

Statement by H.E. Mr. Osman Saleh, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea at the 36th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union 19 February 2023 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



Excellency, Chair

Your Excellencies,

Let me begin by conveying the greetings and best wishes of President Isaias Afwerki to this august Assembly and thanking the people and government of Ethiopia for their warm hospitality.

Excellencies,

This year, 2023, marks six decades since the exhilarating inception of the OAU, and a decade since the launching of Africa's agenda 2063. It's indeed an opportune moment for a thorough assessment of the road we have travelled, for a candid and serious reflection on our inadequate successes and consequential failures.

Today, Africa is formally free from colonial rule, a victory achieved through epic struggles and colossal sacrifices. Moreover, the dream of a united, strong

and prosperous Africa has endured, despite daunting internal challenges and relentless external intervention and exploitation. Indeed there's a growing awareness, confidence, energy and determination among African peoples, most prominently among the youth.

And yet, the reality is that Africa is not where it should be, where its people and youth want it to be. It remains ravaged by conflicts and wars, many of them externally fuelled; and our initial target year to silence the guns, 2020, has come and gone.

The African development scene is no less bleak, despite some positive spots. We are blessed with abundant resources and we still cannot secure our food. There's little industrialization in our continent. Critical infrastructure is lacking, or nonexistent. Our educational systems have by-and-large failed to produce conscious youth that are attuned to their societies and the needs of their people, and equipped with relevant knowledge and skills. Poverty stalks our people, our children. Too many of them die from easily preventable diseases. Our resources continue to be plundered, our money flows out illicitly.

Clearly, the situation calls for concerted, systematic and radical action. It requires new paths, new policies, and new approaches- in the political, economic, social, cultural, security and foreign relations arenas. The old ways have not worked. We simply cannot continue as in the past, as we know where that has brought us.

A good point of departure is to acknowledge that our current predicament is simply not acceptable, and the need to rectify it urgent and serious. Well-thought, fresh and bold policies and measures are required at the national, regional and continental levels. Our nations need to address challenges and seize opportunities in consonance with their specific situations and the wishes and aspirations of their citizens, and with their full involvement. We need to address the failings and shortcomings of our regional organizations to enable them to effectively contribute to regional economic integration as well as peace and security. At the continental level, our attempts to reform the African Union and transform it into a fully-independent- independent of undue external pressure and influence- streamlined, focused and effective organization have not

succeeded. We cannot but rededicate ourselves, and find better ways and means, to achieve this momentous and indispensable objective, which, furthermore, will enable us to better advance our interests in a rapidly changing global environment full of grave risks as well as tremendous opportunities.

I thank you

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