



# *A Reliable Partner in Development and in Maintaining Peace and Security in the Horn of Africa*

*Call from Eritrean Communities in Europe to European Union (EU)  
for positive engagement with Eritrea.*

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***This document is prepared by Eritrean Communities in Europe to call the European Union for positive engagement and meaningful partnership with Eritrea. The Eritrean communities in Europe are a highly organised social network comprising of first, second and third generation migrants who live and make important contributions across the European member states. There is a high concentration of Eritreans who hold the citizenship of Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Holland, Italy, France, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and also new arrival Eritreans who make up our communities.***

***This paper highlights the important issues that pre-occupies our communities and also consists of current state of affairs that is frequently distorted and misrepresented in the media and by some organisations who recycle wrong information about Eritrea.***

***We are Certain the relevant authorities in European Union will heed our call and take appropriate measures to serve the interest of both EU and Eritrea.***

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## Executive Summary

Recently, the European Union and the Government of Eritrea signed an agreement in Asmara, the Eritrean capital, to jointly fund a solar energy facility in the Southern Region of Eritrea. This is the result of a long engagement between the European Union and Eritrea and the expansion and consolidation of their relations.

Eritrea, despite all the hurdles thrown in its path the last decade and half, has proven to be a reliable partner in development, peace and security in the Horn of Africa. One could see this in what happened during the post-independence years, from 1991 to 1998, the only period in Eritrea's modern history the nation was not a target of external aggression--in the many constructive partnerships it established with the United States, the European Union, and many other nations on issues ranging from counterterrorism to peace-building, from regional cooperation and integration to regional and international peace. Or, in the determined effort the nation exerted in the fight against terrorism that was taking root in neighboring Sudan where Osama bin Laden had set up shop to launch his global criminal enterprise.

Unfortunately, many of these partnerships were put into question when this young African nation in 1998 became the target of an all-encompassing foreign aggression and a massive and well-funded disinformation and defamation propaganda war. In fact, there was nothing that was not tried to destabilize and marginalize the Red Sea nation the last decade and half. These include the imposition of unjust sanctions in 2009 and 2011 based on fabricated charges. The action represented another chapter in a long history of injustice against the people of Eritrea. U.S. foreign policy for the Horn of Africa has been generally devoid of fairness and justice—always skewed to favor Ethiopia, and always at the expense of the region in general, and especially Eritrea and the Eritrean people in particular.

Once again, Eritrea has overcome these hurdles and has hit its stride. Eritrea, with exemplary social cohesion and harmony among its 50% Christian and 50% Moslem population and the experience, the organizational capacity, a battle-hardened and peacetime-tested leadership, has the determination to play such a role. Eritrea's more than 1000km Red Sea coastline serves as a firewall against the spread of extremism and terrorism. At a time when the Arc of Crisis, encompassing the Middle East and the Horn of Africa, is in constant turmoil, with many once strong nations trying to prevent total national collapse, Eritrea is enjoying relative peace and stability.

Eritrea's outstanding achievements in other areas include the establishment of a solid foundation for its economy, putting in place of a grass-roots participative system of governance, making more



strides in the empowerment of women, and in the areas of human security, dignity and development. The Eritrean economy, which its enemies expected to collapse six months after they launched the 1998 border war, is on a launch pad poised to take off. The peaceful, politically stable and corruption-free environment, together with a liberal investment law and strong commitment by the government to develop its nascent mining industry has attracted more than two dozen companies from around the world.

In the education sector, Eritrea is embarking on an ambitious program to expand educational services to meet the skilled-human power needs of the country and its economy. Kindergarten, elementary, junior, secondary, as well as higher education is free for all Eritreans. As a result, the growth of access to education in Eritrea since independence has been truly remarkable. At the time of Eritrea's independence there was no institution of higher learning. The only institution that existed in Eritrea, the University of Asmara, was closed and dismantled by the Ethiopian military government and moved to Southern Ethiopia by the late 1980s. Eritrea, today has 8 colleges in different parts of the country, accommodating the needs of about 17,000 Eritrean youth and graduating around 3,000 students every year. Between 2008 and 2012, these colleges graduated nearly 14,500 students with degree and diploma.

The role of Eritrean women in the fight for and after independence is nothing short of remarkable. They were integrated into the ranks of the freedom fighters and fought alongside the men on the front lines. They made up 30 percent of the country's combat forces. The EPLF treated men and women as equals; women served as platoon commanders, commandos, assault troops, tank and truck drivers, mechanics and doctors. Since independence, they have been on the forefront in the struggle to consolidate and broaden women's rights and develop the nation in all areas of Eritrea's national life. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is criminalized.

It is for these reasons that Eritrea is one of the few African countries that have met MDG2 (Achieving universal primary education), MDG3 (Gender equality and empowering women), MDG4 (Child Health) and MDG5 (Maternal Health), MDG6 (Combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases), and MDG7 (Ensuring environmental sustainability). The Africa Research Institute says, 'Eritrea is on track to achieving six of the eight UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).'

As in all other sectors of development and like in any other country, there are, however, numerous challenges and problems that the Government continuously works to address. The Government of Eritrea is committed to further consolidate and broaden the progress achieved in the promotion and protection of human, social, political, and economic rights of all its citizens.

Finally, looking through this window of achievements, the future of this young nation looks very bright and promising. Eritrea will liberate itself from poverty, ignorance, and other barriers to development. A true partnership and engagement with the European Union will undoubtedly help to bring on a meaningful change on the lives of Eritreans.

## The Context

Ever since Eritrea became a de facto and de jure independent nation in May 24, 1991 and 1993 respectively, as a post conflict country it was faced with several economic and political challenges. In short, there was no economy one can speak of. Infrastructures such as the port city of Massawa, roads and bridges, were all deliberately bombed and destroyed by the Ethiopian forces of occupation. This on top of a long chain of dismantling Eritrea's viable industries and moving them into Ethiopia, the banks coffers were also emptied.

Thus, after independence, among other things, and with very limited resources, the Provisional Government of Eritrea took the unenviable task of rehabilitation and reconstruction activity, the Government effort was bearing fruit. Narrations such as following were the norm of the day.

*"Postwar Promise: Africa's Newest Nation, Little Eritrea Emerges As Oasis of Civility. Eritrea is Africa's newest nation: ...has become an unlikely oasis of peace and civility ... Secretary of State Warren Christopher calls Eritrea...A beacon of hope astride the Horn of Africa.....Perhaps even more astonishing, Eritrea is beginning to develop without the corruption so common elsewhere on the continent. Nobody to Bribe 'You can't find anyone to bribe here,' ...That makes one U.S. aid official wistful. Of more than 20 countries he has worked in, he says, 'Eritrea: is the one where you feel comfortable that every nickel you put into the place is going to be used properly....'They're on a takeoff here,' he says. 'All they need is a little wind.'"*<sup>1</sup>

*"In Africa, a continent racked with wars, revolutions and repression and increasingly regarded as an economic and social basket case, there is one country that is reversing the trend and today is the democratic hope of the continent. It is Eritrea, ... situated on the Red Sea, above the Horn of Africa, bordered by Sudan, Ethiopia and Djibouti. ... Eritrea has confounded experts and reversed a trend in Africa that has been depressingly and persistently gloomy since the first country (Ghana) achieved independence from British colonial rule in 1956. As one who has reported from a score of African countries over the past 40 years, I've no hesitation saying that Eritrea is unlike anything I've encountered in Africa."*<sup>2</sup>

*"Proud, principled and impoverished, Eritrea is virtually without peer in Africa as it pursues its own model of development and vision of democracy. ... The foreign investor trying to clinch a deal in Eritrea may experience many things, but the knowing wink and outstretched palm common to so many African encounters are unlikely to be among them. Irritation? Maybe. Exasperation? Possibly. But corruption? Almost never ... Given Eritrea's grim legacy, its challenges are formidable. But thirty years ago most observers doubted that Eritrea would even win its war for independence. Who is to say that Eritrea will not again surprise the world as it seeks to liberate itself from poverty?"*<sup>3</sup>

- 1 The Wall Street Journal, May 31, 1994
- 2 Toronto Sun, December 27, 1998
- 3 Financial Times, 18 January 1996



*“Eritrea, Africa’s youngest country, is embarking on a campaign to abolish food aid and stand on its own feet ..., the Eritreans are transforming their new nation into a country that works.”<sup>4</sup>*

*“While many Africans are asking themselves what went wrong over the last three decades, Eritreans are embracing the future. While ethnic and religious conflicts make many African nation-states fragile, Eritreans are nationalistic and cohesive to a fault. While almost every African country depends on foreign aid, Eritrea in some cases refuses it. ... Eritreans are bringing to government the same confident, do-it themselves approach that helped them win the war. ... They don’t want to be slaves to any foreign donor country. They want economic self-sufficiency and they want to do it their way and with their own blood and sweat.”<sup>5</sup>*

This positive development in Eritrea was perceived by certain forces as a threat to their geopolitical interests. As a result, Yemen was used as a launching pad for the destabilization agenda of Eritrea. On December of 1995, the Yemeni troops occupied the Hanish archipelago, of the Red Sea. The Yemeni action led to military confrontation as Eritrea was forced to defend its sovereignty. However, in the spirit of respecting international treaty and obligation and in an effort to concentrate on its rehabilitation and reconstruction activities, and despite its reservations on the methodology and rationale of the verdict, Eritrea acquiesced to an Arbitration ruling and accepted the decision as final and binding.

However there were the external forces that were not happy with the new approach to development and with an interest to put their footprint in the strategically located Eritrea, encouraged and financed Ethiopia to militarily attack Eritrea. Under the pretext of a border dispute the Ethiopian government launched three major military offensives between May of 1998 and May of 2000. In December of 2000, the two nations signed a comprehensive peace agreement in Algiers, Algeria, an agreement that has come to be known as the Algiers Agreement. The OAU (Organization of African Unity, since renamed the African Union), the EU (European Union); the UN (the United Nations) and the USA signed the historic agreement as witnesses and guarantors. The EEBC (The Eritrean-Ethiopian Border Commission) was established according to the Algiers Agreement with the full mandate of delimiting and demarcating the Eritrean-Ethiopian border based on pertinent colonial treaties of 1900, 1902 and 1908 and applicable international law. By signing the Algiers Agreement, the two parties had agreed to take the decisions of the EEBC as final and binding.

In April of 2002, the Border Commission rendered its final and binding delimitation verdict and awarded Badme, the *casus belli* of the conflict, to Eritrea. Moreover in 2007, it pronounced its demarcation decision and presented the maps to the Governments of Eritrea and Ethiopia and deposited a copy at the UN cartographer Office. Nevertheless, encouraged by some US officials, Ethiopia continues to refuse to respect its treaty obligation and to withdraw its soldiers from sovereign Eritrean territory, including the town of Badme. Here is how former US Ambassador to the UN, John Bolton, put this quintessential US injustice against Eritrea:

*“For reasons I never understood, however, [Jendayi] Frazer [then Assistant*

4 Africa Today May-June 1997

5 The Globe and Mail 26 April 1997

*Secretary for African Affairs] reversed course, and asked in early February [2005] to reopen the 2002 EEBC decision, which she had concluded was wrong, and award a major piece of disputed territory to Ethiopia. I was at a loss how to explain that to the Security Council, so I didn't."*<sup>6</sup>

The occupation of sovereign Eritrea territories and non-implementation of the final and binding decision of the Eritrea Ethiopia Boundary Commission without a doubt is at the root of every trouble in the Horn of Africa and is a fundamental violation of the right of the Eritrean people. Ethiopia's refusal to abide by the final and binding EEBC decision was repeatedly made clear by the Commission itself.

*"Ethiopia is not prepared to allow demarcation to continue in the manner laid down in the Demarcation Directions and in accordance with the timeline set by the Commission. It now insists on prior 'dialogue' but has rejected the opportunity for such 'dialogue' within the framework of the demarcation process provided by the Commission's proposal to meet with the Parties on 22 February. This is the latest in a series of obstructive actions taken since the summer of 2002 and belies the frequently professed acceptance by Ethiopia of the Delimitation Decision."*<sup>7</sup>

*"Ethiopia proposes that 'an alternative mechanism to demarcate the contested parts of the boundary' be set up. Such an alternative mechanism would involve a departure from, and thus an amendment to, the terms of Article 4.2 of the Algiers Agreement, which gives the Commission the mandate to demarcate the boundary. Moreover, Ethiopia's reference to 'the contested boundary, can only be understood as a reference to those parts of the boundary to which it alone and unilaterally takes exception: no part of the boundary is 'contested' by both Parties. ... Ethiopia characterizes the situation as being one in which 'the work of the Commission is in terminal crisis'. The Commission does not accept that assessment: there is no 'crisis', terminal or otherwise, which cannot be cured by Ethiopia's compliance with its obligations under the Algiers Agreement, in particular its obligations to treat the Commission's delimitation determination as 'final and binding' (article 4.15) and 'to cooperate with the Commission, its experts and other staff in all respects during the process of ... demarcation' (article 4.14)."*<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, Congressman Dana Rohrabacher puts the 'disgraceful' U.S. act of encouraging Ethiopia's lawlessness in the following words:

*"We did convince the Ethiopians at one point to agree to arbitration of a major dispute that they were in with Eritrea. ... I thought the behavior of our government in that whole episode was disgraceful, and has undermined our ability to arbitrate other disputes in the sense that Ethiopia, the decision of the arbiters went against Ethiopia in their border dispute with Eritrea...and we extracted some kind of other*

6 John R. Bolton. *Surrender is not an Option*. Threshold Editions, 2007. p. 347-348

7 Sir Elihu Lauterpacht, President, Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC). February 24, 2005. <http://dehai.org/demarcation-watch/eebc/EEBC-President-Report-to-UN-16.pdf>. (Accessed 2014/12/15)

8 Sir Elihu Lauterpacht, President, Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC), October 7, 2003. <http://dehai.org/demarcation-watch/articles/EEBC-Oct-7-2003-letter.pdf>. (Accessed 2014/12/15)

*deal with them to help us with some sort of defense related deal...and let them off the hook, basically said they didn't have to follow their arbitration, which meant the message to all of Africa was you don't...you better skip out the arbitration because that just doesn't work, even the Americans are going to discard it, what the result is. That was very sad."*<sup>9</sup>

As if this and past injustices were not enough, under the false pretext of Eritrea's support for Al-Shabab in Somalia and border dispute with Djibouti, the US government, through the UN Security Council imposed the unjust UNSC 1907 and 2023 sanctions on Eritrea in 2009 and 2011 respectively.

Furthermore, the illegal sanctions that were imposed on the people of Eritrea in 2009 were purposely designed by the US in order to delay Ethiopia's withdrawal from Sovereign Eritrean territory and divert the world's attention from Ethiopia's breach of international law. As the leaked US diplomatic cables show, clearly, the US, through its Ambassador at the UN at the time, Susan Rice, was the architect of the entire sanctions. Evidence was purposely manufactured and railroaded to the Security Council.

*"Even though some voices in the UK Foreign Office were saying that this is a disastrous idea, sanctions should not go ahead. The push was coming from above somewhere. Ethiopia needs to be right. Ethiopia needs to be the stable center. Eritrea is now becoming, to be blunt, a pain in the ass. It will be punished. The US preferred Ethiopia. It preferred Ethiopia for all sorts of reasons. Eritrea was seen as a bunker state; they were less easy to control. Ethiopia had a more reliable military perhaps. Their policy was more directable and perhaps predictable. Whereas Eritrea, from the mid 1990s, it was clearly seen unpredictable and couldn't be relied upon to do certain things that Washington might wanted to do."*<sup>10</sup>

US diplomats also admit they were the ones who advised the Ethiopians to give the sanctions an African face. 'We [the US government] have advised the Prime Minister and his senior leadership ... any case against Eritrea should be raised by other countries. Any charges levied by Ethiopia would be viewed only in the context of their border conflict."<sup>11</sup>

The following cable puts it well, that it was not Ethiopia but the US Government that has forced and lobbied African Governments to Sanction against Eritrea. 'Rice reminded Museveni that past experience suggested that the UNSC would not block a resolution led by African members and supported by the African Union. She shared the U.S. read that, if Burkina Faso and Uganda co-sponsor this resolution, the British will support, the French will 'keep their heads down' and will not block."<sup>12</sup>

9 Dana T. Rohrabacher, U.S. Representative for California's 48th congressional district. November 18, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1O1io-f-itY&feature=youtu.be> (Begins at 6:20)

10 <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/eritreas-external-relations> (begins at 54:30). Richard Reid, 10 January 2010. Eritrea's External Relations. (Accessed 2014/12/15)

11 <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2007/04/07ADDISABABA978.html>. US Embassy Cables, Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), April 2, 2007, (Accessed 2014/12/15)

12 <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2009/09/09USUNNEWYORK861.html>. US UN Mission Cables, New York (USA). 29 Sept. 2009. (Accessed 2014/12/15)



This being the whole affair, Susan Rice shamelessly told the world after the resolution was adopted, 'it was what the Africans wanted'. It shows how Europe and Africa are always taken to be US errand-boys.

Former Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Herman Cohen, had dismissed outright the preposterous attempts in the past to link Eritrea to Islamic extremism by stating 'Those of us who know Eritrea well, understand that the Eritrean leadership fears Islamic militancy as much as any other country in the Horn of Africa region.

*... In view of the absence of any intelligence, real or fabricated, linking Eritrea with Shabaab for over four years, the UN Security Council should terminate sanctions imposed in 2009 by UNSC resolution 1907."*<sup>13</sup>



Eritrean Communities from around Europe demonstrating in Geneva against the illegal and unjust Sanctions

To his credit Ambassador Cohen had clearly stated Ethiopia's dubious behavior as early as eight years ago:

*"there are friends in the region, like the Ethiopians, who probably are feeding false intelligence about terrorists being hidden and that sort of thing, because the Ethiopians are deadly afraid of Moslem control and also they have their own Moslem problem among the Oromo ethnic group in Ethiopia. So they want to keep the Islamists out of power, and they will bring the U.S. into it, if they can."*<sup>14</sup>

13 <http://africanarguments.org/2013/12/16/time-to-bring-eritrea-in-from-the-cold-by-hank-cohen/> (Accessed 2014/12/15)

14 [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/africa-jan-june06-somalia\\_06-06/](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/africa-jan-june06-somalia_06-06/) (Accessed 2014/12/16)

It must be pointed out that in the last three of its reports (2012, 2013 and 2014), the SEMG (Somali-Eritrea Monitoring Group) had openly admitted that there is no credible evidence that links Eritrea to Al-Shabab, therefore, the immediate lifting of the sanctions is long over due. Additionally, the EU, as one of the guarantors of the Algiers Agreement, has an obligation to demand that Ethiopia immediately and unconditionally vacate the sovereign Eritrean territories it is occupying including Badme and its environs. Therefore, the current sociopolitical situation should be viewed within the foregoing politico-military and diplomatic context. Although the GOE continues to strive to achieve economic, social and financial stability, the negative impact of the intrigues and conspiracies cannot be emphasized enough.

## Eritrea's Stride to Ensure Social Justice

In spite of all these misdeeds, Eritrea has been dealing head-on all the obstacles placed against her, and refuses to be helpless and waiting for them to just go away with arms folded. To address these daunting challenges, it gathered whatever little resources it had, and set a program of action to re-ignite the once promising engine of the Eritrean economy with a sensible and home grown economic plan. It set priorities of all the economic activities with 'Food security' taking the priority of priorities. To help achieve that, many dams, water diversion schemes and irrigation facilities were built even during the war. Using considerable foreign currency, earned from its mining sector modern agricultural equipment including tractors and combines, water pumps and water sprinklers were purchased at a high cost.

Similarly, to address the war damaged and substandard infrastructure that existed in the country, new earth movers including bulldozers, excavators, motor graders, backhoe loaders, rollers, articulated dump trucks, asphalt pavers and cement mixers had to be imported at a substantial cost to Eritrea.

A set of new buses of various sizes and capability were introduced to alleviate the severe transportation problems the public was experiencing. On the same line, garbage trucks, hauling trucks, tanker trucks and fire engines were purchased at a tremendous cost to the country.

The peaceful and politically stable and corruption-free environment together with a liberal investment law and strong commitment by the government to develop its nascent mining industry has attracted more than a dozen companies from around the world. In fact, Eritrea recently conducted a yet another successful annual 'Mining Conference' five times in a row. It also has accommodated several economic conferences including the recently held 'Turkish-Eritrean Business Meeting'.

Sensing the underserved reality of Eritrean airports, the prestigious Turkish Airlines and the Five-Star Qatar Airways, both members of 'Star Alliance', have been added to the existing air carriers that have been serving Asmara for the last 23 years.

A new international airport, a new cement factory, a couple of plastic and structural foam molding factories have been erected in Massawa and Barentu. The renovation of the Hirgigo power plant in Massawa is being finalized pending the availability of further funds. Some

housing complexes in Asmara, Mendefera, Keren and Massawa have been and are being built to help alleviate the serious housing problems that exist throughout the Eritrean cities and towns.

A network of roads (many of them paved) and bridges has been built to facilitate road transportation mostly in rural Eritrea. Between 1992 and 2010, Eritrea has constructed and rehabilitated a total of 1,300 km network of asphalted roads, 3,800 km of gravel roads, and 10,000 km earth roads. Part of the historic and important rail line has been rebuilt connecting once again the strategic Asmara-Massawa railroad, using the rails and sleepers that were yanked out during the war, and that have been put out of commission for 17 years. Similarly, air and sea transportation systems are in their teething stage, while some airports and harbors have been built and/or renovated. Again, pending the availability of funding, more such activities are in the pipeline. Eritrea has long realized that its economic development goals cannot be met without large-scale expansion of communication, power, water and transport services. Already, extensive rehabilitation and expansion of the telecommunication, power transmission and road networks are underway. Similarly, the planned improvement and increase in water supply throughout the country.

Currently, electricity is a challenge. However the necessary power grids including the installation of a network of electric poles and the strung out power lines in many parts of Eritrea are a testimony to the future government plan to provide the people with a sustainable power supply. Moreover, a 24-hour power generating plant (using fossil fuel) was just inaugurated in the western lowlands of Eritrea, where it is believed to be a major agribusiness development area and breadbasket of the country. Some wind turbines have been in operation on the Southern Red Sea region with encouraging results. Small scale, photovoltaic cell (solar) panels have been installed in some rural areas of the country, and are being used to generate electricity.

Hundreds of medical facilities including hospitals, health centers and clinics have sprung up throughout Eritrea to facilitate their accessibility to the sick, especially at those remote locations whose economic development was set aside for many years in favor of the major towns.

Eritrea's record on reducing child and maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases is solid, as is its effort to provide access to safe drinking water to its rural population. It has constructed many clinics, health stations, health centers, hospitals and six referral hospitals in its major cities, urban and rural areas. It is also training many nurses (RNs and LPNs), as well as medical doctors at an average rate of about 35 MDs per year.

Eritrea is engaged in multi-faceted interventions to promote health security. Today the prevalence of HIV/AIDS cases is less than 0.5%, polio and neonatal tetanus are totally eliminated. Measles is under control. Eritrea's malaria control program has also been globally cited as one of the most aggressive and successful programs in the developing world. Child vaccination rate is now standing at 99%; this is up from the 10% at the time of independence 20 years ago.

Since independence the number of hospitals in Eritrea has nearly doubled, the number of health centers has grown by ten-fold; the number health stations has more than tripled.

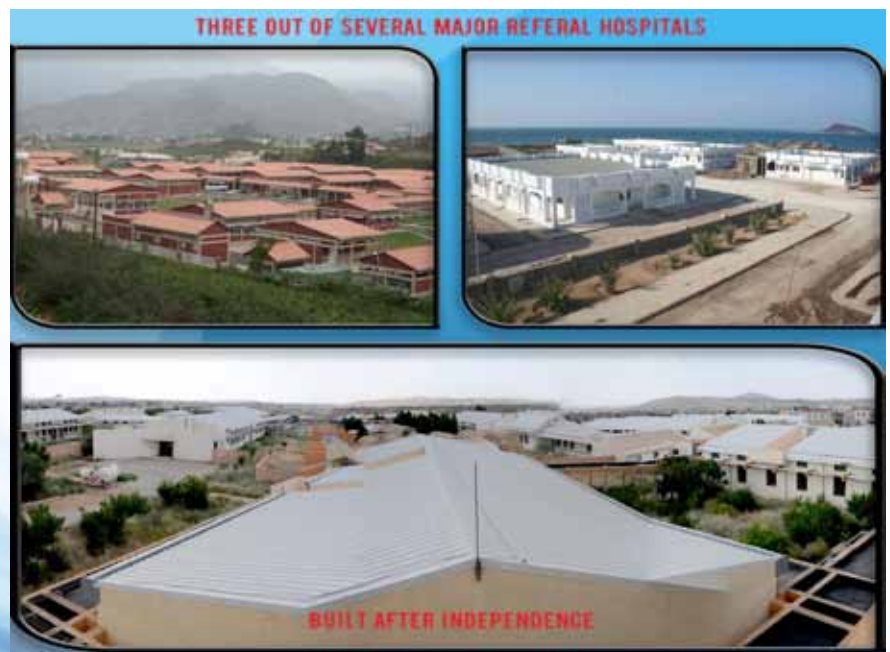


Unlike what it was in 1991, today over 75% of Eritreans are now living within a 10km of a health facility and around 60% of the population can get to health service within five Kms.

Access to safe water has improved significantly between 1991 and 2014. Eritrea is on-track to meeting the MDG target for access to safe water by 2015. This achievement undoubtedly played an important role in the improved child health indicators discussed earlier. An array of water sources has been installed from which water is being piped in to a significant part of the urban and rural Eritrea to facilitate the availability of potable water.

In the education sector, Eritrea is embarking on an ambitious program to expand educational services to meet the skilled-human power needs of the economy by raising the standards of kindergartens, elementary, junior, secondary, vocational and professional schools and institutes, as well as of higher education. The growth of access to education in Eritrea since independence is truly remarkable. Enrollment in preschools has grown six-fold, in elementary three-fold, in middle schools five-fold, in secondary schools four-fold and that in professional and technical schools nearly ten-fold. The same can be said with the growth of the number of schools built after independence. What is more encouraging is also that the growth is not only limited to the urban areas; the rural areas are also witnessing a huge growth in educational services. For example, the number of preschools in rural parts of the country has grown by 1542%; this is sixteen-fold growth. The Ministry of Education is also working hard to narrow the digital divide between schools in the rural and urban areas. Solar energy is being used in the remote areas that are outside the national electricity grid to run computer labs; this way rural students are not left behind their colleagues in the urban areas.

At the time of Eritrea's independence, there was no institution of higher learning. The only institution that existed in Eritrea, the University of Asmara, was closed and dismantled by the Ethiopian government and moved to Southern Ethiopia by the late 1980s. After independence, the University was rehabilitated and was offering degree programs for a modest number of students. As the number of students leaving secondary school grew, it became apparent that the University was not able to meet the higher Education need of the country. In 2004, Eritrea decided to decentralize Asmara University and to create eight full-fledged and independent University colleges strategically located on suitable areas to serve the entire student spectrum. So in place of one institute of higher education, that accommodates not more than 2,000 students, Eritrea today has eight colleges accommodating the needs of about 17,000 Eritrean youth and graduating around 3,000 students every year. Between 2008 and 2012, these colleges have graduated nearly 14,500



students with degree and diploma. According to the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT), report from January 2013:

*“Eritrea has seen a change in its higher education system in the period 2004–2010. However, this reform is not a change in the system itself, but a change in the number of institutions offering higher education in the country. ... Eritrea today*



*has seven [there are 8 now]institutions offering higher education, and the number of students attending programs of higher education has risen from around 5,000 students at the University of Asmara in 2004 to around 17,000 students attending programs at the new colleges of higher education today. The University of Asmara’s main programme were the diploma programme and the bachelor degree; and was only able to introduce the master degree programme in 2004 just before closing. Today we see that most of the new colleges of higher education have already introduced many new master degree programmes or are planning to introduce master degree programmes in the near future.”<sup>15</sup>*

It is for these reasons outlined above that Eritrea is one of the few African countries that have met MDG2 (Achieving universal primary education), MDG3 (Gender equality and empowering women), MDG4 (Child Health) and MDG5 (Maternal Health), MDG6 (Combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases), and MDG7 (Ensuring environmental sustainability). According to the African Research Institute, UNICEF, UNDP, and WHO reports...

*“Eritrea is on track to achieving six of the eight UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Immunization and vaccination of children and adolescents against killer diseases like tuberculosis, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus and measles is estimated at 90% and malaria, which used to be endemic in the country, has been reduced substantially as a result of aggressive control measures since a programme was launched to combat it in 1999. These achievements have translated into a steady increase in life expectancy at birth from 52.5 years in 1995 to 61.6 years in 2011. Notwithstanding these achievements, the country is faced with significant challenges to reduce poverty as well as participation in global partnerships for development.”<sup>[16]</sup><sup>16</sup>*

15 Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) [http://www.nokut.no/Documents/NO-KUT/Artikkelbibliotek/Kunnskapsbasen/Rapporter/UA%202013/Gulliksen\\_Anne-Kari\\_Audensen\\_Erik\\_Report\\_on\\_recognition\\_of\\_higher\\_education\\_in\\_Eritrea\\_and\\_Ethiopia\\_2013-1.pdf](http://www.nokut.no/Documents/NO-KUT/Artikkelbibliotek/Kunnskapsbasen/Rapporter/UA%202013/Gulliksen_Anne-Kari_Audensen_Erik_Report_on_recognition_of_higher_education_in_Eritrea_and_Ethiopia_2013-1.pdf) (Accessed 2014/12/15)

16 African Economic Outlook-Eritrea, 2014. (Accessed 2014/12/16) <http://www.africaneconomicoutlook>.



## In Search of Affordable Renewable Energy

Ever since its independence, Eritrea has been exploring affordable and sustainable energy solutions through renewable sources of energy. Though Eritrea has a lot of potential for geothermal energy, at the moment the two sources are solar and wind. To this effect the countryside is dotted with solar-powered water pumps and according to a UNDP report, there are also villages in Eritrea, most of them in the Southern Red Sea region that are generating wind-powered energy.

*"In 2010, UNDP and the Eritrean government piloted a wind energy project in Southern Red Sea region, consisting of a wind farm with a capacity of 750 kilowatts in the port city of Assab. Later, six small stand-alone decentralized wind turbines were installed in the villages of Rahayta, Gahro, Berasole, Edi, Beilul and Dekemhare. The results were instant. More than 35,000 people now have direct access reliable energy. Wind energy has improved the supply of electricity to water systems, schools, health facilities and small-scale businesses. The project also provided lighting, ventilation, cooling systems, and fish preservation centers, which have improved the livelihoods of small-scale fishermen in the region. The project also had immediate environmental*



*benefits, as fossil fuel consumption has been reduced. The diesel power plant in the southern port city of Assab is now saving approximately 680,000 liters of diesel per year, or nearly \$730,000 per year in diesel costs."*<sup>17</sup>



*One other report also has this: "Out of the 54 countries in Africa, 3 have existing installed solar power capacity, which combined, represent 0.07% of solar power capacity installed worldwide. The top 3 markets based on installed solar capacity are South Africa, Senegal and Eritrea."<sup>18</sup>*

At a time when Eritrea's economy is taxiing on a runway, ready to takeoff, securing sustainable energy sources is a matter of urgency. Eritrea critically needs a reliable, cheap and affordable source of energy to develop its young mining industry, enhance its up and coming mechanized agriculture, and to forge ahead with its proposed construction projects. Besides modernizing its petroleum-based thermal powered generating systems, it urgently needs to realize its full potential in harnessing its renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, as well as geothermal.

Renewable energy sources can also serve as a catalyst in fulfilling Eritrea's vision of building a sustainable strong national economy that satisfies the need of its people, by developing its own resources and a 'responsible utilization of the natural environment and resources.' This means the European union, and other Eritrea's development partners can play critically constructive roles by supporting new projects pertaining renewable energy. If Eritrea succeeds with its efforts of achieving affordable energy, women and children will be the first to benefit. First, they will be saved of the hours of backbreaking task of gathering firewood. Second children would be able to fully focus on their education, and third the environment would be spared of deforestation and pollution.

## **Empowerment of Women**

*"...Noting the fact that the Eritrean women's heroic participation in the struggle for independence, human rights and solidarity, based on equality and mutual respect, generated by such struggle will serve as an unshakable foundation for our commitment to create a society in which women and men interact on the basis of mutual respect, solidarity and equality..."-- Preamble of the 1997 Eritrean Constitution*

Article 14 of the constitution prohibits all forms of discrimination based on race, ethnic origins, language, color, gender, religion, disability, age, political view, or social or economic status or any other improper factors.

The Government and people of Eritrea believe that long-term, sustainable development can be achieved when men and women are given equal opportunity to rise to their potential and participate in the social, economic and political development of the nation.

Eritrean women, like most women in countries at war, bore the brunt of the violence and were saddled with extraordinary responsibilities as their brothers, husbands, fathers and sons who left in droves to join the fight to liberate Eritrea from the clutches of Ethiopian colonization. During the liberation war, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) developed one of the most enlightened views of women that we have seen anywhere in the world. Women participated fully—not as substitutes but as full-fledged citizens of

...tive-energy-for-eritrean-rural-communities/ (Accessed 2014/12/16)

18 [http://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/2669496/solar\\_power\\_opportunities\\_africa#rela1](http://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/2669496/solar_power_opportunities_africa#rela1) (Accessed 2014/12/16)

revolutionary Eritrea eventually comprising more than 30 percent of the fighting force and serving in all capacities; this is not the usual history of militaries, where women have more commonly been used selectively and mostly in jobs seen as extensions of their domestic labor.

Eritrean women were not casual observers in the war; they were pioneers for women's rights. The rights, privileges and responsibilities that Eritrea's women enjoy today were not given; they were earned. From the early 1970s, tens of thousands of women from every ethnic group in Eritrea joined the liberation movements. An increase in Ethiopian atrocities against women and children resulted in the thousands leaving to join the liberation movement, contributing immeasurably not just to the liberation struggle, but also to the women's emancipation movement worldwide.

Eritrean women were integrated into the ranks of the freedom fighters and fought alongside the men on the front lines. They made up 30 percent of the country's combat forces. The EPLF treated women as equals, and they served as platoon commanders, commandos, assault troops, tank and truck drivers, mechanics, doctors etc. Women also served in many non-combat capacities as teachers, paramedics, political organizers, technicians, garage mechanics, drivers and more. Eritrean women in villages across Eritrea and in the vast Eritrean Diaspora organized to support the liberation movement.

Empowerment of women is rooted in Eritrea's liberation struggle. This legacy coupled with the policies pursued thereafter, greatly improved the status of women. In the post-independence period, the Government complemented the achievements of the liberation struggle with relevant statutory laws. As it happens, the political and economic rights of Eritrean women are explicitly guaranteed and enshrined in the Eritrean Constitution and other pertinent laws in force; including the Transitional Civil Code, the Transitional Penal Code, the Land Proclamation, the Election of Regional Assemblies Proclamation and the Proclamation to Abolish Female Circumcision. During the reporting period, the following activities were undertaken by the Government in its drive to fulfill its ideals and objectives.

The Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE) made a deliberate effort to ensure women's participation in every stage of the constitution-making process. Hence, fifty percent of the members of the Constitution Commission were female, effectively taking part throughout the process. Eritrean women had the opportunity to make their voice heard and advocate for their rights and concerns through their participation in various consultation forums held inside the country and in the Diaspora.

In line to the political and economic rights of Eritrean women explicitly guaranteed and enshrined in the Eritrean Constitution and other pertinent laws in force (including the Transitional Civil Code, the Transitional Penal Code, the Land Proclamation, the Election of Regional Assemblies Proclamation, Labor Proclamation, and the Proclamation to Abolish Female Circumcision), the steady and purposeful amelioration of the political, economic and social status of women has continued to be one of the main preoccupations of the Government. The political and social role of women in political activities, the elected assemblies, administrations at local, regional levels, in government positions have improved in the last four years.

Barely four years since attaining independence and despite all other challenges that required attention and resources from the state, believing in the importance of women in Eritrean society, and the government's desire to defend the rights of the Eritrean woman, the State of Eritrea ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1995. The Convention has been translated into all the local languages and has been widely disseminated, particularly among women. There is strong commitment and political will on the part of the government, which provides a supportive environment for the implementation of the Convention.

Proclamation No.86/1996 on the establishment of Local Government stipulates that 30% of the seats in the Regional Assemblies would be reserved for women and that they would contest the remaining 70%. To further ensure women's equal access to all available services, and to have full participation in power and decision-making, several women are appointed to higher positions. Currently there are three women Ministers holding the position of Justice Minister, Minister of Health, and Minister of Tourism. In addition, there are some High Court judges, attorneys, local and regional Administrators, as well as director-generals, directors and unit heads in ministries and other governmental departments. There are scores of businesses, from hotels and shops to petrol stations, which are run by women. In the words of Professor Asmarom Legesse, 'these are not token positions. These are the outcome of the thirty year war which was also a war to equalize the unequal - and they've achieved it.'





Much effort has been made to bridge the gender gap in education and enhance the quality of girls' education in the Eritrean school system. The particular emphasis made to combat adult illiteracy is an important and exemplary achievement. Data from the 2011/2012 academic years for example shows that, 52,747 adults participated in the adult literacy programs in 947 centers with the help of 2,311 facilitators. Women constituted 95% of the participants.

In 2007, after almost two decades of sensitization and education campaigns, the Government outlawed Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) by Proclamation 158/2007. The Proclamation has been a milestone toward banning the practice of FGM/C. Indeed, government bodies in collaboration with other stakeholders have been intensifying anti-FGM/C campaigns. Sensitization seminars have taken place in villages and towns; not to mention the big cities that are densely populated. In addition, heavy penalty is imposed on those who perform FGM/C and their collaborators. It is an insult to the brave women of Eritrea who have worked to educate the society and bring an end to discriminatory traditional practices, and be lectured on such matters by those who are working to reverse their progress. Furthermore, the future is far from bleak for the women of Eritrea.

The Government of Eritrea pursues a strict policy of zero-tolerance for sexual violence. Article 589 (2a) of the Transitional Penal Code of Eritrea (TPCE) criminalizes a person who compels or induces a child under 15 years of age to submit to sexual intercourse. This offense is punishable by rigorous imprisonment for up to 15 years. Apart from this, any other sort of sexual outrage or indecent act on a child under 15 years of age or between 15-18 years of age is penalized under Articles 594 and 595 of the TPCE.

Proclamation No. 1/1991 specifies that any contract of marriage made between persons below 18 years of age is null-and-void, and that the spouses and witnesses to such marriage shall be punishable under the Penal Code.

The encouragement and promotion of female participation in the development of trade skills and equal pay for equal work is considered for gender equity and women's health and safety. Article 41 (1) of Labor proclamation explicitly provides for an employer to pay equal starting wages for the same type of work without discrimination on grounds of gender. Furthermore, Article 65 (1) stipulates

that women may not be discriminated against in regard to any opportunity or treatment in employment and remuneration on the basis of their sex. This specific clause is not enshrined in the international Convention but emanates from cherished values and



practices that were nurtured during the long struggle of independence. The equal treatment of both sexes and disadvantaged groups is deeply entrenched in the Eritrean societal values.

## Human Rights in Context

**E**ritrea believes the individual or group's sense of self-respect and self-worth, physical and psychological integrity and empowerment is paramount in the protection and enhancement of human rights.

*"...Aware that it is the sacred duty of all citizens to build a strong and advanced Eritrea on the bases of freedom, unity, peace, stability and security achieved through the long struggle of all Eritreans, which tradition we must cherish, preserve and develop...Realising that in order to build an advanced country, it is necessary that the unity, equality, love for truth and justice, self-reliance, and hard work, which we nurtured during our revolutionary struggle for independence and which helped us to triumph, must become the core of our national values...Appreciating the fact that for the development and health of our society, it is necessary that we inherit and improve upon the traditional community-based assistance and fraternity, love for family, respect for elders, mutual respect and consideration...Convinced that the establishment of a democratic order, through the participation of and in response to the needs and interests of citizens, which guarantees the recognition and protection of the rights of citizens, human dignity, equality, balanced development and the satisfaction of the material and spiritual needs of citizens, is the foundation of economic growth, social harmony and progress..."-Eritrean Constitution*

Human rights in post independent Eritrea constitutes the epicenter of state building, social justice for a viable future imbued with progressive morality. The effort based on promoting humanity has been mainstreamed into Eritrea's unique nation building strategy. Human Rights in Eritrea is an interlinked effort to ensure human dignity, human security and human development. The fundamental principles in terms of strategy have also encompassed a broader development outlook which includes the strengthening the supremacy of the internal transformations, decisiveness and centrality of the human factor in our society, integration of human rights into all sectors of life, indivisibility of rights and responsibilities and the link between peace and security, and human rights and development.

### HUMAN SECURITY

**Economic Security**-The Government continues to allocate a hefty amount of its annual budget, running to more than half a billion Nacfa, for the upkeep of the families of martyrs and the war disabled. In a society where the extended family system is still intact and social cohesion and solidarity deeply embedded in the national psyche, the Government has strived to maintain the income gap within the bounds of decency and reason. In the public sector, the wage differential stands at 1:8 between the lowest and highest salaries including the most senior government officials. (The Gini coefficient for Eritrea, although not computed accurately, remains one of the lowest in the region). Public expenditure has not been confined to the social sectors.

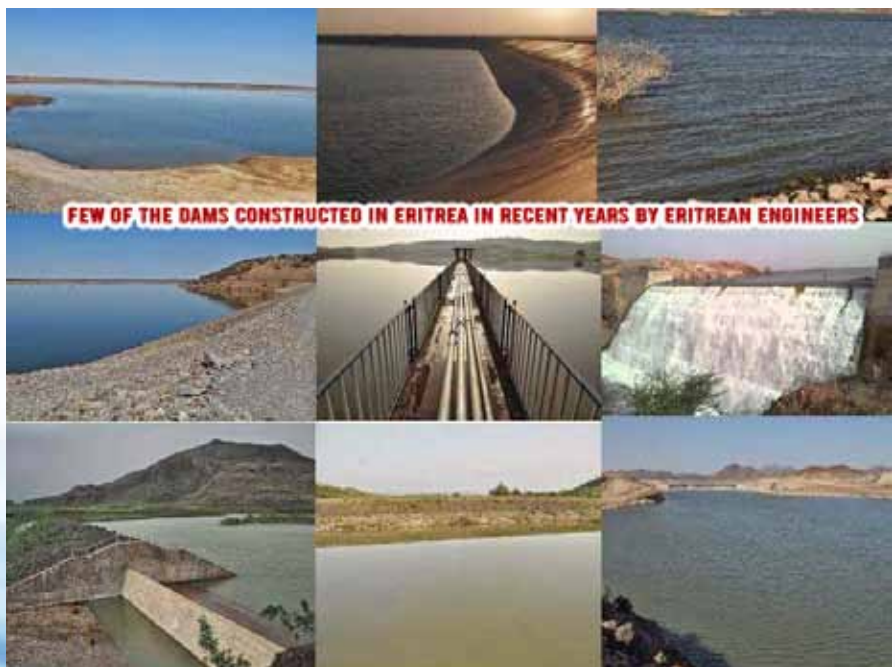
In a country where the domestic private sector is not yet strong, the Government continues to shoulder the burden of investment in indispensable physical structure to lubricate the conditions for rapid economic growth.

**Food Security** — Food security requires that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to basic food. Eritrea has abandoned food aid programs and is laser-focused on ensuring food security and has shown remarkable growth. This is designed to ensure the people of Eritrea to live in dignity. Unless a population is free of a perpetual dependency, it cannot chart its own future. For the past several years, the Government was engaged in food security activities, and has openly and clearly expressed its strong commitment to National Food Security as its number one national priority. As part of this effort the country is becoming a nation of dams, along other irrigation and agro-industrial development projects aimed at food security.

**Health Security** - HAMSET (a program to combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria, STDs and Tuberculosis) is a major initiative coordinated by the Ministry of Health that aimed at tackling the main causes of the such diseases, with the support and coordination of efforts of several ministries, the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW), the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students (NUEYS), and other communities.

Women & children were the prime beneficiaries of The HAMSET project Eritrea, who once had the highest maternal mortality rates in the world (about 1400 deaths per 100,000 births) in the past, is today one of the four African countries on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goal 5 on Maternal Health. Goal 5 calls on countries to reduce maternal mortality rate by three quarters by 2015. Eritrea's investment in the country's political, social and economic issues is one of key drivers of the made towards the health-related MDGs.

High incidence of obstructed labor contributed to the high maternal mortality rate in Eritrea. The rural nature of Eritrea, with its poor communication and transportation infrastructure, particularly in outlying areas, required that 80 percent of deliveries took place without a physician or trained midwife present. The commitment and persistent efforts of the Government of the State of Eritrea, in partnership with other stakeholders, has resulted in an impressive progress in maternal and child health. Today in Eritrea, each community has fully-trained maternal care-givers and expectant mothers living far from medical centers do not have to risk their lives travelling long distances while in labor. Instead, trained birth attendants visit them in their homes before and after delivery to provide medical assistance and to ensure that both mother





and baby are in good health.

Studies have shown that one of the key success stories of Eritrea's development process is its ability to mobilize and motivate communities to participate in the design, development and utilization of programs, including those related to health. Eritrea is one of the few countries expected to achieve the MDGs in health. As expected, Eritrea has now achieved all the three health MDGs namely MDG-4, reduce child mortality, MDG-5 improve maternal health and MDG-6 combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

**Environmental Security** — Lack of access to clean water resources is one of the greatest environmental threats. Eritrea has embarked on a very ambitious water and soil conservation strategy that includes building of water canals, dams and terracing and tree planting across Eritrea. Use of smokeless ovens and solar energy is also part of the short and long term goals to ensure environmental security –reverse the damages caused by decades of war and neglect and prevent further deterioration of the natural environment. 'Eritrean Water Proclamation" No. 162/2010 to ensure judicious and efficient use of water.

Access to clean drinking water has improved dramatically. In 1990, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), only 43% of Eritreans had access to safe drinking water; by 2013 that number had risen to 85%, compared to 48% in Ethiopia. The government has supported a variety of methods to provide safe drinking water, including harvesting rainwater through roof collection and solar-powered pumps to extract groundwater reserves.

- **Personal Security:** Eritrea remains one of the safest nations where crime is virtually non-existence. This is due to the strong communal cultures and traditions of its people. Today, the threat that Eritrea faces is from human smuggling and trafficking of young Eritreans, lured by various actors with promises of greener pastures.
- **Community Security:** Community security aims to protect people from the loss of traditional relationships and values and from sectarian and ethnic violence. Eritrean communities have a long-standing culture of being actively involved in all issues. Eritrea's culture of ethnic and religious respect and tolerance remains exemplary in a region rife with ethnic and religious conflicts.
- **Political Security:** Eritrea protects and defends the rights of all its citizens to fully participate in the economic, political development of the young nation.

Understanding Eritrea's development strategy requires knowledge of Eritrea's rich history, and Eritrea's diverse cultures, norms and social traditions. The structure of the economy is changing in favor of industry and services. Thirdly, there are a number of manufacturing sectors that are in demand of intermediate skills. These include food, beverages, bottling, tobacco, textiles, leather and leather products, paper, printing, publishing, chemicals, pottery, bricks, ceramics, cement, metal manufacturing products, automotive products, and furniture.

Training in relevant trades such as welding and metal fabrication, woodwork, electricity and electronics, refrigeration, plumbing, building construction, auto electricity and auto mechanics. All these trades are in high demand for manufacturing sector and the gold industry in particular. In sum, to sustain growth in the medium and long run will require

increasing the quantum and quality of skills to match the demands of the economy.

As in all other sectors of development and like in any other country, there are however, human right challenges and problems which the Government continuously works to address. It is committed to further consolidating the progress achieved in the promotion and protection human rights.

The sacrosanct ideals of humanity and the continuous effort to promote and protect human rights are thus predicated on the above thinking and practice. On this term and as part of the collective effort to humanity, Eritrea also continues to uphold its responsibilities on the basis of the international treaties it has acceded in congruence with its national laws. It has also reinforced its engagement as an integral part of its development diplomacy. The UPR recommendations it accepted in the UPR 2nd Cycle will thus be utilized broadly towards this end.

Human Rights issues have cardinal importance to the Government of Eritrea. In this vein, Government key national priorities are geared towards creating and enhancing the environment to protect and promote fundamental human rights in the broadest definition of the term. The GOE's unequivocal commitment to achieve this goal must naturally be gauged with the enormous challenges that it has to grapple with.

Institutional and capacity constraints have been a major factor and challenge in our development effort in general and human rights in particular. Non-pecuniary motivations such as love of people and service to country, self-reliance, dignity and self-esteem, sense of responsibility and accountability, to look beyond the present and put national needs and interests ahead of their own personal needs, a sense of self-worth, sense of belonging, producing noticeable, measurable results in the lives of the Eritrean people etc. etc. Long cherished Eritrean values cultivated and enhanced during the long 30-year bitter struggle for Eritrea's independence, remain the driving force and guiding principles today, as they did then. It is being able to contribute to the development of Eritrea that makes their sacrifices worthwhile.

In the same vein, the prevailing tendency to co-opt human rights and use them as a pretext for intervention in internal affairs is also counter-productive. Eritrea strongly opposes all politically motivated resolutions as well as country specific mechanisms meant to target countries, Eritrea being one of them, under the guise of human rights but with no dividend at all.

In this context, the imposition of unjustified sanctions on Eritrea has negatively impacted the full enjoyment of all human rights. To add insult to injury, Eritrea has been subjected to a litany of accusations of gross violations of human rights in the areas of civic, political, economic, social and cultural domains. The facts on the ground illustrate that these accusations are not valid and are mainly motivated by sinister political agendas. The steady progress the country has and is making on the different facets of fundamental human rights is a testament to the GOE's principled commitment to human rights and is in sharp contrast with the reality on the ground. The concerted campaigns that Eritrea's detractors have unleashed for other ulterior motives do not reflect the reality in Eritrea, as the recent Danish Immigration Service investigative report has shown.

On top of these challenges, economic, institutional, absolute and/or relative shortage of some types of professionals and specialists, climatic factors are among the constraints to the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Nonetheless, as imposing as these constraints are to Eritrea's development efforts, the people and Government of Eritrea will continue to invest in the future of their country confident that their determination, perseverance, and sacrifices are bound to pay off in the end.

## The Scourge of Brain Drain

**L**ike almost all developing countries, Eritrea has been facing the issues of brain drain and economic migration of its well-educated youth. However, unlike other developing countries it is evident that Eritrea's issues have been deliberately and systematically created and compounded by other parties. There is no doubt that internal push factors, mainly economic, attribute to the prevalence of these issues. However, the externally enticed and driven pull factors play a major part in the creation and maintenance of these issues.

It is a matter of fact that the Eritrean Government gives a high priority to education at all levels. To this end, the government allocates a considerable amount of attention and budget out of its meager resources for the pursuit of higher education by its citizens in institutions located inside and outside Eritrea. Hundreds of Eritrean students have benefitted from this unique opportunity and have undertaken their studies in countries, such as South Africa, India, the UK and the USA. This trend is consistent with the government's policy of promoting education among its population. Hence, to accuse the Eritrean government of causing migration has no merit and is groundless.

With regards to the issue of human trafficking, Eritrea has been and is making huge efforts in apprehending and prosecuting those that are caught inside the country and suspected in the commission of the crime. In addition, the government has been sharing names of suspects residing abroad with the respective law enforcement bodies. The recent apprehension of several suspects in several European countries is a good example that such a co-operation among countries, where the perpetrators reside, is critical in dealing with the issue of and deterring human trafficking.

With regards to economic migration, it is apparent that there has been an increase in the





number of migrants moving from south to north and east to west seeking employment. In this connection, therefore, it is unfair to target Eritrea as if it is the major contributor of this phenomenon. The prospects and opportunities of employment in Eritrea have only been hampered mainly due to the precarious no peace, no-war situation caused by the war with Ethiopia. It is imperative that the European Union discharge its duty by urging the Security Council of the United Nations to ensure the implementation of the EEBC Decisions and to lift the illegal sanctions that were imposed based on manufactured lies. It is needless to mention that a peaceful and stable environment must exist for economic development to persist and by extension gainful employment to occur.

In recent months the Danish Government sent a delegation to Eritrea and undertook a thorough and methodical in-country report about Eritrea by interviewing numerous organisations including European Embassies, UN agency and NGO organisations located in Eritrea and published its findings which highly contrasts with the litany of media reports on the reasons why people are migrating from Eritrea. In the report it highlights the drivers and root causes of Emigration and the nature of Eritrea's National service.

To highlight the push and pull factor, why people leave Eritrea, the report quotes a western Embassy and an NGO organisation as follows:

*“According to a Western embassy (B), 99.9% of all Eritrean asylum seekers in Europe are economic refugees. The extended families, which may comprise 50 persons, merge their savings in order for them to send a bright young relative, usually a man, to Europe. It is an investment and it is expected that the young man will send remittances back to his family in Eritrea. As long as the family knows that he will be granted asylum, they will not hesitate to send him off. But if the outcome was not given, the family would think twice before they send the young man to Europe. It was emphasized that the human rights situation in Eritrea is no worse than in most other African countries and poverty in Eritrea is not worse than in other African countries. There are no mass violations of human rights in Eritrea, and European countries do not grant protection to everyone from Guinea, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic or Egypt. In this respect, it could be argued that the Eritrean government has a point when it states that Eritrean asylum applicants received preferential treatment in Europe.”<sup>19</sup>*

*“A Western embassy (C) in Eritrea stated that in comparison, a gardener working at an embassy received 3,500 Nakfa per month. An employee at a private hotel would get 3,000 Nakfa per month and a Minister receives approximately 4,000 Nakfa per month.”*

The European Union should give Eritrean government's stance on how to solve the issue of illegal migration its highest priority to ensure the interest of both European member states and the countries who are source of migration is served. The Eritrean government stance was presented at the AFRICAN UNION REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING

**19** [20] Eritrea – Drivers and Root Causes of Emigration, National Service and the Possibility of Return <https://www.nyidanmark.dk/NR/rdonlyres/B28905F5-5C3F-409B-8A22-ODF0DACBDAEF/0/EritreareportEndeligversion.pdf>

AND SMUGGLING IN THE HORN OF AFRICA, and part of the statement is stated as follows

*“This requires that we go beyond general statements on the need to address the root causes of the problem to taking concrete steps, within specified time frames to address these root causes. It also requires, at least in Eritrea’s case, that the selective, mistaken, unjustified and counter-productive politicizing of the issue of migration and the consequent victimization of Eritrean migrants as well as the rampant nationality-switching is brought to a swift end.*

*As part of a comprehensive approach to address the issue of migration and human trafficking, Eritrea proposes the following:-*

*1. A robust and concerted effort to identify, arrest and prosecute the human trafficking criminals, and all those who in different guises, including human rights activism, are complicit in these crimes.*

*2. A determined effort for broad-based and sustained socioeconomic development as well as active citizen political participation to provide increased opportunities for citizens in countries that are currently sources of migration.*

*3. A review of the migration policies of the countries of destination, and in Eritrea’s case, the end of the selective and unjustified politicizing of the migration issue.*

*4. Protection of the rights of all migrants, including their right to education, skills training, employment as well as their right to maintain their links to and visit their home country.*

*Implementation of these measures, with a view to making tangible progress within a time frame of three to five years, requires a strong political will and commitment of all concerned nations as well as their resolute, sustained and coordinated efforts.*

*For Eritrea, fighting illegal migration and human trafficking is an important national priority. Along with the continued illegal occupation of sovereign territory and the imposition of unjust sanctions, promoting illegal migration has been a particularly insidious part of the tool box employed to undermine the country. Despite these obstructions, however, Eritrea is completely focused on and actively working for sustainable political, social and economic nation-building. Sustained, and relative to our resources, massive investment in socioeconomic reconstruction and human resources development is beginning to bear fruit and we are confident that the next few years will see tangible change in the lives of our people, which will all also have a bearing on migration patterns. Eritrea is determined to work with all partners, the neighboring as well as European countries, to fight human trafficking, which is a crime against humanity, and to address its root causes.”*

Finally, We believe agreements such as the one made between the governments of Finland and Eritrea recently to increase the capacity of Eritrean Education system by building teaching training programs and the provision of educational tools and materials is one way of ensuring young Eritreans aspiration will be focused on the positive involvement inside their country and address the European immigration crisis faced by many member states.

## Conclusion

Once more, we call on the European Union as guarantor and witness to the Algiers Agreement to honor its moral and legal obligations by enforcing the Eritrea Ethiopia Boundary Commission's final and binding delimitation and demarcation decisions. It is critical to take into consideration the seriousness of the violations of the peoples' human rights due to the occupation of sovereign Eritrean territories by Ethiopia and the illegal and unjust UN sanctions imposed on the nation and its magnanimous people.

Before Ethiopia's war propaganda supported by some western media and interest groups started churning out fabricated stories and lies about Eritrea, the country's true reality and genuine desire to chart its own bright future was being lauded left to right.

Eritrea with a population of 50% Christian and 50% Moslem and the most peaceful Country in the Horn of Africa is on a launch pad poised to takeoff. Any partnership with the European Union, UN agencies and international investors, be it in the form of foreign direct investment, soft loans or grants would certainly accelerate the realization of what many believe would be the eradication of poverty in Eritrea. We encourage all Eritrea's development partners to actively cooperate with Eritrea in this win-win engagement. Indeed Eritrea is a reliable partner for development.

Eritrea is a viable and reliable partner that can effectively and positively contributes to the issue of development, peace and security in the Horn of Africa. All what it needs is a little tail wind and here is where development partnership with the European Union can contribute.

Eritrea's future and vision is clearly articulated by the late Tanzanian Minister and journalist Abdulrahman Mohammed Babu after his visit to the liberated areas of Eritrea in 1985.

*"Where in Africa would you see mature community minus the pompous party functionaries, insensitive bureaucrats and overindulged diplomats? In short, it is a unique experience of the absence of the exploited or exploiter, of the true equality between man and woman, experience of witnessing normal human beings free from hang-ups, engaged in an honourable struggle to liberate the rest of the country on the basis of self-reliance and independent of external power. ... And I am not ashamed to admit that I have been overwhelmed by what I saw. Living, working and eating with these staunch revolutionaries. I am tempted to echo the famous quote: 'I have seen the future of Africa and it works.' ... "20*



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