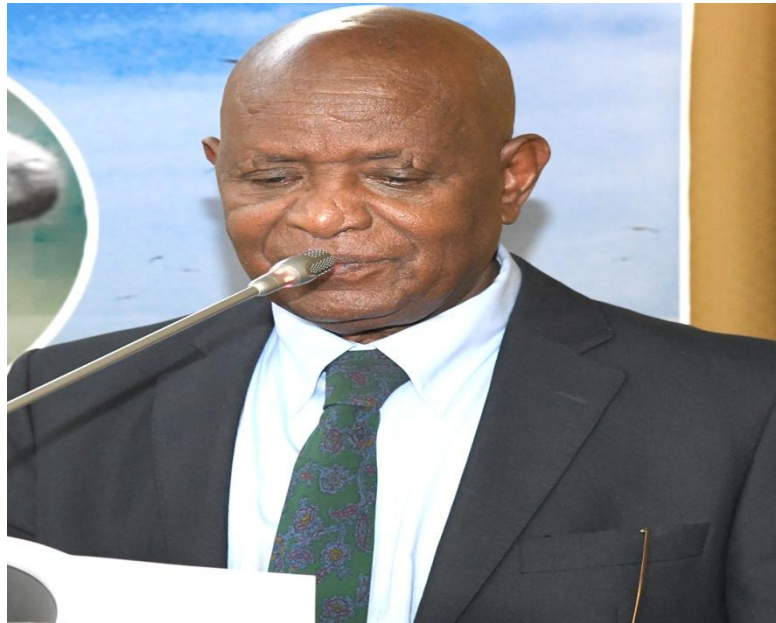


**Opening Statement made by
Mr. Tesfai Gebreselassie,
Minister of Land, Water and Environment
To the Gathering Held to Mark World Environment Day,
Asmara, 03 June 2022**



Honorable Mr. Fesehaye Haile, Governor of Zoba Maekel

Honorable Madame Amakobe Sande, UN Resident Coordinator

Honorable Mr. James Wakiaga, UNDP Resident Representative

Honorable participants, Ladies, and gentlemen

I welcome and thank you all for coming to take part in the gathering. It has been organized jointly by the MLWE and UNDP-Eritrea Office to mark the upcoming World Environment Day, 5 June.

Before going into making brief and general introductory remarks, I would like, on behalf of the ministry, to express my acknowledgment to the organizers for their effort to prepare the event and UNDP-Eritrea Office for their sponsorship.

Dear participants,

This year's World Environment Day will be celebrated under the slogan **Only One Earth**. Millions of people across the world will celebrate the Day by engaging in different environment-related activities and pledging commitment and solidarity to contribute, within their means, towards achieving the goals of the ever-expanding global peoples' movement aimed at making the Earth a better place to live in for now and generations to come.

In response to the global call of the Day, on our part, we are holding this awareness promotion gathering. Here short presentations will be made on some major environmental challenges facing our country and on what response is expected from every citizen individually and the Eritrean society collectively to address the challenges.



Early this week, as part of the event, a knowledge competition program on general environmental issues was conducted among young employees of different government institutions through Eritrean Television media. On 5 June, municipal residents will undertake neighborhood cleaning activities to show their solidarity with the international community in the fight against the causes of global environmental problems.

Dear participants,

Since our early childhood school days, we all knew in the universe there are billions of planets and other heavenly bodies. To the best of human knowledge, amongst the innumerable planets, it is only our blue planet Earth that is endowed with unique natural conditions favorable to life. Although it might be a bit late, people have come to realize the condition exclusive to our Earth is not something to be taken for granted. It is fragile and requires care. I believe that every one of us here has lived enough to witness how human tampering with the natural environmental balance can cause dismal misery in the lives of millions of people and other contemporary creatures. Now it is also clear that the main drivers of the environmental crisis of our time are built into the foundations of the global economy and the modern human way of life.



Since modern times, human activities and reckless interaction with nature have been disturbing the natural balance by excessive extraction of natural resources and production of toxic wastes that harm the Earth. Air pollution, global warming, and consequent climate change witnessed in our time, (and manifested by irregular rainfall pattern, freshwater scarcity, flooding, and land erosion, soil fertility degradation, desertification, wildfires, heat waves, pollution of fresh

water and sea, loss of bio-diversity etc), to a larger extent, are consequences of human activities.

As these major challenges of our time are global, it is also clear that they need global solutions. And effective solutions to the challenges are known and well within reach of modern technology and financial capacity of the developed countries. Nonetheless, despite the available possibilities, ghg emissions, and global temperature have been on the rise and global environmental degradation has been becoming dire, In the face of these challenges, it is sad to not human reluctance to act accordingly. Particularly the reluctance to act shown by the countries that have the means and major responsibility is unacceptable by all measures.

Dear participants,

The fact that **Only One Earth**, an adage that encompasses simple and common knowledge, is selected again after 50 years to be the slogan for this year's World Environment Day speaks a lot. It is meant, among other things, to remind the peoples and governments of developed and developing nations alike, that:

- Many of the things we do not want to act on fast enough will cause more damage on us.
- We need to realize that planet earth is not only where we can survive, but it is also meant to be a shared home for us to live in harmony with other species.
- Further failure to give due respect to nature will invite unbearable human sufferings like never before, if not our extinction.
- Geological history of the earth is rich in examples of the extinction of species that in their turn had alternately dominated planet earth in various geological times. If the environmental conditions change for the worse, humanity cannot be an exception.
- While it is appropriate to focus on the consequences of human negligence towards nature; it is also important to underscore that there is a great possibility to save our planet from the dire environmental crisis it has

been dragged into, if only humanity acts before things go astray and before a point of no return is reached.

- For the common good, every one of us has the legal and moral responsibility to care for the environment and protect it from damage.



Dear participants,

As people of a country victimized by causes that are not of our making, it will be within our right to strongly urge and demand the major global emission contributors greatly cut their emissions in order to meet the global temperature reduction target. At the same time, we should realize our responsibility in addressing our domestic environmental challenges. Meeting this responsibility will be an important contribution that, we as a country, can make toward the achievement of global environmental goals.

In closing my remark, I urge everyone in this gathering to be vigilant advocates of the environment by example.

I thank you all for your attention.