

**Eritrea's Statement at the Meeting  
Of High - Level  
Officials of Red Sea and Gulf of Aden**



Distinguished Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Eritrea's delegation, composed of Presidential Adviser Yemane Ghebreab and Hagos Ghebrehiwet, Head of PFDJ Economic Affairs participated at the Meeting of High - Level Officials of Red Sea and Gulf of Aden that was convened in Riyadh from 21-22 April, 2019. Eight Red Sea and Gulf of Aden states, namely: Egypt, Eritrea, Djibouti, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen participated in the Conference

Allow me first to express our profound gratitude for the kind invitation extended to us to participate in this important conference.

The geo-strategic and geo-political importance as well as complexity and sensitivity of the Red Sea are too evident to merit extended discourse here. Furthermore, the vital importance of this international water way; its intrinsic regional and global significance, will not diminish but rather augment with time.

This will remain true irrespective of the turns and twists of history or changing circumstances. In the event, the attention that must be accorded to safeguard the security of the Red Sea must be high and fully consonant with its paramount importance.

Dear Participants,

As we all agree, this important maritime route had sadly become a theatre for reckless regional and international interferences in the past thirty years largely due to misguided exogenous agendas. This somber state of affairs in turn entailed a perplexing reality of stampede and unnecessary complications. This was in addition to the legacy of the Cold War.

It must be noted here that the interferences that stem from regional and international agendas could not have materialized without the complicity and connivance of local players. In this perspective, the whole affair warrants a sober and comprehensive review that is not dented by emotional or presumptive approaches.

In these times, the proliferation of institutions is increasingly becoming the norm all over the world. This is also true in our region. The various initiatives usually emanate from a reservoir of political goodwill. Indeed, they are launched to advance lofty objectives. Unfortunately, the institutions that stay the course, gain traction and consolidation over time to deliver the desired results are few.

By the same token, initiatives undertaken in the past years to foster appropriate institutional frameworks and ties of cooperation in the Red Sea, or to launch conferences for submission of research papers, have been considerable indeed. Here again, those that have produced impacting results are few.

The formulation of a viable framework of cooperation and attendant functional institution on the basis of consensus and mutual understanding will therefore require a patient and methodological approach. Continuous and serious consultations will thus remain a matter of necessity rather than choice.

In our modest view, the requisite consultations should incorporate the following cardinal procedural and substantive issues. They must also be conducted in a manner that will avoid wastage of time or opportunity loss. The key parameters are:

1. Comprehensive and unbiased assessment of the current realities of the Red Sea and associated matters, in all their dimensions and perspectives in a realistic manner;
2. Full clarity on the desired objectives and goals;
3. Detailed mapping of the threats to the peace and security of the Red Sea; and, categorization and specification of these parameters;

4. Formulation of a viable strategy that will ensure achievement of constructive objectives and goals;
5. Formulation of strategies to contain and eliminate the threats in tandem with the positive policies of cooperation;
6. Mapping out detailed schemes and plans that will ensure holistic implementation of the twin strategies;
7. Stipulation of the implementation mechanisms, associated structures and mobilization of the requisite resources;
8. Ensuring that all the organizational configurations and frameworks that are developed are anchored on respect of sovereignty and international law;
9. Ensuring that all littoral States build and possess their own effective defense capabilities and naval forces (without delegation to others);
10. Supplementing, through collective efforts and synergy, those specific tasks that cannot be met through individual domestic capabilities and resources;
11. All relevant States will create appropriate modalities of cooperation with "external forces" for tasks or missions that are beyond their collective capability on the basis of a consensual framework;
12. Creation of competent committees to address all these issues in a comprehensive and professional manner.

Dear Participants,

Let me conclude by expressing our sincere hope that the modest views we have outlined above will enrich the deliberations of this Conference.

I thank you