



**Statement by H.E. Mr. Girma Asmerom Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations On agenda item 67 : Report of the Human Rights Council General Assembly Hall 70th Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

Mr. President

My delegation wishes to welcome the President of Human Rights Council (HRC) and takes note of his annual report to the General Assembly.

Eritrea believes, and as it is clearly and strongly stressed by the African Group, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and other regional groups, on a number of occasions, that

Universal Periodic Review (UPR) remains a valid and appropriate mechanism in enhancing human rights issues as well as constructive dialogue and cooperation between Member States. This tool should not be undermined by other unnecessary parallel and overlapping initiatives. Article 2 of the UN Charter which clearly states the non interference in the internal affairs of states should also be the guiding principle of the Human Rights Council.

The core tenets of the human rights values are best promoted when the Council upholds the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity. These are the founding principles that should be respected and promoted at all times by all Member States.

Mr. President,

The report of the Human Rights Council before the Assembly contains several important works on issues that my delegation highly values. It must, however, be pointed out that my delegation rejects the proliferation of country specific mandates.

For example, renewing the mandates of the Special Rapporteur and the Commission of Inquiry on Eritrea is unwarranted and unnecessary. It is a politically motivated act that does not reflect the realities on the ground in Eritrea. It also lacks context. Even developmental programs, such as afforestation, water harvesting and dam building as well as other infrastructural activities that are implemented with the full participation of the people are deliberately presented as "slave labour". Contrary to this distorted assertion by the country specific mandate holders, they are, in fact, effective ways of mobilizing domestic sources for sustainable development. Eritrea should be commended and emulated not intimidated and threatened, and its development activity must not be misrepresented.

Mr. President,

In spite of the occupation of its sovereign territory, including the town of Badme, and the politically motivated unjust sanctions imposed on it, Eritrea with 50 % Moslem and 50% Christian population, located in the major maritime trade route and the volatile Horn of Africa and Red Sea region, and with 1,200 kilometres coast line and more than 350 islands, is fully committed and engaged to advance and realize the hard fought social, cultural, economic and political aspirations of its people.

Therefore, to mention a few of its human rights agenda and achievements is appropriate.

- Women's political, social, and economic rights are fully respected by law. They have equal rights to own property. Get equal pay for equal work and FGM is criminalized.
- With the motto, "Education for All", education is free from kindergarten to tertiary level. At tertiary and vocational level, students are provided with free food and lodging.
- In the health sector, Eritrea has achieved MDGs 4, 5 and 6 and has laid down solid basis for the transition to the 2030 sustainable development agenda. Eritrea is also declared by the WHO as a polio and measles free country.

Mr. President,

The establishment of a Special Rapporteur and a Commission of Inquiry for the same issue and for the same country, in this case Eritrea, is not only redundant, but it is also waste of time and resources that cannot be justified and rationalized. It must be terminated. It must be underlined that the Special Rapporteur is also a member of the Commission of Inquiry. This fund could be reallocated to the OHCHR so that it can enhance its technical cooperation with Member States. Eritrea's humble recommendation is consistent with the appeal of the High Commissioner to Member States to strengthen the regular budget of the human rights body.

For the Human Rights Council to depend on a report presented to it by one or three individuals that collect their information from faceless and nameless sources is not only procedurally wrong but travesty of justice. It must be rejected. The HRC should not allow itself to be politically manipulated and used by any group or member country, big or small, rich or poor. The Council's main objective should be to promote human rights standards through constructive engagement and dialogue. It should not be an instrument of certain countries' sinister agenda that has little value in improving the human rights situation of any given country.

The HRC must also give an opportunity for the concerned and accused party to defend itself and explain the human rights situation in the country. The dictum “you are innocent until proven guilty” must be respected by all Member States, including the Council.

I wish to appeal to the President of the Human Rights Council to guide the Council members to thoroughly interrogate any justifiably established mandate holders and to only discuss issues that are verifiable and collected from credible sources. Sweeping allegations and sensational sound bites must be avoided and challenged.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, we ought to remind ourselves, not long ago we witnessed the termination of the Human Rights Commission when some of its members used it as a political tool of threat and intimidation, mostly against the developing countries. Once again I appeal to the President of the Human Rights Council to exercise maximum vigilance so that the integrity of the Council is maintained.

Nobody can tell and has the right to tell the Eritrean and other people what to be or not to be, and what to do or not to do. The People and only the people of Eritrea are the determinant of their destiny. What the Eritrean people need is solidarity, cooperation and engagement. Not conditionality, threat or intimidation. We must not also forget that the right to development is a human rights issue. Let's practice what we preach. “Nobody must be left behind”.

The Eritrean Government, once again reaffirms its commitment to the attainment of better human rights standards in order to guarantee the full enjoyment by the people of Eritrea.

*Thank you Mr. President.*

*New York*

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