support that this imperialist plan received from the majority of the member states during the last session.

At the opening of the last session (Part II), we came here with great confidence and faith in the United Nations. But what we then heard and witnessed during the debate on the question of the former Italian colonies, was in complete and alarming contrast with what we expected.

The great confidence and faith of the Somali people in the United Nations has been considerably reduced. We regret this, but we must tell you the truth. The Somalis did not arrive at this conclusion without well-founded reasons.

Our people would have lost complete confidence and faith in the United Nations had not some disinterested and non-colonial powers made possible the rejection of the Bevin-Sforza agreement. Again we express our deepest thanks to those nations, whose names are today very dear to the heart of every Somali at home and overseas.

Next we wish to deal with the question of the representation of the peoples of Somaliland. This is very simple if you turn to the report of the Four Power Commission of Investigation, which visited Somaliland early in 1948. This report alone is quite enough to demonstrate our indisputable right to speak for and on behalf of the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of Somaliland. You may ascertain from this report that the overwhelming majority of the Somalis supported our program.

Also you may ascertain from the same report that the members of the Commission recognized our party as the only real and active political organization in Somaliland. I would refer particularly to the general conclusions of the Four Power Commission at the end of its

report on Somaliland. To quote from this general conclusions, page 121 of the English text:

"In spite of this lack of maturity, in the last five years a nationalist movement led by the Somali Youth League has rapidly spread through the country, embracing most of the urban classes wherever located, and through the influence of the Chiefs and Elders, almost all the tribes except those in the Sab Confederacy and a few others. This movement is well organised, possesses relatively competent leadership, and may well be the major force in Somali politics for some time to come."

Last session some Quislings appeared before the Committee claiming to represent ineffective or non-existing parties. They also made false statements by saying that they represent some tribes of Somaliland. These traitors are far more interested in receiving eight years back pay due to them as ex-servicemen than in the welfare of the people of Somaliland. Italy has issued formal promise to pay eight years back pay to all ex-servicemen in case she becomes again the ruler of Somaliland.

In the last session, the Quislings from Somaliland stated that they were in favor of the Bevin-Sforza agreement, namely a solution condemning the Somalis to perpetual slavery and servitude. We say perpetual slavery and servitude since that imperialist plan contained recommendations to restore Italian administration in Somaliland for an indefinite period.

At that time the traitors admitted that they had not read or even seen any of the various draft resolutions submitted by some delegates in regard to the future of Somaliland and its people. Further they made ridiculous statements such as that the Italian Government had opened Universities and other higher educational institutes for the Somalis and that more than 500 Somalis had obtained different degrees.

These facts alone are quite sufficient to prove that the said traitors come here only to sell Somaliland and the Somalis. We have already informed the honourable members of the Committee that had the administration of Somaliland been in the hands of the people, our Quislings would have received equal justice as their colleagues in other parts of the world.

Italy may arrange to bring here again the same or other traitors. We have nothing to worry about their arrival since everyone may clearly see that they come here in order to sell their country and their people.

The standing of our organization in relation to that of other political parties in Somaliland is quite clearly indicated in the following passages, quoting again from the same page of the report of the Four Power Commission of Investigation:

"The other political parties have developed in opposition to the Somali Youth League and, with one exception, are of recent growth. Their influence is slight."

Besides receiving the support of the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of Somaliland, our organization is representing the true interests and welfare of Somaliland and the Somalis. The activity of our organization, in addition to our firm intention to stand and sacrifice ourselves for the cause of the legitimate aspirations of the Somali people, is good proof that we stand for the true interests and welfare of the inhabitants of Somaliland.

The honourable members of the Committee will observe that our right to speak on behalf of the whole or at least the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of Somaliland is well-founded. With this right and privilege, we should like to express briefly the wishes and needs of the Somalis in order that their true welfare may be safeguarded.

Some days ago we submitted to the Chairman of the First Committee a memorandum containing our program in regard to the future of Somaliland. The program had received the unanimous approval of the Sultans, Tribal Chiefs, Elders, Religious Sheiks and Akils of all Somali tribes inhabiting the former Italian Somaliland. From this program you will observe that the greatest desire of our people is the immediate independence of Somaliland.

We are grateful for the opportunity to endorse the said program with this oral statement of ours. Therefore, we ask the honourable members of the Assembly to proclaim the immediate independence of Somaliland. This is the greatest desire of the people.

From this program you will observe also that we have been reasonable enough to state that if, in the wisdom of the honourable members of the Assembly, it considered best to place Somaliland temporarily under the International Trusteeship System, we do not raise objections PROVIDED THAT the restoration of Italian administration in any form or guise and even as a Trustee under the supervision of the United Nations be completely excluded. The reasons of our strong opposition to living again under the hated and oppressive Italian domination are substantial, irrevocable and permanent. We set them forth in several memoranda submitted to the Committee.

In case the honourable members of the Assembly decide to place Somaliland under the International Trusteeship System, we stated that our preference is a direct United Nations administration for a very short period of interim. We are convinced that only under such direct United Nations trusteeship can the letter and spirit of Article 73 of the United Nations Charter be successfully implemented.

Mr. Chairman and honourable delegates, we should like to comment briefly on what some members frequently call "the spirit of com-

promise." Needless to point out that by saying so, these members have in mind the compromise between a group known as strong supporters of the unjust imperialist claims of Italy on one hand and a bloc of colonial powers on the other. We consider this kind of compromise totally unjust and illegal.

A just and legal compromise would be a compromise between the inhabitants of the territory concerned on one hand and the General Assembly of the United Nations on the other. We, as the representatives of the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of Somaliland, have clearly demonstrated, as you may see in the above-mentioned program of ours, the willingness to compromise to a certain reasonable extent.

We are very glad to note that this time almost all the members here present recognize that Libya is ready for immediate independence. Some of the members are considering the same even for Eritrea. Just three months ago the prevailing view was that none of the three territories known as the former Italian colonies were ready for self-government or immediate independence.

The reason for this radical change is not because something extraordinary has happened in Libya and Eritrea. The reason is, in our opinion, that a considerable number of member states have reconsidered the matter and accordingly changed their mind. We express our deepest disappointment that the said members did not see fit to reconsider their position in regard to the question of our country Somaliland and our people.

Instead of considering the question of Somaliland, we observed from the very start of this session that the authors of the Devin-Sforza agreement have the intention to re-introduce that part of the plan in regard to Somaliland and its people.

Our greatest surprise this time is not that these colonial powers are preparing to re-introduce the Devin-Sforza agreement, but that most of the members who previously supported the plan are prepared to support it even now. They already made statements to this effect in the First Committee even without waiting to hear the views of the representatives of the inhabitants.

Mr. Chairman, honourable delegates, it is needless to remind you of heavy responsibility on your shoulders and the importance of your deliberations. The destiny of millions of human beings depends on your vote. Today you are in a position to cast your vote in favour of the legitimate aspirations of oppressed and exploited peoples like ourselves or to deny them these rights. Today you are in a position to cast your vote against the survival of colonialism or to condemn weak and small nations to perpetual slavery and servitude. You are in a position to cast your vote in favour of International peace and security or for war and disaster.

We beg you, honourable members, to bear in mind all these relevant facts before casting your final vote. Consider the damage that your vote may cause weak and oppressed peoples like ourselves. Remember that their very existence depends on your vote. Respect the fundamental principle of self-determination. Respect the principle that "the wishes and welfare of the inhabitants are paramount" and all other fundamental principles of the noble Charter of the United Nations. Save the lives of millions of human beings who have declared that they prefer complete extermination rather than life under the subjugation of their former masters. Save the very prestige, if not the existence of your own organization and its noble Charter. Honour the wartime pledges for freedom, liberty and justice promised

to all peace-loving nations of the world. Strengthen the confidence and faith that millions of peoples in dependent territories repose in you and in the United Nations.

Mr. Chairman, honourable delegates, we have been driven to this desperate appeal by the apparent tendency of some members in this Committee to solve important matters on the basis of political bargaining and expediency. We have witnessed that a good number of members in this Committee intend to bargain with the destiny of our people and our country. We have observed that many members apparently intend to disregard completely the wishes and welfare of our people. These members intend to re-impose Italian rule in Somaliland. This is entirely against the wishes and welfare of the inhabitants. Therefore, we consider this act as an open violation of both the letter and spirit of the United Nations Charter.

We stated that we represent the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of Somaliland. We stated also that the Somalis prefer complete extermination rather than live again under Italian domination. If the honourable members of the Committee have the slightest doubt of the truthfulness of these statements of ours, we believe that the best and just solution would be to send a new Commission of Investigation to Somaliland to ascertain the true wishes of the people. This would mean postponement of the matter at least another year. We stated at the outset that no one here present awaits more anxiously than we the day of your final decision. Better to delay than to condemn the whole population of a weak and oppressed nation to total extermination.

We advance this proposal because we are positive that should the Assembly decide to restore the hated Italian rule in Somaliland, our people will resist to the last man. Such an unfortunate decision

would bring immediate reaction notwithstanding the fact that British bayonets, tommy guns, thousands of heavy tanks and aeroplanes stationed in Mogadishu and other centres throughout Somaliland are ready to subdue our people forcibly. The Military Administration there would do its best to crush the resistance of ill-armed, weak and poor Somalis by using the typical British methods already practiced in other dependent countries such as Indonesia.

Some delegates have already advanced proposals to send a new Commission of Investigation to Eritrea and find out the wishes of the people. Since proposals such as these are under the consideration of the members, why then exclude the very serious case of Somaliland? If some members desire to send a new Commission of Investigation to Eritrea, why then deny equal rights and privileges to Somaliland? We earnestly hope that the honourable members of the Committee will consider this important fact.

In the event of any new Commission of Investigation being sent to Somaliland, we ask the Assembly to select the members of the same among the strictly neutral member states of the United Nations.

Once again we beg the honourable members of the Committee to consider carefully before casting their final vote. Remember that the very existence of millions of human beings depends on your vote. Remember that the destiny of our people and that of our country and our children depend on your deliberations.

Before concluding our speech, we would remind the honourable members that this session of the General Assembly has been called a "Peace Assembly" by its President, General Romulo. May we not hope that this means peace for all and not peace for some and war for others? May we beg of you that in your deliberations you make no decisions which will inevitably bring disaster and chaos to our country. It would, we

assure you, be disgraceful to arrive at such decisions in a "Peace Assembly."

Once again we wish to stress that the Somalis do not desire and will not accept the restoration, in their country, of the Italian administration in any form or guise and even as a Trustee under the supervision of the United Nations. If, against the wishes of our people, the General Assembly should decide to restore Italian rule in our country, how can you, honourable members, expect us to trust and have faith in the United Nations since we have seen from the very beginning that our wishes and welfare have been completely ignored?

We appeal to you, honourable members, not to sacrifice our people on the altar of political expediency. We appeal to you to be guided by the principle that is not merely laid down in the peace treaty with Italy but in the very cornerstone of the United Nations Charter-- that the wishes and welfare of the inhabitants are paramount.

We wish to reserve the right to comment, at a later stage, on every draft resolution advanced in regard to the future of our country and our people.

We faithfully hope that the honourable members of the Committee will carefully consider the just and legitimate aspirations of the Somali people. We trust that these honourable members shall disregard any and all irrelevant interests and bargaining and decide this all-important and vital issue of the fate of the whole Somali nations on the ground of equity, justice and good conscience.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, honourable members.