Remarks
By
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UNDG – Eastern and Southern Africa
Cocktail Reception Hosted by UNRC/HC for the Mission
November 17, 2014
Venue: Hotel Asmara Palace
Asmara, Eritrea

Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E Osman Saleh
Honourable Government Ministers Here Present
Senior Government Officials
Members of the PFDJ
Ambassadors and Heads of Missions Here Present
Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Distinguished Guests
Excellences
Fellow UN Colleagues
Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to first extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Government of the State of Eritrea for accepting our mission and also for the warm hospitality we have received from the Government - and indeed, from the people of Eritrea - everywhere we have been since our arrival in Asmara.
Over the past three days, my delegation (composed of myself and the IOM Regional Director) has had a very successful visit. Our meetings with the high level Government officials, civil society, members of the diplomatic community and the UN team have been very fruitful. Today we also had an opportunity to visit some GoSE–UN projects just outside Asmara and interacted with the community itself. Our interaction with the three constituencies (Government, development partners and the community) in addition to the UN family present in Eritrea, have given us a good understanding of the country.

My visit as Focal Point for Eritrea within the UNDG Regional Directors Team, accompanied by my colleague the Regional Director for IOM was essentially to follow-up and build on the last UNDG-ESA High Level Mission of December, 2013, as well as other subsequent missions aimed at deepening the relationship between the Government of Eritrea, the UN and other development partners at large. Our meetings with Government have clearly shown the willingness and commitment to heighten cooperation and partnership with the UN and other development partners in a number of fields. I am pleased to note that since the last mission in December 2013, the momentum has grown tremendously. Our task is to move concrete steps towards the realisation of the goals in our collaboration.

Development partners and the diplomatic community here in Asmara have also impressed upon us that, they are ready to work with the UN and support Government in its development efforts and journey of nation building.

As earlier mentioned, we also had an exciting opportunity to visit a few projects just outside Asmara on food security and sustainable livelihoods - on the temperate fruits grating and a micro-dam in Lamza area - and water and sanitation project.
Eritrea, by virtue of being in the Horn Africa, is naturally not well endowed with resources like water and this affects food security. But we saw very good examples of not only harnessing scarce resources but also effective and efficient utilisation of such resources like water. The projects have clearly visible impact on the livelihoods of the community. What makes this more interesting is the fact that community is at the centre of the management of these initiatives. With these innovations, I am also convinced that, with time, food security and nutrition, which Government has pronounced as a “priority of priorities” will be a reality. What we saw only confirms the success stories we have heard about Eritrea’s progress in the health MDGs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me at this juncture, to congratulate the Government and people of Eritrea, and all the partners involved for the impressive progress in health MDGs. In the same breath, I would to encourage the Government and people of Eritrea to work even harder in other areas lagging behind to sustain the gains already made. I further urge the Government of Eritrea to continue sharing information with the partners and the outside world to help market the country better. Many potential partners and countries simply do not have information about the country. At this point, I would also like to call upon the international and diplomatic community to joins hands and help in mobilising the necessary resources to support the national development efforts as articulated in our cooperation agreement with Government.

I also encourage Eritrea to use the experiences in health MDGs to help shape the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The world, and particularly Africa, needs your voice in defining its position in the next development agenda.
In conclusion, I once again re-affirm and further pledge the UN commitment and support to national development endeavours and all efforts to further engage with Eritrea within mutually beneficial frameworks.

This is just my first visit, and I am grateful for the warm and open welcome the mission has received and the very positive discussions we have had. I promise to visit regularly to keep in touch and help ensure that our cooperation continues to grow from strength to strength.

Thank you.