



Permanent Mission of Eritrea
to the United Nations

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Statement by

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The State of Eritrea

at the

Rio+20
United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

"The Future We Want"

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Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General of the Conference,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset allow me Mr. President to congratulate you for presiding over this historic Conference and its deliberations under the thought provoking theme of "**The Future We Want**".

I would like also to take this opportunity to express my delegation's appreciation to the government and people of the Federative Republic of Brazil for the warm reception accorded to us since arrival and for hosting the Conference.

Mr. President,

For most of the countries represented at this Conference, the history of the past is a painful history of poverty and strife. And the saddest news today is that, for a considerable number of populations of the developing countries, especially those in Sub-Sahara Africa, the present is not much different from their painful past.

Forty seven years after the UN launched the first campaign to eradicate hunger from the face of the Earth and twenty years after the Earth Summit here in Rio, about 24,000 people die every day from hunger or hunger-related illness and close to a billion people live on less than a \$1.25 a day in the world. According to the United Nations, there are 100 million more poor people today than in 1990 in Sub-Sahara Africa. Over 300 million mothers in the developing world currently suffer from short or long term illness because of pregnancy or childbirth and every 15 seconds a child dies from water-related diseases. Again, more than 300 million acute illnesses and over one million deaths annually are caused by malaria. In Africa, where 33 of the 48 LDCs are located, 5,500 people die every day because of HIV/AIDS and there are 40 million AIDS orphans.

Mr. President,

These staggering human tragedies do not include the killings, injuries and displacements of innocent people caused almost daily by armed conflicts that are conducted under perfidious pretexts in different corners of the world. One can go on citing such menacing stories that we all are aware of are real human stories of real people.

Given this awful human condition, the future that my country wants, in the context of sustainable development, is a future much better than the past and the present. This is a future of social justice and equity, peace and security, sustainable economic growth and prosperity and sustainably habitable environment, a future of genuine international cooperation, as well as the advancement of science and technology for the good of humanity. To this end, Mr. President, the government and people of Eritrea are working very hard.

- With a strong will to **eliminating hunger** and to free its people from foreign food handouts, the Government of Eritrea has invested hundreds of millions of dollars from its own domestic resources and enormous human labour on infrastructure for **food security**. Nonetheless, a lot remains to be achieved.

- I am pleased to report that Eritrea is on track to achieve the **health** related MDGs 4, 5 and 6. The banning of the harmful practice of FGM in Eritrea is another significant step in the right direction.

My government recognizes that access to safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation as one of the basic rights of its citizens. We are, therefore, working hard to make this a reality across the country.

- In Eritrea **education** is on the list of top priorities of the country and it is offered for free at all levels. The progress made in gender equality at all three levels of the educational ladder and adult education is significant; however, education is still a big challenge to my government as only 56.2% of the total number of school age children are now enrolled.
- Climate change, desertification, land degradation and drought, biological diversity loss and adaptation capacity building are critical challenges to Eritrea in the context of sustainable development, food security and poverty eradication. Fully aware of this, Eritrea has streamlined its **environmental management** action plans to its national strategy of development.

This action resulted in the establishment/enhancement of about 200,000 hectares of permanent forest closures, construction of hundreds of thousands of kilometers of hillside terracing, planting more than 90 million tree seedlings within relatively short period and the construction of hundreds of micro water structures for purposes of water conservation, development of irrigation schemes and livestock and household water consumption.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to express its firm conviction that in order to pave the way for the future that we all want, the challenges of sustainable development as well as genuine international cooperation have to be the primary common agenda of all nations. And the noble intent of this Conference will be meaningful if its deliberations are beyond the usual empty speeches, but rather set the mechanism and the means for implementation for the goals stated in the Outcome Document.

One thing is clear at this juncture. The bright future that we all aspire can be achieved only if the prevailing unfair global economic system and trade relations and the patterns of production and consumption which are based on excessive consumerism and environmental recklessness are profoundly reformed.

The ever increasing competition for the ever depleting limited resources shall not guarantee us sustainable future. Therefore, it is this delegation's fervent hope that the member countries, the UN agencies and the international community at large work together, in true partnership, to make our common goals achievable.

I thank you, Mr. President, for your kind attention.