Eritrea's very first International Conference on Eritrea Studies (ICES) has been observed in the past three days with great enthusiasm, adding one more star schedule in the country’s eventful calendar, following the celebrations of its Silver Jubilee, the youth festival and not what more.

On the cloudy morning of July 20th, with an opening ceremony in which senior Government and PFDJ officials, Diplomats, scholars from inside the country and abroad as well as invited guests took part, the three day International Conference on Eritrean Studies commenced at Asmara Palace; under the organizing surveillance of the National Commission for Higher Education, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Eritrean Research and Documentation Center and the Eritrean Center for Strategic studies.

In the occasion Mr. Yemane Gebremeskel, the Minister of Information, delivered an opening speech in which he underlined the importance of indigenous research in all areas of relevance and its positive correlation to the hurdles and necessities of national development drive. The Minister also gave extensive briefing with regards to the Eritrean Government's policies and challenges in all development sectors. He asserted that the International Conference would be a trajectory to expand researches pertinent to the country’s development programs.

UNDP is one of the major sponsors of the conference next to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. UN Eritrea Acting Resident Coordinator Ms. Josephine Namboze, expressed satisfaction that the
UN contributed in co-funding of such an eminent conference. She went on to express her gratitude in the achievements the Eritrean people and government attested in the past twenty five years of independence.

Following welcoming addresses of Senior Government Officials, the Opening lecture began with Professor Asmerom Legesse, a renowned Eritrean researcher. Professor Asmerom Legesse shared his personal experience, humble start then followed by his good long fifty years of Research. Professor Asmerom Legesse is a true icon.

Another person that was honored during the morning hours, was Eritrea’s longtime friend, Dr. Samuel Mahaffy. American by origin, Dr. Samuel Mahaffy, was born and raised in Dekemhare, Southern region; and considered Eritrea as his own home and he stood and worked for justice upon the people and government of Eritrea. Partakers stood in silence to honor his life, service and dedication to the country and people of Eritrea. Also, a tribute video depicting Dr. Samuel Mahaffy life was shared, followed by the presentation of his research paper at the ICES.

Topics raised and discussed on the first day of ICES include: ‘Studying Eritrea discursive modes & practical challenges’, ‘Foreign Policy Dynamics in the Horn of Africa’, ‘rethinking research on Africa’, ‘Archaeological discoveries’ amongst others.

The Conference continued on its second day on July 21st, discussing over a number of research studies on current different issues pertaining in Eritrea, in the Horn as well as in the continent. A number of selected research papers and studies were presented at the conference venues where different topics were discussed with regards issues. Khwima Singini an economist of age 27 took the attention of the participants while assessing Chinese investment on Africa: it’s pros and foes, and advised for African countries sustain an advantageous strategies on regards to foreign investments.
He explains about the importance of arranging such a unique international conference which is the first of its kind here in Eritrea thus being a win-win situation for Eritrea.

The recent discovery of a million old foot print in Eritrea has been one of the most significant historical achievements. It’s to be noted that the discovery was accomplished by University of Rome, Italy in collaboration with the National Museum of Eritrea, and was discussed on the second day panel of ICES.

Another scholar and participant of the conference Professor Alfredo Coppa from the University of Rome, Italy, explains about the recent Paleontological findings of a 1 million year old Eritrean site in the Danakil Depression. The Role of women and the Eritrean Diaspora were also few of the many upstretched topics.

Likewise as part of the various activities organized at the conference, an exhibition depicting the pioneer publishers in Eritrea, the traditional handcrafts and ornaments prepared by the ‘Tinsae Women’s Handcraft in Eritrea’ operating under the umbrella of the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) as well as pamphlets portraying the tourism attraction sites in Eritrea were displayed. The exhibition received a broad admiration amongst the conference participants.

Undeniably this International conference has created a solid ground for the conferees to grasp views and ideas on Eritrea’s overall development sectors and the progress scored in the past quarter century of independence.

On the third and final day, Friday the 22nd of July 2016, the ICES makes the venues of Asmara Palace even livelier. Resource managements, social and economic empowerment and sustainable economics were focal points of discussion. Furthermore papers related to literature and preforming arts, language and education, copyright issues and socio-cultural studies were presented. Additional documents were mounted on issues of digital documentation, e-Resources, IT biomedical studies, the conservation of floral and faunal diversity, as well as Educational Policy.
In giving a general outline about the ICES and specifically about the research papers and how they were selected; the Director of Administration and International Relations at the National Commission for Higher Education, Professor Zemenfes Tsige pointed out that the overall objective of the conference is to create a forum whereby edification discussions and conversations are raised, hence, discussed. He said: “We had a scientific methodology as to the research paper’s presentation”. He further more noted that 130 distinguished scholars exhibit a wide range of appealing and thought-provoking studies on Eritrea.

With the large number of topics covered in a short time of just three days, the sessions were running at the same time in several areas of the Asmara Palace, making participants and the 450 invited scholars, rush through the hallways of the hotel. The organizing committee explains that the presentations were well-arranged to be clustered in 41 plenary panels and parallel sessions.

In the evening hours of July 22nd, the overall proceeding of the conference summed up by comments and remarks to further enhance future conferences such as this one.

An emotional couple of minutes took the room by sentiments of amity when an Ethiopian-Canadian woman participant conveyed her desires for peace and amity amongst the people while assuring that fellow Ethiopian nationals like her, equally and ardently believe so.

In his closing remarks Professor Tadesse Mehari, Executive Director of the National Commission for Higher Education expressed his gratitude to the participants for traveling all the way to Eritrea and be part of its first International Conference on Eritrean Studies. He further said that how Eritrea is far from all the denunciations pointed towards it to demonize it, while in contrast, in the actuality the reality is one of self-development and dedication for regional and international integrity for sustainable development. Professor Tadesse finally conveyed his acknowledgement for Eritrean young scholars for their enthusiasm to make this a reality and express gratitude the UNDP for co-sponsoring this conference.

The evening ceremony was highlighted by a yum dinner and cultural shows. Today a tour to the
wonders of Asmara's Art deco and a thrill ride in the ancient steam train down the beautiful hills of Asmara is scheduled for partakers; a souvenir of Eritrea for the participants to take back to from wherever they come from.