

World Teachers' Day Marks Its Anniversary

Written by Assefaw Ghebrezghabiher

World Teachers' Day was celebrated on Friday, the fifth of October 2012, for the nineteenth time on international plane and for the 16th time here, in Eritrea. This year's commemorative occasion was colourfully observed, under the watchword 'Take a Stand for Teachers', at Koudo-Himbasha Assembly Hall in Mendefera, the regional capital of Southern region. Present at the occasion were higher Government Officials, invited guests and different representatives of governmental offices and parastatal unions. The heartening musical performance of the Cultural Troupe of Southern region gave a special colour and flavour to the occasion.

Along the main street of the regional capital, an eye-filling parade of students, teachers and residents who hoisted flags and chanted watchwords pertaining to this noble historical date and mission, preceded the official opening of the occasion by a national anthem staged at the stated Youth's Assembly Hall. The warm and vivid gathering was officially opened by the Mr. Moustefa Nurhussien, Administrator of the region.

In his key note address, he cordially welcomed and thanked the presence of the invited guests and others who came to take part in the occasion. He also went on to say that it was a pleasure for the Region to be entitled to host this memorable and purposeful occasion. Pertaining to the date, he laudably underscored the fact that teachers as engines of change have great responsibility and lofty task in the society they work in and for. They are everywhere and serve as a lighthouse to direct the path of human life and social development. Their laudable efforts blossom and bear deserved fruits for which they remain blessed by everyone and everywhere. However, for their task is not and cannot be plain sailing, they, like any other counterpart, may confront some teething problems that could be overcome in the course of time.

Following, the President of the Eritrean Teachers' Association, Mr. Isaac Tesfaghiorghis, delivered a speech on the occasion. He welcomed all and conveyed the message and spirit of the 'World Teachers' Day' and extensively dwelt on the great role and inputs of teachers whose impacts are observable in the development of individual life and society. He said, "There is not any personality but the teacher himself who is the most influential figure in the world of education." That is to say his selfless contribution to society makes his profession stand in relief. What is more, his unparalleled role in moulding and shaping the youth, who are the bulwark of social development, is beyond admiration. His relentless efforts aim at cultivating inquisitive and scientifically developed citizens tuneable to social culture and other compatible domains. In other words, that is his sole soul and has no other vested interest. The President also attributed many other positive values to the teacher who, along-side his main partner-the Ministry of Education- is involved in the implementation of international pledges like Education for All (EFA) and in Millennium Development Goals (MDG). However and despite all his apparent significance, said Mr. Isaac, a teacher lives under hard living conditions, with the hope that

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tomorrow will definitely be a different landscape of a bright day. Departing from such grim reality, teachers in one voice have been reminding, time and again, the focal attention of the Government in general and the Ministry of Education in particular for considerate attention and action to save the name of the age-old meritorious profession: teaching. He further stated that the office of the Teachers' Association is there to look after teachers and make its presence felt through professional contributions and interventions where applicable. Its due participation in the national celebration of Independence Day, its representation and connection with profession-related agencies like the National Confederation of Eritrean Workers are but a few that could be quoted. The President made it also clear that the Association has established good relations with other sister associations to the effect of which invitations get extended for professional enhancement and cross-fertilized experiences. In his message, Mr. Isaac deeply exhorted the concerned authorities to take into consideration the issue of establishing offices for respective regional teachers' associations, though some are already underway. He also raised, in reference to last year's reminder, the issue of how science laboratories are being used in schools to make theories and practices go together. Along-side with this, he inquired whether or not school laboratories have supportive libraries.

In conclusion, on behalf of all Eritrean teachers, Mr. Isaac thanked, the august presence of the Regional Administrator; the Minister of Education and officials of the ministry; the Head of the Regional Education Branch Office; the representative of People's Front for Democracy and Justice; and the active participation of the other different representatives who made the occasion vivid and colourful.

During the conference representatives of the different entities like the National Confederation of Eritrean Workers, National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students, National Union of Eritrean Women, People's Front for Democracy and Justice conveyed their respective messages of good wish and warm support. In a word or two, they appreciated, in unison, the tremendous role teachers play in building a nation. All made it a common point that teachers, as pivotal force, are crucial elements in the transfer of skill and knowledge that make a great difference in the construction of a nation. Some even went on to say that teachers as trustees have many things to set right in the education of the youth in front of whom lies a heap of tomorrows. They recommended that teachers fight wastage of time and some alien and unbearable elements of culture that seem repulsive.

Of focal importance and weight was the message conveyed by the Head of the Regional Education Branch Office, Mr. Kale'ab Tesfaselassie. His impressive account on the contribution and historical role of teachers both in pre-and post-independence Eritrea neatly reminded the path teachers traversed in the thick and thin times. He directly correlated the growth of the current enrollment rate of students at all levels and the mushrooming number of schools and teachers with the strenuous efforts and dedication teachers showed in their professional career.

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He also added that whatever sound policy may be formulated and curriculum be developed; it is the teacher on the ground that interprets them into reality. He continued to say that deservedly enough, teachers need to be well taken care of and applauded. In conclusion, he stressed the fact that the current recruitment, training and remuneration system needs to be revisited if the pillars of education are to be successfully implemented as designed and desired.

Finally, the occasion was capped by the brief closing speech of the Minister of Education, Mr. Semere Russom, who addressed the audience and thanked the Southern Administrative region, the Regional Education Branch Office, the Regional Branch Office of the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students, the Regional Branch Office of the National Union of Eritrean Women, and other actors who joined hands to make the occasion successful. In addressing the occasion, he stated that teachers are the pillars of social developments. Without their professional contribution, it is difficult to think and talk about any sort of successful development. Their responsibilities are manifold. As pioneers, they bring about change. They challenge the most unchallengeable. There is nothing more worrisome and inimical than ignorance and there is nothing bitter than poverty. Despite all odds, teachers are determined to eradicate them root and branch. Therefore, the role teachers play remains unmatched. This lends itself to the fact that since education is a social process and the teacher is a social agent, the amelioration of his status could not and should not be left to the Government alone. It is a social responsibility which everyone has the right to make a stake as this year's watchword unequivocally reminds us the concern teachers deserve.

Finally, 'Glory to our Martyrs' was sung to conclude the occasion.