



Permanent Mission of Eritrea
to the United Nations

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STATEMENT

BY

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CHAIRMAN OF DELEGATION

AT

THE HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY MEETING
OF THE 60TH SESSION OF
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

NEW YORK, 15 SEPTEMBER 2005

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I deliver this statement on behalf of the late Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea, His Excellency Mr. Ali Said Abdella, who passed away on 28 August 2005. Minister Abdella has been designated to head the Eritrean delegation to the 60th session of the United Nations General Assembly and would have loved to personally address this august Assembly. I wish to use this opportunity to thank, on behalf of the people and Government of Eritrea, all the countries who sent us their kind condolences.

Mr. President,

The Millennium Declaration of 2000 embodied the noble development goals that humanity had aspired to collectively achieve by 2015. However, five years after the declaration, it is becoming increasingly clear that, in spite of significant progress made in many regions and countries, most low-income countries will not be able to meet the MDGs. The case of Sub-Sahara Africa is of particular and immediate concern. Almost all of the countries of this region are off-track and the prospect for achieving most-or even all-of the Goals by 2015 is remote.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

If the commitment on the Millennium Development Goals is to be taken seriously and countries are to have a realistic prospect of meeting the targets, there are two critical factors that have to be met:

1. While pro-poor policy reforms by the recipient countries are necessary conditions for meeting the millennium goals, developed countries should turn pledges and promises into concrete action by providing the financing needed for achieving them; and
2. Development assistance is more effective when recipients 'own' the development process. National policies and programs to promote poverty reduction and achieve development goals should be formulated by a broad group of stakeholders within a country.

Mr. President,

At independence, the new Eritrean Government inherited a devastated economy and infrastructure, ineffective institutions, a large exiled population, and an empty treasury. Yet by mid-1991, the de facto independence year, the government was able to take effective steps to reconstruct the economy by, inter-alia, establishing the regulatory and institutional framework, investing in infrastructure, including the school and health systems as well as water and sanitation facilities and roads. The private sector responded to the favorable investment climate by investing in the services, construction and other

resources-based industries. As a result, Eritrea had embarked on a promising journey of economic progress and, during 1992-1997, the Eritrean economy registered an impressive growth rate of 7.4%.

Unfortunately, Eritrea's promising start was to be disrupted by the outbreak of a border conflict with Ethiopia in May 1998, which quickly escalated into war. During 1998-2000, Eritrea also suffered its worst drought in many years. Following the signing of the Algiers Peace Agreement in 2000, the Government of Eritrea embarked on an Economic Recovery and Reintegration Program. Eritreans had hoped for a speedy border demarcation based on the ruling of the Boundary Commission. Unfortunately, we have not been able to fully turn our attention and resources to tackling the most pressing development challenges because of Ethiopia's refusal to abide by the final and binding decision of the EEBC, which was sanctioned and guaranteed by the United Nations and the refusal of the Security Council to fulfill the legal obligations of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

Let me now turn to the Millennium targets. Notwithstanding the above obstacles, I am happy to report that Eritrea is projected to achieve eight (8) of the ten (10) targets by 2015. We realize, however, that this is no cause for celebration for three reasons:

First, Eritrea is off-track in two crucial areas, namely the eradication of extreme poverty and the achievement of universal primary education.

Second, the Millennium Goals, even if they were to be fully achieved, represent only the minimum benchmarks for development.

Third, Eritrea's roadmap to 2015 was prepared on the basis of some crucial assumptions including the resolution of the "no-war no-peace" situation and the return to normal rainfall.

Mr. President,

We believe that Eritrea's MDGs status points out to the fact that, even with modest resource, countries can go a long way in achieving the goals if they have the right policies and strong government commitment.

In conclusion, Excellencies, I would like to assure you that Eritrea would, as in the past, continue to take the necessary steps and to make sacrifices to achieve the Millennium goals. In our endeavor, we seek the commitment of our development partners in providing adequate finances to meet these goals. Even more importantly, I call upon the international community to enforce the Boundary Commission's decision on the Eritrea-Ethiopia border, if only because peace and stability have crucial bearing on the achievement of the millennium development goals.

I thank you, Mr. President.
