



Permanent Mission of The State of Eritrea  
To the United Nations, New York

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*Statement*  
*by*  
*H.E. Mr. Osman Saleh*  
*Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea*  
*during the*  
*General Debate of the 71<sup>st</sup> Session of the*  
*United Nations General Assembly*

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New York

Mr President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year the people of Eritrea have been celebrating the silver jubilee of their country's independence since 1991. During the difficult years of the war for independence, very few people believed that Eritreans and their leadership were capable of this historic achievement as the odds were overwhelmingly stacked against them. Unlike in other liberation struggles, it was both superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, and not one or the other, who sought to crush by armed force their aspirations for self-determination. But the Eritrean people and their liberation movement, the Eritrean people's Liberation Front, the predecessor of today's People's Front for Democracy and Justice, believed in the justness of their cause and in their own determination and capability to win the war fair and square, to prevail in an unequal battle.

The post-independence struggle for nation-building too has been complex and difficult. We have been compelled to commit precious human and economic resources to defend ourselves against wars of aggression and subversion. We have suffered the occupation of our sovereign territory in violation of international law and a binding international arbitration. We have been subjected to incessant hostility, sanctions, economic, financial and diplomatic pressures as well as armed attacks and psychological warfare. Our people, in particular our youth, were targeted, through policies that actively encouraged their migration, leading to much suffering and loss of life in the hands of human traffickers, policies whose inevitable outcome was then presented as evidence against Eritrea. No less an authority than President Obama stated publicly that he had "renewed sanctions on some of the worst abusers, including Eritrea." And he added, "We are partnering with groups that help women and children escape from the grip of their abusers." The objective was "regime change" as a prelude to bringing Eritrea to its knees.

In the face of this concerted onslaught, few gave Eritrea a fighting chance. We were routinely written off, our imminent collapse predicted with regularity. But once again, resilient Eritrea and Eritreans at home and abroad were able to forge, through their patriotism, cohesion, sheer determination and sacrifices, the capability to resist the onslaught on their nation and to protect their hard-won freedom. And after a difficult

decade-and-half, Eritrea is now on the up. Most of the Millennium Development Goals have been achieved. The economy is rebounding. Infrastructure is being built. Favourable conditions are being created to provide youth with ample opportunities for quality education, vocational skills, decent living conditions and active political participation. The country's regional and international engagement is growing. The counter-productive policy of isolating Eritrea is slowly but surely failing.

Mr. President,

The pressures, coercion and hostility that Eritrea has faced are by no means exceptional or distinctive. In our region, the Horn of Africa, they are only one element of a misguided policy pursued over a quarter of a century that has fuelled violence, conflict, instability, fragmentation as well as extremism and terrorism. Throughout the world, many nations who cherish dignity and independent decision making, uphold the sovereign equality of nations, seek to chart political and economic paths suited to their conditions and benefit more from their human and natural resources have faced the wrath of those who wish to cling to their domination and privileges as well as all manner of coercion and subversion, including sanctions, blockades, and armed interventions. More generally, unsustainable policies of greed and pillage and the reckless resort to unilateral pressure and force to secure unilateral advantage instead of seeking common ground and mutual interests is pushing the world on an extremely dangerous path. The very survival of the planet and humanity are in grave danger due to unsustainable systems of production and consumption and the attendant large-scale wastage.

In this context, Eritrea wishes to point out that the pending decision by the United States to adopt legislation that nullifies national sovereign immunity constitutes a violation of international law and a dangerous precedent with grave implications.

Mr. President,

Even as the challenges and dangers we face are grave and stark, our world is still full of possibilities and opportunities. The global balance of power and wealth is changing, with new sources of growth, dynamism and innovation, not only in the celebrated emerging economies, but also in many other countries. In both industrialized and developing nations, ordinary people are making their voices heard and their actions felt, by mobilizing, organizing and fighting against the domination of the few and for a more equal and just world. Calls for the respect of international law and norms and for the overhaul and revitalization of the United Nations and global financial institutions

with a view of making them more representative and democratic are more widespread and insistent and often backed by concrete initiatives and concerted actions.

In our region, the Horn of Africa, the past two decades have generally been a period of missed opportunities, of zero-sum games, of repeated conflicts and setbacks. Even today, the situation remains fraught with risk and danger. Yet recent developments indicate the possibility of an opening for a new beginning, for re-launching the vision of the 1990s of a peaceful, progressive, economically dynamic and cooperative Horn of Africa.

Mr. President,

Eritrea often speaks of the hostilities and injustices it has suffered, of the difficulties it has faced, of the valiant struggles of its people. This is an experience it shares with many other peoples and nations; and it does inform its views and policies. Yet, Eritrea does not dwell on the past, but prefers to look to the future. It is keen to build on its encouraging achievements to transform its economy and society, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals mainly by relying on the energy, skills and initiative of its people and the judicious use of its natural resources. It is also determined to work actively and constructively, and in collaboration with its neighbours, for peace, stability and prosperity in the Horn of Africa and Red Sea regions. It seeks to foster relations of solidarity and mutual support with all nations, peoples and organizations that fight for a world free from the scourges of war and poverty and the respect for human dignity. Finally, Eritrea is resolved to engage with all nations in modesty and self-confidence.

Thank You, Mr. President