



**Bi-Weekly Newsletter
Permanent Mission of the State of Eritrea to AU
and UNECA
Press Section**



Senior Eritrean Delegation Visited Serbia

A senior Eritrean delegation composed of Foreign Minister Osman Saleh and Presidential Advisor Yemane Ghebreab paid a working visit to Serbia, from 7-9 March 2017, at the invitation of the Serbian Government.

The delegation met with President Tomislav Nikolic; Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic; President of the National Assembly Ms. Maja Gojkovic; First Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) and Foreign Minister Mr. Ivica Dacic; and, Economy Minister Goran Knezevic.



This was the first high level visit between the two countries and Serbia's DPM and Foreign Minister described the event as "historic and significant."

The Eritrean delegation held warm, extensive and fruitful discussions with Serbia's leaders on bilateral ties as well as regional and global issues of common concern.

Serbia's Prime Minister, Alexander Vucic, thanked Eritrea for its principled position on international issues and sta-

ted that his country was ready to build a strong economic cooperation with Eritrea on the basis of warm political relations that the two countries already enjoy.



Eritrea and Serbia agreed to build close cooperation in trade, investment and education. They also explored priority areas based on the strengths and competitive advantages of each side. The two sides further agreed to hold regular consultations and to bolster their coordination in international organizations and multilateral forums.



The Serbian First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister accepted the invitation of Minister Osman to visit Eritrea at his earliest convenience.

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 **Eritrean Mission to
AU & ECA**

 **@EritreaAU**

Commissioner of Culture and Sports Conducted a Working Visit to Japan

The Commissioner of Culture and Sports of Eritrea, Ambassador Zemed Tekle conducted a working visit to Japan from 20 to 26 February 2017.



During the visit, Ambassador Zemed held talks with Japanese Minister of Olympics and Para-Olympics, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Administrator of Kinagawa Region, Vice Director of the Executive Committee for Tokyo Olympics 2020 as well as other heads of sports.

The Japanese Foreign Minister, Mr. Fumio Kishida, expressed appreciation for the timely visit of the Commissioner to Japan and said that the relation Japan has with Eritrea is growing from time to time.

Ambassador Zemed on his part emphasized the significance of his visit in strengthening the relation between Eritrea and Japan in the sector of sports.

In the meeting conducted with Mr. Yosuo Mori, Vice Director of the Executive Committee of Tokyo Olympics 2020, the two sides reached understanding that allow the Eritrean cyclists to use the Misado Training Center as part of their preparation for the Olympics. They also agreed to sign memorandum of cooperation for the strengthening of cooperation in culture.

The remarks made by Ambassador Estifanos Afeworki, Ambassador of the State of Eritrea to Japan, at a Reception held on 23 February 2017 in honor of Ambassador Zemed Tekle can be accessed at: <http://www.shabait.com/news/local-news/23507-remarks-made-ambassador-estifanos-afeworki>

BBC Africa Editor Debunks the Demonization of Eritrea by the Western Media

The BBC Africa Editor, Ms. Mary Harper, stated that her first-hand impressions of Eritrea gathered during her visits to the country contradict with the prevalent negative representation of Eritrea in Western media. Ms. Harper made the remarks during a Seminar held at Birkbeck University in London.

“Before I went [to Eritrea], I really tried to do my homework, I watched everything I could. Read as much as I could.... But, I think, never been before in my time reporting on Africa—and I have reported on pretty much every country there—I have never had an experience of getting to the place and thinking ‘this is another country compared with the image I have been given by the media.’ And that is absolutely not to say Eritrea is some sort of paradise. It is demonized by the Western media and various organizations. The image of Eritrea is incredibly limited.”

Ms. Mary Harper



Ms. Harper’s presentation at the Seminar can be viewed at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7114fFN9C8&feature=em-share_video_user

Conserving Every Drop of Water

Eritrea is located in one of the driest parts of the African continent. Like its neighboring countries the country suffers from repeated shortfall of rains which affects agricultural production and availability of drinking water. However, the country has long graduated from dependency on food aid.

Eritrea has taken ensuring food security as one of the top national priorities and the cornerstone for sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction. The food security strategy, adopted more than a decade ago, aims at ensuring that all Eritreans have sufficient quantity of nutritious food at an affordable price at any given time and place within the country. This is to be achieved largely from a combination of increases in domestic food production and importation from abroad.

One of the pillars of strategy is soil and water conservation. In order to avoid dependence on the unreliable and inadequate rainfall, Eritrea has made huge investment towards the construction of dams.

In many parts of the country once dry areas have been rehabilitated with the construction of hundreds of dams, micro-dams, reservoirs, check dams - all with local resources and capacity. In the past few years alone, a number of dams each with a capacity of storing tens of millions of cubic meters of water have been built. Some of the newly built dams include Gerset, Kerkebet, Fanko-Rawi, Fanko-Tsimue and Badmit in the Western lowlands; and Mslam and Tekera in the Central Highlands. The Gahtelay Dam in the Eastern Escarpment is slated for completion this year. The aggregate volume of water harvested in these dams is around 250-300 million cubic meters.

On top of providing drinking water, the harvested water is used for agricultural production. This is ena-

bling the communities to harvest two to three times per year using irrigation farming. The Government intervention entails provision of mechanized farming, modern farming techniques and management methods, improved seeds, fertilizer, and technical packages.

Fish production has been introduced in some of the dams, providing the communities with much needed protein-rich diet in their proximity.

The environmental impact of the water and soil conservation as well as afforestation activities is easy to witness. In many places tree coverage is growing and the water level is rising, the flora and fauna flourishing.

The irrigation schemes are equipped with electric power for pumping the water and powering the agro-processing plants and cold storage units that are built to preserve and add value to the agricultural products.

The Eritrean spirit of self-reliance is also manifested in the local production of pipes and accessories needed for water distribution and spate irrigation.

In all the programs and activities, the primary success factor is the active participation in and ownership by the local communities. Communities throughout Eritrea participate in dam construction, catchment treatment and land care on a regular basis. Students at high school level also participate through the summer campaigns in the construction of terraces and check-dams, and tree planting.

The population that has put its sweat and resources to conserve each drop of water is now producing the food it consumes irrespective of the vagaries of the weather. Thus has freed itself from the shackles of food aid.



International Women's Day: Progress, Change, Celebration

Excerpts from an article written by Dr. Fikrejesus Amahazion

In Eritrea, International Women's Day (IWD) is recognized as a national public holiday and many activities are held, across villages and cities in the country and within Eritrean communities around the world.

According to the African Development Bank (AfDB), Eritrea has "gone a long way towards achieving gender equality," while in a report on gender in Eritrea, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), noted that "the Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE) has demonstrated its value for social justice and gender equality, which has in turn created an atmosphere conducive to gender equality, including through specific reference to gender equality in policies and programs."



Eritrea's independence struggle was pivotal in challenging long held gender stereotypes and structural systems of inequality. Eritrea's three decades long struggle was about far more than just political emancipation. Rather, it sought to usher in a complete and radical transformation of society. Accordingly, an important dimension of the struggle – giving special attention to egalitarian, popular democratic principles and ideals – was a particular focus on women's and gender-related issues. No longer would women be narrowly viewed as secondary, subordinate figures within society; instead, they would stand proudly as full equals to men. For example, in the liberated areas the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) introduced initiatives to abolish female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), forced marriages, bride price, child marriages, kidnappings, and dowries.

Importantly, within the annals of revolutionary liberation and guerrilla movements, Eritrea's women were set apart upon two dimensions – their role and their number. During the war, Eritrean women comprised more than 30 percent of the fighting force and they served in all capacities. Ultimately, Eritrean women would prove absolutely critical to the eventual achievement of independence.

In honor and recognition of Eritrean women's monumental contribution to the liberation struggle, the country undertook several significant steps after independence to formally guarantee women's equal standing in all sectors of society. It ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (signed 20 December 1993 and ratified 3 August 1994), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (acceded 5 September 1995), and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (in 1999), and has worked diligently to implement the Beijing Platform for Action. Furthermore, Eritrea legally prohibited harmful, traditional practices, including FGM/C, child marriage, bride price, kidnappings, and dowry.



As well, the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW), an organization first established in the 1970s and boasting hundreds of thousands of members worldwide, has actively coordinated, monitored, and implemented a broad array of programs, initiatives, and public campaigns. Importantly, NUEW's multifaceted work has substantively helped propel social transformation, develop a conducive environment for gender equality, support the empowerment of women, and encourage women's equal participation in the political, economic, social, and cultural spheres.

(Cont. on page 5)

International Women's Day: Progress, Change, Celebration *(Contd. from page 4)*

Notably, towards improving gender equality, Eritrea has made the expansion of educational opportunities for females a national priority. For example, it has worked to revise curricula and teaching materials to make them gender sensitive, and improved accessibility by increasing the number of female teachers and establishing boarding schools for girls in remote areas. Encouragingly, since independence, national gender disparities in enrolment, completion, and literacy have improved significantly. The 2013- 2017 Eritrea National Education Expansion Development Report notes that “female gender parity with males will be achieved in elementary and middle education by 2015/16, and in secondary education by 2016,” and that “in technical and vocational education and training the enrolment of girls has continued to grow.”



Furthermore, it should be noted that literacy rates for young girls and women in Eritrea are considerably higher than those for adults, suggesting that the country's efforts to strengthen the supply and quality of basic education programmes, particularly for females, have been successful. These trends are particularly impressive when considering that, in the not so distant past, literacy throughout the country, particularly for females, was tremendously low.

In addition to education, Eritrea's general development policies have also served to support equality. For example, consider access to water, which has been a central focus of Eritrea's national developmental objectives. In recent years, access to clean drinking water in rural and urban communities in Eritrea has risen to a total of 85%, dramatically high-

er than the meager figure at the onset of independence.



Much of the country's improvement is down to considerable investments, cooperative projects and integrated approaches that cut across ministries and sectors, a simultaneously focus on both rural and urban populations, and broad community involvement. Notably, the lack of access to water is not just a fundamental human rights issue, it also extends to harm efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, therefore additionally severely limiting potential for broad development. Girls spending valuable time fetching water may not attend school, thus missing out on education that may propel socio-economic transformation, while women who spend hours fetching water have less time to engage in productive income-generating work and activities.

Importantly, particularly when considering the theme of this year's IWD, Eritrea's attention to gender equality has also extended to the employment and economic sectors. National Labour and Land Reform Proclamations secure legal protection for women in employment, guarantee women equal opportunities and maternal protection benefits, and ensure that women are able to purchase, use, or inherit land without discrimination. Additionally, several national initiatives, such as the Macro Policy, the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Program, the National Saving and Loan Program, the National Gender Action Plan, and NUEW's micro-credit programs were specifically created to guarantee that women would be adequately supported with the requisite resources and vital technical training that would help them fulfill their socioeconomic potential.

(Cond. on page 6)

International Women’s Day: Progress, Change, Celebration (Contd. from page 5)

The diverse efforts promoting equality, coupled with gradual – yet quite noticeable – societal cultural changes, have seen women integrated into many sectors of the economy, allowing them to play a vital role in the country’s development and progress. With the majority of the Eritrea’s population residing within rural and semirural areas, relying predominantly on agriculture, crop cultivation, and animal husbandry for income, it is notable that many Eritrean women now proudly own land. Women’s ownership also extends to business, with a considerable proportion controlling small and medium-sized enterprises. Moreover, women now constitute a large segment of the workforce, and they remain very active in the informal sector. While women have traditionally been concentrated in manufacturing, such as the garment, leather, and tobacco industries, through steady improvements and investment in education and human capital, and greater access to opportunity, they are gradually transitioning to high-

-skill sectors.

From the days of the long struggle and since independence, Eritrea’s resilient women have shattered outdated, patriarchal rules and notions through their wholehearted participation, struggle, contributions, and sacrifice. Today, Eritrean women are active within all areas of society and they contribute in many diverse ways, ultimately playing a crucial role in the country’s socio-economic progress and overall development.

This IWD (and every other day of the year), allow us to recognize and appreciate the key roles played by women in all sectors and begin to take tangible actions to ensure an equitable, inclusive society.

The full article can be accessed at: <http://www.shabait.com/articles/nation-building/23570-international-womens-day-progress-change-celebration->

Eritrean Cyclists Shine Across the Globe Tesfom Okubamariam Crowned African Cyclist of 2016

Eritrean cyclists garnered outstanding victories and demonstrated superior performances in competitions held in February and March 2017 in, among others, the *Tour of Oman*, the *African Cycling Championships* in Egypt, *Tour de Langkawi* in Malaysia, *Tropicale Amissa Bongo* in Gabon and *Paris-Nice* in France. Moreover, Tesfom Okubamariam received the ‘*African Cyclist of 2016*’ Award in Libreville.



TeamRwanda UK&Euro... · 14 Feb

Today's #TTT winners mighty @cyclingEri #Eritrea A masterful display only team to break 1'10" congs 🙌🙌 E R 🚲 🚲 🚲 🚲 🙌 #ACC2017



Eritrean Cycling and 2 others

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La Tropicale @tropicale2... · 04 Mar

.@TesfomO #Eritrea received today the Trophy of the African Cyclist 2016 from the president of the jury #BernardHinault @tropicale2017



Tesfom Okubamariam

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Eritrean Cyclists Shine Across the Globe (Cond. from page 6)

ProCyclingStats.com @... · 14 Feb ▾
 #Eritrea wins African Continental Championships WE - TTT (» Luxor > Luxor (41.8k) #ACC2017

procylingstats.com/race.php?id=17...



← 3 ↻ 39 ❤️ 61

Tour of Oman @tourofoman ▾
 .@MeraKudus wins the white jersey #TOO2017



1:33 PM · 19 Feb 17



The 4th stage, and Queen stage of the Tour de Langkawi couldn't have gone any better for Team Dimension Data for Qhubeka as Mekseb Debesay won a top the Cameron Highlands.

Team Dimension Data @TeamDiData ▾
 #ParisNice Strong performances by @OmarFraile and @Natnaelb2 on today's queen stage of the race.

bit.ly/PN-Stage7



9:17 PM · 11 Mar 17