

**Remarks made by His Excellency Mr. ESTIFANOS Afeworki
Ambassador of the State of Eritrea to Japan at the Tokyo Peace Day
Memorial Ceremony March 10, 2019**

(Thank you for the introduction)

Representatives of the diplomatic corps in Japan present,
Governor Koike
Members of the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly
Mayors of cities and municipalities
Citizens of Tokyo
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Konichiwa,

Greeting people at all time of the day in my language is Selam and it means Peace:

More than 100,000 souls were killed and more than 1 million people were injured on the night of 10 March 1945 when the city of Tokyo was blanket bombed from the air. Homes, buildings and natural habitat were burnt out.

At this particular period of time in human history, one of the ugly faces of our human past and the present, all tools of warfare were used including atomic arsenals. Whatever the mighty powers had in their possession as instruments of war, rained on the heads of people ravaging indiscriminately men, women, and children all over our planet – in Asia, Europe and the continent of Africa including but not excluding my country Eritrea. Cities, towns and historic civilization centers all over were knocked out with brutality during those bloody days and years.

Hence, I believe, we are gathered here today, to learn a lesson from the ugly faces of all those wars by immortalizing our memories and the memories of generations to come by highlighting the meaning, price and sacrifice paid for peace all over this planet by the human race.

I was born in 1947. This is two years after the Bombing of Tokyo. I grew up in the capital city of my country Eritrea called Asmara. By the way Asmara means in the local language women united men to fight against slavery. Eritrea being an Italian colony during that period was also deeply involved in the Second World War. More than 160,000 soldiers participated in this bloody war from Eritrea. As you might know, Italian warship named “Eritrea” served in the Indian Ocean during this period, which came during the war to the Port of Kobe for protection. A modified sister ship named “Ethiopia” was also in the making but was not realized because the war ended earlier than expected.

Hence, you must not be surprised to hear of my story that I, as a toddler, grew up playing hide-and-seek in air-shelters, what you call in Japan “Bokugo” dug on the

side of a mountain in a racially segregated city of Asmara. “Mai Botoloni” translated in English “Fountain of the Battalion” was our water source. Spaghetti and Macaroni were the rations of our parents from which we fed. Malnutrition was common. The misery did not end there. The smell of war never left our neighborhood and the region since then.

Life is very short, as we all agree, we the children of that generation were also sucked into and forced to witness half of a century of proxy wars ravaging our people and the region. This was a war that took the lives of millions of innocent people and subjected our region into cyclic massive displacement, underdevelopment, drought and famine. It was really a savage war where all kinds of war instruments were used including but not excluding chemical weapons and Scud Missiles, which knocked out livelihoods of millions of the population in Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Coming out from the ruins of this long war and 72 years of crisis and war situation in our region of Africa - Peace Pact was signed between Eritrea and Ethiopia witnessed by Secretary General of the UN António Guterres and King of Saudi Arabia Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud on September 16, 2018. This treaty of peace is a significant historic events for world peace that I thought must be shared on this sad day with all present here set to commemorate the victims of the Tokyo bombing.

I have witnessed the biggest battles in the Horn of Africa which involved super powers and regional powers which came as far as from Latin America as well as the 1982 Arab Israel War in Lebanon. As a person who had witnessed wars and its disastrous outcomes, I believe humanity deserves eternal peace. Help us keep the peace in our region as well as in your region. We all deserve peace, wherever we are... I believe that those who know and experienced war have the courage, vision and wisdom to see peace. Peace Day Memorial Ceremony in Tokyo is Peace Day Memorial Ceremony in Asmara and Addis Abeba and the rest of the world. This should be the only and only way to commemorate all victims of war in our planet.

From this podium, I would like to call upon the Government of Ethiopia and my own government, the Government of Eritrea to consider in making, starting 2020, September 16 a public holiday to observe Eritrea Ethiopia Peace Day - a day to commemorate the victims of the long war and heighten the understanding of the importance of peace for generations to come.

Thank you for lending me your ears, and look forward to your continued support for the peace building efforts in our region. Dawn of peace after long dark nights of six decades...

Selam