On behalf of the UN family in Eritrea and on my own behalf, I welcome you all to this important occasion marking the 67th commemoration of the UN Day globally. I extend my special and warm welcome to the Government officials, members of the diplomatic community, and special guests for our panel discussions we have organised as part of our celebrations. At this point, I would also like to express my profound thanks and appreciation to the
Government of Eritrea, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for facilitating the preparations for the day, as well as the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students for partnering with the UN in this year’s celebrations.

As some of us may be aware, in 1947, the United Nations General Assembly declared 24 October- the anniversary of the Charter of the United Nations- the United Nations Day. It is an occasion to highlight, celebrate and reflect on the work of the United Nations and its family of specialized agencies. We also use the day to reaffirm UN’s commitment to empowering the disadvantaged, marginalised, and vulnerable to ensure human security and dignity. The UN Day is part of United Nations Week, which runs from 20 to 26 October each year.

**Ladies and Gentlemen;**

The UN support to Eritrea stretches from the time of independence where the UN contributed in many areas including, post war emergency and recovery programmes on rehabilitation and reconstruction in first few years, capacity development and institution building, provision of basic social services (health, education and social protection), food security and sustainable livelihoods, governance, human rights, and gender mainstreaming. The UN continues to support Eritrea towards realising development aspiration.

The UN has supported Government to record significant achievements across a number of sectors. We have plans to produce a publication that highlight the work of the UN in Eritrea. This should be out before the end of the year. However, let me highlight just a few of the key achievements,

UN has played a critical role in strengthening the health delivery systems evidenced through the remarkable national progress towards achieving targets in the health MDGs 4, 5, & 6- Reducing child mortality; Improving maternal
health, and Combating HIV/AIDS malaria and other diseases. The child and maternal mortality rates have significantly improved, HIV prevalence rate below 1%, and Eritrea is heading towards certification of polio-free State. Recent reports indicate that sanitation coverage in the rural areas has increased from 4% in 2006 to about 25% in 2012, while rural safe water supply coverage has increased from 58% to 68% over the same period. Recent data also show that FGM/C has radically decreased in girls under the age of 15 and 5 to 33% and 12% respectively. Support towards renewable energy initiatives (first wind energy pilot) and energy efficient stove (adhanet) has been commendable and widely disseminated and adopted. In fact, the wind energy programme in Assab now accounts for about 20% of the energy requirements of the city and the port facilities. Other successes include the reintegration of the IDPs and expellees and ensuring their livelihoods, support to decentralized regional planning, as well as strengthening human and insitutional capacities within certain Government service sectors (eg Ministries of Justice, Foreign Affairs, Dept of Immigration and Nationality, and the Civil Service Administration).

**Ladies and Gentlemen;**

This year’s commemoration comes at a special time when we have witnessed important positive turns in our cooperation with Government since 2013. The developments point towards a deepening of the relationship, at different levels. Just to highlight but a few examples;

1) **The High Level mission of the UN Development Group for Eastern and Southern Africa in December 2013**: Through the mission, the UN and Government agreed on an Aide Memoire which essentially provides the framework of key issues to focus and follow-up on to enhance the partnership; this was after earlier visits by John Ging, the OCHA Operations Director and other UN officials.
2) The Economic data and statistics mission at the request of Government in August, 2014: Through this window of opportunity, the UN and other development partners would be pleased to support Government in further strengthening the development and management of national data and statistics;

3) The growing interest in government for the UN to support programs geared toward youth empowerment; through vocational training, income generation activities, micro credits etc.

4) The UN Department of Political Affairs mission in August 2014: The mission which came four years after the last visit, clearly signals the will to engage at political level from either side;

5) The Joint Annual review of the SPCF, in June 2014: Though this was at programmatic level, the meeting provided a platform to discuss some of the critical enablers for the smooth implementation of the SPCF. And that in itself also further instils confidence in our relationship;

6) The National Union of Eritrean Women International Conference and Symposium: The UN supported the NUEW to organise a very successful conference and international symposium on September 15, which brought together women from all over Eritrea joined by gender experts, Ministers for Gender issues from the COMESA region, as well as the representative of UN Economic Commission for Africa;

7) The major highlight of the year was the General Assembly (GA) Side Event on Eritrea’s health MDGs, held 26 September, 2014 in New York. At the event, Eritrea shared its experiences, innovations and best practices in achieving the health MDGs, 4, 5, and 6 with the rest of the world. The side event was jointly organized by the Eritrea UN Country Team and Government of Eritrea. I am quite pleased to report that the
event was very successful and attracted many people both from embassies UN agencies and other well-wishers. Allow me to take this opportunity to thank Government for taking the lead in this process and also appreciate the support we received from various corners to ensure the success of this event.

I strongly urge Government to build on and sustain the momentum created by the GA side event to enhance its image and cooperation with the international community. From some of my some visits, it also emerged that some partners/stakeholders simply had little or no understanding or information on what is taking place in the country. Eritrea was just not on anyone’s “radar screen”.

At this juncture, let me hasten to point out that, as development partners resident in the country, we pledge our support to Government’s endeavours.

Ladies Gentlemen;
Against the above developments, for us, the UN in Eritrea would define our theme for this year’s celebrations as “Deepening and broadening the role of the UN in Eritrea”. In light of this, I would like to emphasise that, the UN can help with financial support (the UN provides seed or catalytic resources) and more resources are supposed to be mobilised from donors. At this point, I would like to remind that our SPCF is funded only 40% and would like partners donors to look into how we can increase resources to support Eritrea. But more importantly, the UN is also known for four critical areas of support; 1) It is a convener of stakeholders especially where there is need to deliberate on important issues of interest; 2) while it plays support role to Governments in upstream and policy work- it has a pool of policy and technical advisors across the globe; 3) it is an advocate for international norms and standards- through
the various international instruments and obligations including the MDGs; 4) its source of technical expertise and assistance to build and strengthen institutions. I therefore, urge the Government to utilise these roles to the maximum possible.

**Ladies and Gentlemen;**

As the sun sets on the life-span of the Millennium Development Goals, comes the dawn of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A lot of consultation has gone into the Post-2015 Development Agenda, at national, regional, global as well as thematic levels. However, the door is still open for further contributions as this will be concluded in September 2015. As such, I urge Eritrea not to be left out in this vital process and especially, in also putting a mark/voice on the Africa position towards on the whole agenda. Given the impressive record on health MDGs, I believe Eritrea has a lot to share that could help formulate, shape and implement the Post-2015 Development outlook for the good of humanity. To reinforce this thinking, today we have organised some panel discussion on the topic “MDGs and Post-2015 Development Agenda” just to help us get a sense of how much such a dialogue process could help us (as partners) to shape the future we want.

**Ladies and Gentlemen;**

To conclude, once again I reaffirm the UN and our development partners’ readiness to support Government in realising its development aspirations. I also want to acknowledge and appreciate the tremendous work of ALL UN Staff and their families and friends for their unwavering support- they deserve all the credit for UN work in Eritrea. They work tirelessly to facilitate programmes; and without them we would not manage. I thank UN
Communication Group for preparing this day, the youth who competed for prizes, (both the winners and all participants) and NUEYS our co-organisers.

Once again, I thank you all, the senior Government officials, the PFDJ officials, diplomatic community, fellow UN colleagues, distinguished guests, the general public for your support and putting aside your normal daily engagements on a working day to join us on this occasion. I think it is because we know that the UN is about us and about our nations. In short the UN is us!! Together we can do more!

I Thank You