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The Escalating Tensions Between Ethiopia and Eritrea: African Workers Call for Urgent Preventive Diplomacy and Constructive Dialogue

The African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa) (www.ituc-africa.org) expresses grave concern over the escalating tensions between the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the State of Eritrea. These rising hostilities carry the ominous risk of a return to full-scale military confrontation—one that could devastate millions of lives and livelihoods across the Horn of Africa and beyond. As a pan-African trade union movement committed to protecting and defending human and trade union rights and contributing to peace, security, and democratic resilience, we issue this statement as both a warning and a call to action.

We see the early warning signs, and we refuse to be silent.

Reports from multiple credible sources, including *The New York Times*, *Al Jazeera*, *Chatham House*, *Reuters*, and *African Arguments*, continue to highlight a dangerous buildup of military rhetoric and manoeuvres between the two nations. These developments threaten to unravel the fragile gains made under the Pretoria Agreement and risk plunging the region into a complex, multi-layered conflict reminiscent of the crisis in Yemen—this time on the African side of the Red Sea.

The Horn of Africa is already overwhelmed by active wars in Somalia, Sudan, Oromia, and the Amhara regions of Ethiopia. The economic, human, and political costs are staggering. Since the outbreak of the war in Tigray alone, Chatham House estimates that the region has experienced an unprecedented rise in state-based violence. Active conflicts have caused economic losses exceeding half a trillion US dollars, with Sudan alone accounting for over a quarter of this amount. Civilians—particularly women, youth, workers, and displaced communities—continue to bear the brunt of these wars, facing famine, forced migration, and systematic rights violations.

ITUC-Africa stands in unwavering solidarity with the Horn of Africa Confederation of Trade Unions (HACTU) and all our affiliates in the region. We reaffirm our conviction that peace, security, and resilience are fundamental prerequisites for human development and decent work.

We call upon:

- **The governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea** should consider deploying dialogue and not military troops that would lead to rapprochement and defusing tensions.
- **The African Union** to deploy its early intervention and preventive diplomacy to avert a war that would potentially affect millions of innocent civilians and workers.
- **The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and other RECs** must assume a more proactive leadership role and urgently convene a mediation summit aimed at de-escalation.
- **The international development community**, including the United Nations, multilateral and bilateral partners, should support regionally led preventive diplomacy through technical, financial, and political means.

Africa cannot afford another war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. And it cannot ignore the spreading fire in Sudan.

ITUC-Africa reaffirms that social dialogue remains the bedrock of sustainable peace and justice. War is not inevitable—our collective failure to prevent it is. As African workers, we insist on diplomacy, solidarity, dialogue, and respect for life, rights, and dignity.

In the spirit of Pan-Africanism and human solidarity, we urge our regional bodies and international partners to act now, not later. Preventing renewed fighting between Ethiopia and Eritrea is not only a strategic necessity, but also the most urgent moral, political, and legal imperative before us.



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