

UN chief welcomes 'positive steps' towards peace between Eritrea and Ethiopia

The United Nations has announced its readiness to support Eritrea and Ethiopia following recent peace overtures between the two neighbouring States in the Horn of Africa.

Ethiopia this month announced its readiness to accept and implement a 2002 border agreement that ended two years of bloody conflict, in which thousands died. Without a deal, skirmishes continued at the border, with Eritrea reportedly remaining on a war-footing.

In a speech delivered this week, Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki announced plans to send a delegation to Addis Ababa "to gauge current developments directly and in depth, as well as to chart out a plan for continuous future action", according to media reports.

In a statement released by his Spokesperson on Thursday, the UN Secretary-General welcomed the "[positive steps](#)" taken to resolve outstanding issues regarding the normalization of relations between the two countries.

António Guterres also commended efforts by their leaders "to achieve sustainable peace and good-neighbourly relations which, in turn, will have positive repercussions in the entire Horn of Africa region".

The UN chief also underlined his readiness to provide "all support that may contribute to advancing and consolidating" engagement between the two countries, the statement continued.

Tens of thousands of people were killed in the two years of war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, which began in 1998 over a border dispute.

The UN deployed a peacekeeping mission to the region, [UNMEE](#), whose mandate included monitoring the cessation of hostilities, providing mine action assistance and coordinating humanitarian and human rights activities.

The operation was established in 2000 and was terminated by the Security Council eight years later following "[obstructions](#)" by Eritrea that undermined the mission's mandate.