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Annan urges Ethiopia and Eritrea to settle 'untenable' stalemate over border

8 March 2006 - Calling the protracted stalemate between Ethiopia and Eritrea "increasing untenable" and dangerous for the region, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged both countries to cooperate during a proposed March convening of the commission that was created to settle their border dispute.

"Eritrea and Ethiopia should seize this unique opportunity and extend the necessary cooperation to the Boundary Commission," Mr. Annan says in his latest report on the issue.

He also recommends extending the United Nations mission (UNMEE), deployed to keep the truce between the two countries, for two or three months, "in order for the forthcoming meeting of the Boundary Commission to bear fruit," he says.

He adds that the options proposed in his previous report - ranging from redeployment to total withdrawal - will be kept under review.

In that report he said that the mission's position had worsened because of Ethiopia's refusal to accept the Boundary Commission's binding decision as required by the 2000 accord that ended the bitter fighting over the border, as well as Eritrea's subsequent ban on UNMEE flights and its demand to remove UNMEE staff of certain nationalities.