

**Speech delivered by President Isaias Afwerki
at the official ceremony of the 27th
Independence Day anniversary**



Dear Participants and Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to convey, on this momentous day of the 27th anniversary of our Independence, my warmest congratulations to all the people of Eritrea inside the country as well as those who live abroad. Let me also express my gratitude to all those who have worked hard to organize and embellish this auspicious event.

The priceless importance and value of liberation and freedom, the significance of sovereignty, augment and gain more luster with time as the years go by. This does not only engender satisfaction and fulfillment; but it also reinforces our resilience and determination.

The central theme of this year's celebration is "vision through

toil". Mankind's aspiration for liberation and independence is an inalienable right that is enshrined in natural law. The establishment of an independent nation – i.e. a nation that is economically prosperous; that progresses constantly to a higher level of development; that is endowed with stability and security; that thrives in a neighbourhood of mutual respect and cooperation; in a nutshell, a cohesive nation of citizenship - is not predicated on sheer and subjective, political good will, alone. Indeed, it entails a robust heritage rooted in precious sacrifices.

The vision and sacrosanct national right of the Eritrean people for liberation was not bestowed to us as a gift or favour on a silver platter. It was achieved after 50 long years of arduous toil and unparalleled sacrifices.

By the same token, the protection of our independence and sovereignty, or, the crystallization of our vision of national security in the past quarter century, have exacted rigorous work and precious sacrifices – a second testament so to speak – of vision through toil, to confront and overcome all mutations of political and diplomatic subversion, security provocations as well as economic sabotage.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

History teaches us that global and regional agendas are factors that have some impact in our national developmental trajectory. In the event, it is essential that we soberly follow and assess the dynamics of global and regional developments that are unfolding in these turbulent times in order to properly gauge its potential impact on our future programmes.

The "Cold –War period", that span for fifty years from the end of the Second World War until our independence, was characterized by a bi-polar world order. The chronological developments and features of this period are recorded in our documents and history. The end of the bi-polar world order – that coincidentally occurred in the same year of our independence – ushered in a uni-polar world order.

The upheavals and devastation inculcated in the past twenty five years are fresh in our memories. This is indeed a matter of yesterday's recorded history. All the indications are that this "uni-polar" world order will not have the predicted longevity. The turbulences that we are witnessing in global dynamics today can in fact be interpreted as the symptoms of a transitional phase.

Where will this transitional phase end up? How much time will it take? Some analysts postulate that the end result will be a multi-polar world order. If so, who will be the principal protagonists in the new, global architecture? The United States? China? Russia? India? Europe? What are the potential permutations? What will be the balance of power? What

will be the underlying value system? And how will this affect and influence our region? These scenarios cannot but provoke a host of questions.

We cannot be nostalgic of the bi-polar world order for very palpable reasons. The indelible fact is we were compelled to pay a hefty price in the period that it lasted. Nor can we have any love lost to the uni-polar world order of yesterday. This was, again, a time when our sovereignty was threatened while an unfair and illicit sanctions regime was also imposed on us.

We do not have cogent reasons to cherish a multi-polar world order. Bi-polar, uni-polar or multi-polar global security architectures are not critical factors in themselves or in abstract terms. The crucial issue transcends mere numerical configurations. The fundamental wishes of the peoples of the world; what is determinant at the end of the day, is a global order that is rooted on justice and the respect of the sovereignty of nations; a global order that is free from the rule of the jungle dominated by a greedy few.

The damages inculcated on us in the past 75 years by “major global powers”, “regional hegemonies” and “surrogates” to advance their perceived agendas and power games are fresh in our minds. In the event, we need to meticulously gauge future scenarios and emergent agendas (and the possible permutations) that will ensue thereof. The road map of our national trajectory will have to be charted out taking these factors into account. In all eventualities, we will not act as mere onlookers with folded hands. We shall continue to strengthen our readiness for active engagement without any bias.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Although we recognize the influence of global and regional developments – irrespective of scale – in our national development, the principal and determinant factor is nonetheless our domestic reality and its robustness.

The extraordinary achievements of the liberation struggle have been repeated and reinforced in the past 25 years of unremitting hostilities. We have confronted the myriad tentacles of adversity with patience, resilience and strong defiance. We have not capitulated. The antagonisms unleashed against us have lost their steam to dissipate into oblivion. The opportunities that stand before us today are substantial. We must accordingly brace ourselves physically and mentally to implement robust programmes of our developmental objectives with more vigorous power and greater pace. This is not an option; it is a necessity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The programmes and projects that we have been pursuing – under the existing circumstances and opportunities – will naturally require further review and refinement for optimal implementation. And they can be summarized as:

- o The strategy of harnessing and harvesting rainfall. This involves building the necessary water infrastructure through even spatial distribution and in a phased manner in order to ensure optimal utilization of our water, land and climatic resources and endowments with the ultimate aim of increasing agricultural production both in quantitative and qualitative terms through the introduction of modern technology.
- o In marine resources, to pursue a similar strategy to build the requisite infrastructure in order to increase our domestic productive capacity;
- o To funnel investment and more vigorous work to the energy sector so as to implement, in a modular manner, our planned schemes of revamping power generation and supply through the right mix of policy choices (thermal, solar, wind and other modalities of alternative energy). This is critical and indispensable for strengthening our developmental programmes in several sectors and especially for embarking on manufacturing and industrialization, due to its obvious strategic importance, at a fast pace.
- o To increase investment in order to upgrade our domestic resources and capacity for the effective implementation of our programmes of physical infrastructure; (roads, ports, harbours, airports as well as housing projects that are being implemented at a slow pace);
- o To increase public transport both in quality and quantity;
- o To pursue the ongoing fiscal and monetary restructuring through more robust and qualitative administrative and managerial inputs;
- o To enhance effective and efficient administrative competences by further reviewing and strengthening efforts already underway to address weakness and corrupt practices at various levels of administration;
- o To increase integrated investment in our educational system – in terms of curriculum and supportive instruments, teachers/experts, infrastructure and other vital facilities – so as to augment our human capital and its multiplier dimensions through special attention and highest priority;
- o To review already charted-out programmes and plans of action to encourage and ensure the participation and contribution of all Eritreans who reside abroad in all our developmental programmes;

These are the main priorities of the coming three to five years.

Let me underline again that we shall not fail to achieve our vision!

Let me also express my wish for a good rainy season!

Glory to our Martyrs who taught us much and bolstered our resolve through their example!

Victory to the Masses!