



STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY
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THE STATE OF ERITREA AT THE
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THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Madam President,
Honourable Heads of Delegation,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me join previous speakers to convey our congratulations for your election as President of the 73rd Session of the UN General Assembly.

This forum provides, annually, a congenial platform for the Member States to broach critical issues of international peace and security and their ramifications on national and human development. In this spirit, allow me to bring to the attention of this august assembly key matters of paramount importance to my country and our region as a whole.

As you are all aware, Eritrea and Ethiopia have recently signed a historic Peace Agreement that brings to an end the dark, two-decades-old, a chapter of war, constant tension, and strife.

This historic achievement – even if belated by almost 16 years – will allow both countries to funnel their resources, potential and positive energy solely towards much-needed development. It has already infused hope and optimism on the peoples of both countries.

Its positive dividend for regional peace and security is too palpable to merit emphasis. This is indeed attested by new frameworks of all-rounded cooperation that have been set in motion in the past two months or that are on the offing at the regional level.

Eritrea wishes to express its gratitude to various countries that contributed in different ways, and that have demonstrated their political goodwill, to the success of the historical process underway.

Madam President,
Distinguished Delegates,

Let me now revert to a perplexing injustice that has afflicted my country for almost a decade. I am referring to the unwarranted sanctions that were imposed on Eritrea in December 2009 and 2011 respectively.

With positive winds of peace flowing in our region, several UNSC member States are these days calling for the immediate lifting of the deplorable sanctions. The diplomatic discourse is not however fully coherent.

As it happens, some countries are looking for procedural and other pretexts and preconditions. The apparent aim is to move the goalpost and maintain the illegal sanctions on Eritrea.

As an aggrieved party, which has stood for nine long years on the receiving end of the miscarriage of justice, Eritrea cannot and will not plead for clemency or magnanimity. The people and government of Eritrea will continue to stand up for their rights until justice is ascertained and wrongs meted to them are redressed.

Madam President,
Distinguished Delegates,

The transgressions perpetrated against Eritrea are, in many ways, symptomatic of the hubris and perverse power games that have primarily governed international relations in our contemporary times. The spiralling crises, instability, wars, and conflicts that have, and continue to rage, in various parts of the world are inevitable consequences of the absence of justice; the attendant outcomes of international power imbalance. When the rule of law is suppressed and supplanted by the logic of force; when global power balance is compromised, the inevitable outcomes are intractable crises and escalating wars.

It is against this disconcerting global backdrop that Eritrea was first victimized and targeted for unlawful and unfair sanctions on 23 December 2009. I will not bore you with details of the incontrovertible facts; of how and why this act was imposed; as all relevant information – including confidential communications, (Wikileaks and all) – have since long been available in the public domain.

However, to sum up, the interplay of forces and factors that brought about the sanctions were the following:

1. The principal architects of the sanctions were previous US Administrations who felt that they could use their unassailable power, and raw coercion, to ram through the UNSC, punitive measures against a small country and people to advance their misguided regional agenda. It is worth remembering here that certain officials in the US Administration had mulled imposing similar sanctions on Eritrea in 1999-2000, at the height of the border war with Ethiopia, in order to impose asymmetric arrangements through coercive means. The fabricated charges peddled in 2009 were, in fact, suitable improvisations to implement a prevalent agenda.
2. The second cause for the imposition of the sanctions was the inability of the UN system to prevent such wrongs from happening as well as systemic flaws/political horse-trading in the operations of the UN Security Council. Here again, one must remember that the UNSC had failed to take any meaningful action against Ethiopia. This was despite the fact that previous Ethiopian regimes had flagrantly violated the UN Charter and the Algiers Peace Agreement guaranteed by the same UNSC when they refused to abide by the final and binding decisions of April 13, 2002 of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission, (the EEBC).

3. The third factor in the imposition of the sanctions was the existence of governments that served the agenda of major powers. In the case of the sanctions on Eritrea, the principal architects resorted to regional Trojan Horses to imbue an "African face" to their resolutions.

Madam President,
Distinguished Delegates,

The sanctions imposed on Eritrea for the last nine years have entailed considerable economic damage to the country and unnecessary hardships on its people. The related campaigns of smear and defamation have inculcated immeasurable damage to the reputation of the country and to the prospects and potential of investment. Perhaps, the biggest damage was the regional instability and insecurity that this state of affairs bred and exacerbated. The actual cost incurred and the opportunities forfeited – both at the national and regional levels – are thus huge.

In the event and in light of the widely acclaimed peace and cooperation that has broken in the region, certain countries to choose to ignore the stark truth and to prolong the sanctions regime in Eritrea is astounding.

In the past six decades, the Eritrean people have waged long and difficult struggles to advance the cause of justice and to foster a climate that is conducive for mutual security and stability in the region. These robust convictions and legacy have indeed enabled them to withstand all the wrongs and scars inculcated by the unfair sanctions. Through characteristic resilience and hard toil, they have now vanquished the injustices perpetrated on them.

As I stressed earlier, the people of Eritrea have not committed a crime or transgression that impels them to seek clemency. As such, they are not only calling for the immediate rescinding of the sanctions but they are also asking, and deserve, amends for the damages incurred and opportunities forfeited.

I thank you!