

Celebrating Progress:
UN Agencies Highlight Eritrea's
Sustainable Development Achievements



By: Sabrina Solomon

From ensuring clean water and affordable energy to championing gender equality and climate action, Eritrea's achievements highlight the interconnectedness of its dedicated efforts. Through resilience, determination, and innovation, Eritrea is overcoming challenges and laying the robust foundation for a prosperous, equitable, and sustainable future. Together, the people of Eritrea are turning aspirations into tangible achievements, one step at a time. Here, representatives from six UN agencies share their insights and opinions on Eritrea's commendable progress across various sectors, offering their heartfelt congratulatory messages to the people and Government of Eritrea on the occasion of the 34th Independence Day anniversary.

Mr. Yusuf Abdullahi – Mohammed UNICEF Country Representative to Eritrea

"Eritrea has made significant progress in social development," notes Mr. Yusuf. He highlights impressive strides such as the vast numbers of children attending school and the high vaccination Abdullahi Mohammed Yusuf UNICEF rates against preventable diseases. "We also see progress in the number of people gaining access to social health and nutrition services. On my field missions outside of

Asmara, I frequently observe many communities getting access to clean drinking water. All of this contributes to the positive changes I have experienced during my time in Eritrea, but these are just a few examples of what I have witnessed.” He emphasizes Eritrea’s success stories in Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in health. “This country has made great progress in child health, with 95% of children under the age of five fully vaccinated. Eritrea tops the region in child vaccination, which is critically important as young lives can be saved through such preventable disease vaccinations.”

Mr. Yusuf commends the government’s decisive action against harmful traditional practices. “If we also look at traditional unjust practices, the government banned FGM, and you see sub-zones that have already been declared FGM-free thanks to the efforts of communities and the government.” Regarding education, he observes substantial improvements: “Now, more children have access to education as all teachers have been trained, more schools have been constructed, and more teaching and learning materials have been distributed. Thus, we see significant progress in the number of children attending school, and importantly, an equal number of boys and girls attending.” In water sanitation, “there is an increase in the availability and accessibility of water across the country. Whenever I go out for field missions, I see rural communities in very remote areas with access to clean water. What’s also interesting is that most of the water facilities are fitted with solar systems and are climate resilient.”

Mr. Yusuf expresses pride in the government’s efforts and focus. “As UNICEF, we technically support the government’s programs in sectors related to children and mothers. I very much hope that Eritrea will continue its path of development and improvement. What’s particularly interesting is that the government already has clever policy options such as self-reliance. It’s clear now that with a decline in alliances, the majority of countries must be self-reliant. This policy is quite well-established here. Locally promoted efforts are most sustainable. I also see a lot of effort by the Government of Eritrea to continue that path, which is commendable. Eritrea should be proud of it because it is leading many countries on this front.” He suggests a key lesson for other African nations: “One particular thing that a lot of African countries need to learn from Eritrea is self-reliance

because we do have a lot of resources, and Africa is a resource-rich and young continent with huge numbers of young people.

Eritrea can provide many learning opportunities for these young countries because we understand that the world is not going to be the same, and Africa needs to explore its own resources and become more self-reliant over time. So these policy options and self-reliance, being as independent as possible, are crucial areas.” “Once again, I would love to congratulate all Eritreans on this Independence Day. I know that it has been a hard-won independence. We at UNICEF are going to keep supporting the government and reaffirm our commitment to children, working hand-in-hand with the government here. I truly appreciate our partnership with the Government of Eritrea, and that is going to continue. I hope for a brighter future for Eritrea.”

Mr. Pacome Kossy – UNRCO Head of Office “I have been in Eritrea since June 2024 and I am quite impressed with the country’s resilience and self-reliance,” states Mr. Kossy. “I believe that Eritrea’s commitment and emphasis on national sovereignty and social cohesion offer meaningful lessons not only for Africa but for the rest of the world. The hospitality of the people of Eritrea and the natural richness of the country make this a meaningful assignment for me.” He notes significant progress in health. “This year, for example, we can say that 81% of all births in the country are happening in health facilities.

We can also report that almost 100% of all children under the age of two in the country are fully immunized. These are major milestones in maternal and child health in the country.” Regarding food security, “there is also progress. Between 2023 and 2024, fish production has improved by nearly 70%. This is a very good development for coastal communities.” “On behalf of the UN family in Eritrea, I extend heartfelt congratulations to the government and people of Eritrea on the 34th anniversary of independence. This is a moment to honor the spirit of reliance and the spirit of resilience that define Eritrea. As you celebrate more than three decades of national sovereignty and nationbuilding, the United Nations stands with you, supporting your aspirations of peace, dignity, and sustainable development.”

Mr. Mohammed Aw-Dahir, FAO Representative in Eritrea “Eritrea has huge potential in its agriculture and is a very unique country in its reliance on its own people and resources,” remarks Mr. Aw-Dahir. “This spirit of self-reliance is absolutely something many African countries are also emulating, given that the financial landscape and aid have changed significantly. So, what Eritrea has been doing is an inspiration for everybody, and we see a bright future for the Eritrean agriculture sector.” He emphasizes past investments: “Eritrea made a lot of investment in the water sector. For that sector to be fully utilized now, improving the agriculture value chain to create employment and wealth is very critical. So, we see huge potential with the possibility of attracting investment, not only from the public but also from the private sector.”



Mr. Keity Ohashi – UNFPA Country Representative to Eritrea “In terms of mortality, you have made significant declines compared with the 1990s in the health sector’s MDG [Millennium Development Goals]. Now, you are making good progress,” states Mr. Ohashi. “We congratulate you on your Independence Day. Eritrea is Pacome Kossy - UNRCO making good progress, and I think this is an occasion that we commemorate together. I just want to validate that what you are doing is great in achieving what you are aiming at. I think that for the SDGs, you have only five years left. We would like to encourage Mr. Keity Ohashi – UNFPA you to continue the efforts and try to achieve all the objectives of the development goals. Not only for the UNFPA mandate areas but also in terms of

the UN. We are working together, sometimes jointly, and we are here to achieve and support you in that sense.”



Ms. Nashida Sattar – UNDP Deputy Resident Representative to Eritrea “We are happy to see the commitment the government has taken on a number of issues that UNDP has worked on, including energy transformation, shifting to more sustainable sources of green energy, addressing environmental challenges this country faces, and also in terms of building capacity to future-proof the country,” comments Ms. Sattar. “We are also seeing huge impacts on the ground in terms of access to water, access to energy, and in terms of building resilience in the country. I am particularly happy to see the government’s commitment on issues of green energy, climate resilience, and gender equality. We are also seeing a lot of commitment by the people and the government towards development pathways.” “Firstly, allow me to congratulate the Government of Eritrea on your 34th anniversary of Independence Day.

UNDP has been a partner for the last three decades, engaging with and partnering with the government and other development partners to truly fulfill the aspirations of the people of Eritrea. We hope that the future is brighter for Eritreans, and we hope that issues such as transforming to greener sources of energy are achieved in the near future.” Celebrating Progress: UN Agencies . . . “I have been here for almost three years now, and I am always struck by the resilience of the people of Eritrea. It is a hopeful time for the people; there are a lot of challenges that people are facing, but it’s also a people that meets these

challenges with confidence and resistance.”

Dr. Nonso Ejiofor - WHO Representative in Eritrea “I think the most interesting lesson coming to Eritrea is that of self-reliance, as we all know, engraved in the philosophy of the Government of Eritrea: that of a state-driven development sector,” states Dr. Ejiofor. “Amidst the background of limited resources, Eritrea continues to strive with a strong sense of commitment and collaboration with partners on the ground to meet their development Dr Nonso Ejiofor - WHO Country Representative needs. This is something that is worthy of admiration.” He highlights a key success: “We have seen immunization coverage in Eritrea that has become a model for most African member states. Amidst very tight resources, Eritrea has managed to reach children in the most hard-to-reach areas using the most innovative approaches.



We get on camels, we access the most inaccessible parts of the community, making sure that no child is left behind in terms of immunization coverage. And so today, I think we are proud to say that Eritrea has the record of the highest coverage compared among other African member states. This is something that we are proud to be associated with.”

Dr. Ejiofor also notes progress beyond immunization: “Not only limited to immunization but also HIV programs, colleagues from the global front would tell you that Eritrea is transcending from infection to talking about elimination. These are important strategies of achievement that can only be possible with the unwavering commitment to development and leadership, as has been

demonstrated by the Honorable Ministry for Health.” He also praises technological advancements: “The genomic sequencing technology is rather one that is strategic to emergency preparedness and response. All of us remember what we went through during COVID-19 trying to sequence strains. And Eritrea has identified this as one of the critical technologies it would like to acquire in terms of strengthening emergency preparedness and response capacities. So, with the support from WHO, Eritrea has been able to deploy this technology, positioning itself as one of the few African countries that has this technology on the ground.

What it means is that the national lab in Eritrea is taking yet another bold step in terms of building capacity to detect all diseases of public health concern. This is an investment that we expect to yield dividends in the near future. Before now, we had to ship samples for diagnosis for certain diseases of public health concern. But with the activation of the laboratory here, which is a baseline for genomic sequencing, we are seeing ourselves testing some of the diseases locally, which means a lot in terms of public health outbreaks.” “My aspiration and confidence as well is that if Eritrea continues to progress on this trajectory, achieving the SDGs is only a matter of time.

With this kind of collaboration I have seen with the government, we are on track to achieving the healthrelated SDGs. You can count on our continued collaboration and commitment in driving the health agenda, working closely with the most critical stakeholders like the Ministry of Health of the Government of Eritrea.” “This is a joyous occasion for all of us. We wish the Government of Eritrea a happy Independence Day commemoration. We wish all of the aspirations of nationhood for Eritrea come to pass in our lifetime. We also would like to reaffirm our partnership with the Government of Eritrea; ‘leaving no one behind’ is the mantra for health in Eritrea. This is in close alignment with WHO’s agenda of universal health coverage.

So, Eritrea is truly a partner we are proud of, and on this occasion, I would love to say we are proud to be associated with the progress that has been made so far.”

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