

Italy and Eritrea Strengthen Bilateral Ties with New Plan of Action



By: - Sabrina Solomon

On July 29, a high-level Italian delegation, led by the Minister of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry, Mr. Francesco Lollobrigida, and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Mr. Edmondo Cirielli, visited Eritrea to sign a comprehensive agreement.

The comprehensive plan of action, signed in the presence of President Isaias Afwerki, aims to deepen strategic collaboration in key areas, including energy, infrastructure, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, culture, sports, and maritime security and other areas. The agreement was formally signed by Eritrea's Minister of Trade and Industry, Mr. Nesredin Mohammed Saleh, and Mr. Edmondo Cirielli. Both nations have agreed to organize a future business forum to facilitate further engagement.

The Italian delegation visited the port city of Massawa, where they were warmly welcomed by the Minister of Marine Resources, Mr. Tewelde Kelati. The delegation also laid wreaths at the cemeteries of Italian soldiers in Dogali and Massawa.

We had the opportunity to speak with Minister Francesco Lollobrigida. Excerpts follows:

Q. Mr. Francesco Lollobrigida, what were the main objectives of this visit, and how do they build on previous diplomatic exchanges?

The primary objective was to be here in Asmara to sign a crucial plan of action, which we did in the presence of President Isaias Afwerki and the Minister of Trade. This plan is designed to strengthen the Eritrean-Italian relationship and foster cooperation and mutual growth. Our delegation, which also included the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and a Member of Parliament, has gained a better understanding of where to focus our investments. We see this as just the beginning of a significant increase in relations and potential investments between our two countries.



Q. Can you elaborate on specific areas of cooperation where tangible outcomes are expected?

Again, this is just the beginning, and hopefully, we will be able to organize a business forum to discuss specific areas of investment further, as you mentioned, like infrastructure, fisheries, trade and the economy in general. We have come up with a series of projects that are also inclusive of private and governmental business, and thus, to make it more concrete, we have a business forum currently.

Q. Eritrea and Italy share historical ties. How does this visit aim to deepen strategic collaboration in regional peace, migration management, or maritime security?

We will have the chance to discuss further all of these matters that you mentioned in the future. We will examine regional peace and maritime security in detail, and

these are the main objectives that we intend to prioritize. We will have more occasions to do so in the future, but these are absolutely the priorities of the Eritrean and Italian relationship at the moment.

Q. Has there been any follow-up or implementation of previously signed agreements or memoranda of understanding (MOUs)? If so, could you share examples of projects that are already underway or nearing execution?

We have elaborated this memorandum of understanding, which closes all the discussions and agreements that we, along with our technicians, had, and we are looking forward to proceeding with action. We have signed this plan of action today, which has been the conclusion of an extended dialogue between Italy and Eritrea, and this is just the beginning. We will start implementing the plan soon.

Q. Given the geopolitical landscape in the Horn of Africa and Europe's interest in new partnerships, how does Italy view Eritrea's role in regional affairs, and what long-term vision does your government hold for bilateral relations?

The people of Italy and Eritrea have historically had good relations. Still, today, after the signing of the action plan, the relationship has further improved, and we will work to strengthen the existing bond. We will work closely with the Government of the State of Eritrea, in particular, in enhancing the crystallization of strategic ports, strategic hubs, for maritime trade in the future.

Thank you!

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