

## Press Release by Embassy of the State of Eritrea in Germany

### **German Parliamentary Committee: Indecent statement on Eritrea**

In its deliberations on "economic cooperation with Eritrea" on 22 April last week, the Development Committee of the German Bundestag went out of its way to heap insult on the Government of Eritrea. It went further to issue an offensive Press Release of its ill-informed and misguided proceedings.

Why the Parliamentary Committee chose to dwell on this mundane issue at this point in time when the grave danger of COVID-19 is the overarching concern of paramount importance for all countries and peoples in our global community is difficult to understand or decipher.

Optics and bad taste aside, what are the facts?

1. The Bundestag Development Committee states that the German Federal Government "does not foresee any chance of bilateral development cooperation" because "Eritrea's leadership rejects any cooperation". The Committee further laments Eritrea's lack of "interest in improving trade relations although it is entitled to duty-free and quota-free access to European markets". In the same breadth, though, the Committee asserts that Eritrea "does not meet the requirements for bilateral German cooperation due to its serious human rights violations".

These statements are not only incoherent and contradictory, but they are also at variance with the facts.

First off, Eritrea cannot be blamed since it is the German side which has put, in the first place, brakes and preconditions on development cooperation. This new position does not also reflect the agreement on bilateral economic cooperation reached between the two countries when a high level Eritrean Ministerial delegation visited Berlin in September 2016 for fruitful meetings with their counterparts.

Secondly, Eritrea maintains both normative trade and development cooperation ties with several European countries. And this was also the case with Germany until the latter abruptly terminated a long-negotiated commercial agreement at the last minute in 2009 due to pressure from the US State Department.

The Bundestag Development Committee may have short memories. But this is in the public domain. It was indeed published in the Wikileaks documents.

To cut a long story short, Eritrea and Nevsun negotiated, in 2009, commercial loans with the German Development Bank and South Africa's

IDC for the capital expenditure of the Bisha gold processing plant. The agreement included off-take provisions for Germany to import copper from the Mining Plant at market prices. When all the negotiations were finalized, the German side withdrew from the consortium because the US State Department leaned on the former as part and parcel of its adversarial position against Eritrea and prevalent policy of scuttling the mining project. In a nutshell, Germany forfeited its commercial interests and credibility at the last minute because it chose or was cajoled to kowtow to overriding US policy on Eritrea.

2. We can also invoke other unfriendly acts. For now, let us recall Germany's substantial financial/budgetary support to the TPLF regime and its war machinery in all the years while the latter continued to occupy sovereign Eritrean territories in violation of international law and the EU brokered Algiers Peace Agreement.

3. The Bundestag Development Committee alludes to Eritrean sizeable "asylum applications" in Germany. Here again, the Committee cannot gloss over the EU and Germany's standing policies of enticing the youth/National Service from Eritrea with preferential treatments and other inducements for ulterior political purposes.

In the event, the Development Committee's assessment is ill-timed, lopsided and really shallow. A constructive approach would have been the convention of a proper and structured follow-up Ministerial meeting and dialogue between the two countries at the appropriate time.

Embassy of the State of Eritrea to the Federal Republic of Germany  
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