

## **Highlights of Local Media Interview with President Isaias Afwerki**



### **Q1: On Fluid Global and Regional Issues**

Assessment of the current and evolving situation must be undertaken against the backdrop of the Cold War that was supplanted by the unipolar global order in 1991 and that has prevailed over the past three decades. What transpired during the last three decades is not necessarily congruent with what Fukuyama and Huntington envisaged.

The fact is US pre-eminence and pronounced aspirations of all-rounded supremacy – in the economic, technological, and military domains – has not been realised. Its influence and purported dominance in all these parameters had been declining; the downward trajectory evident for many years now. Washington's debt, which has reached 36 trillion dollars, is a manifestation of this reality.

Indeed, President Trump's MAGA Doctrine constitutes, in very broad terms, tacit acknowledgment of this situation. In this regard, the recent US action against Venezuela, purportedly under the pretext of combatting narcotics; other potential measures against Cuba, Colombia, Mexico, Iran, and the issue of Greenland are indicators of the tools that are being employed to advance the policy objectives of the MAGA Doctrine.

Other tools include tariff wars; selective support to certain segments, as seen in the cases of South Africa and Nigeria; withdrawal from international

organizations; and facilitating the resolution of conflicts, such as those in Ukraine, Armenia–Azerbaijan, and Thailand–Cambodia.

The apparent objective of these tools and actions is to exploit the natural resources of other countries in order to boost America’s economic power and ensure the success of MAGA.

The primary targets of these actions – particularly President Trump’s plans regarding Venezuela and Greenland – are evidently China and Russia. Even the European Union has been targeted through increased tariffs. The issue of migration is also part of the US approach in promoting MAGA.

The impact of MAGA on our region should be understood within this broader context and framework.

Currently, the world is undergoing a period of transition and turmoil. There is a need for a new global order that allows people to live in peace under a fair and just system. The focus should not be solely on the United States. The roles that China, Russia, India, Japan, Korea, Pakistan, and the EU could play in such a global system must also be considered. NATO is facing a crisis, and the EU has not lived up to expectations. Beyond issuing statements, what practical roles can they play in countering MAGA?

Our assessment of global developments should be made against this backdrop. We must categorize different scenarios and analyze them in relation to realities on the ground.

Despite possessing 60 percent of the world’s natural resources, Africa remains a marginalized continent. However, our wider neighbourhood – the Red Sea, the Horn of Africa, and the Gulf—has significant geostrategic importance. How can we leverage this advantage over the next three years? These variables must be appraised as we formulate and adjust our policies.

President Trump’s actions should not be viewed in isolation or unduly exaggerated. Each factor must be examined carefully and individually. This issue should be assessed within the context of the roles played by global and regional

powers in Trump's Doctrine over the coming three years. Our analysis must be objective and applied at both regional and national levels.

## **Q2: Engagement with the Trump Administration:**

The advent of the unipolar global order – which, as it happened, was concurrent with Eritrea's independence – and associated misguided policies pursued by successive US Administrations had detrimental consequences to Eritrea as well as to the world at large.

For our part, we earnestly pursued a policy of constructive engagement from the outset under the mantra of “forget and forgive”; despite the injustices meted to our people for decades, including prior to independence. But our sincere endeavours were not reciprocated.

Still, the Eritrean Government took the initiative for engagement and sent a message to President Trump early in the second year of his first term. The initial response from his Administration was positive. Unfortunately, the first initiative faltered, supposedly drowned out by other issues.

US-Eritrea ties worsened again during the Biden Administration which imposed on Eritrea numerous and unwarranted sanctions.

Eritrea demonstrated its goodwill again and took initiatives, in earnestness, for constructive engagement in President Trump's second-term. Unfortunately, the process seems to have been hampered by certain pundits and lobbyists. A case in point is, for instance, the US State Department's fallacious Report on Eritrea's “unconducive Investment Climate”. These are worn-out tactics of demonization and intimidation, ostensibly in order to extract inappropriate concessions. Still, this foot-drugging will not dampen our efforts and commitment for constructive engagement in the remaining years of the Trump Administration.

Our approach is also holistic in terms of its regional dimensions. The approach has never hinged solely on bilateral Eritrea-US ties. Regional peace and stability is a pre-requisite for development and the ties we cultivate with the US (and other partners) must encompass nurturing communality of views and approaches on vital regional matters.

### **Q3: On Sudan**

The situation in Sudan must be understood within the country's historical context, dating back to 1956. It should be examined not only from a bilateral perspective but within a broader framework. For the 30 years preceding the current crisis, the National Congress Party was embroiled in fomenting grave problems in Sudan and the wider region. Eventually, the Sudanese people could no longer tolerate the situation and overthrew the regime through a popular uprising.

The military establishment subsequently assumed responsibility as a trustee through the Sovereign Council. The main objective of the Transitional Council was to serve as a transient bridge until power could be transferred to a civilian administration.

We supported the idea of the Transitional Council guiding the country towards civilian rule. Accordingly, in 2022, we prepared a document and submitted it to the Transitional Council. The shared understanding was that the Sovereign Council would hand over power within a maximum period of three years. However, external interferences obstructed this process.

The main objective of these external actors was to destabilize the region by exploiting the crisis in Sudan. The primary destabilizing actor has been the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The crisis in the Sudan cannot be portrayed as a civil war; or merely as a rivalry between two Generals. These are transient bodies with time-bound, care-taker, mandates. In this perspective, supporting the Transitional Council remains the most viable solution so as to pave the path for enduring peace under civilian rule.

Unrealistic notions and platitudes floated by various bodies (UNSC, QUAD etc,), and the proliferation of initiatives will only prolong and compound the crisis. Egypt and other regional countries should play a constructive role in realizing the vision and the earnest quest for enduring peace and stability in Sudan.

### **Q4: On PP's proclamation of war and the agenda of two waters.**

We should not waste time on this issue (this question does not merit a response). The Prosperity Party is pursuing an agenda of war against its own people. In spite of the Pretoria Agreement, it is waging war against the Amhara, Tigray and Oromo peoples. It has declared war against us. It is bragging about Drones and weapons that it has amassed. We have no appetite for war. But we know how to defend our nation. Our vision was to foster good ties. But we should not be perturbed by PP's agenda, which in essence is driven by the same external force bent on stoking conflict in the region and is behind the crisis in the Sudan. The PP's mindset can be described by the following four attributes: Ineptness; bankruptcy, cowardice; and greed. In the event, we should not be distracted and give space to its delusional posturing. We must focus on our domestic developmental agenda.

#### **Q5: On recent visits to Saudi Arabia and Egypt**

Our principal and longstanding national policy—pursued since the days of the armed struggle—has been regional stability. We do not live in isolation; therefore, this is not an option but a necessity. This principle should be upheld not only by us but by all countries in our neighborhood—the Nile Basin, the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea, and the Gulf.

Generally, our region has experienced persistent crises stemming from internal weaknesses and external interferences. Development cannot be fully achieved without first addressing these challenges. We cannot claim to be secure while our neighbourhood remains entangled in crisis. Our actions must therefore be complementary, and mutual understanding is essential in creating such an environment.

Our engagements are based on this reality. Our bilateral engagement with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia aims to promote this shared and noble objective; which is not new. We have been engaging in this endeavour for a long time, not for the sake of nurturing alliances *per se*; but because Saudi Arabia has a significant geostrategic role in the region. We have discussed the role Saudi Arabia should play in promoting stability, security, and development in the Red Sea region.

Our bilateral engagement with Saudi Arabia is a continuous process of consultation. We had submitted a comprehensive 12-point proposal on the cooperation and coordination of the littoral States for the safety and security of the maritime route at the appropriate forum some years ago. The essence of these proposals revolves around the responsibility of each littoral State to protect its coastal segment; to foster cooperation among all the littoral States to enhance each other's capabilities; and to create platforms and modalities of cooperation for joint action when necessary – whether it is combatting piracy; illicit trade; acts of subversion; drug trafficking etc. Implicit in these arrangements is avoidance of extraneous forces and hegemonic regional forces from a compounding military presence in the vital maritime route.

Overall, our engagements with Saudi Arabia and Egypt remain fruitful. There is mutual understanding on a wide spectrum of issues that transcend immediate security concerns to encompass common approaches to regional conflicts as well as potential cooperation in investment and infrastructure

As the visits took place at the end of 2025, they have also provided us with the opportunity to discuss priorities and actions for 2026.

## **Q6: Domestic developmental issues**

Development is naturally predicated on stability. But that does not mean that it will be shelved even during the most adverse conditions. Development was not shelved even during the arduous times of the liberation struggle. So even in conditions of regional turbulence, our focus on, and pursuit of, our development agenda will continue with all the requisite rigour, commitment and priority. It will not be held hostage by other variables.

In this perspective, we have mapped out concrete and prioritized developmental and sectoral programmes for implementation in the six Administrative Regions. These include;

- Physical infrastructure in terms of roads (in the main arteries as well as feeder roads);

- Water infrastructure: dams of all sizes; treatment of catchment areas etc. with utilization of GIS-based comprehensive mapping and modern technology. The scheme includes higher utilization of existing water infrastructure as well as novel approaches including desalination.
- Energy development: the envisaged programme is focused on a decentralized and hybrid generation of electricity – the latter includes thermal as well as renewable power generation with solar, wind and geothermal alternatives sources. Ultimately, nuclear power generation is also envisaged. The first phase is to generate 360MW additional power in 12 mini-grids throughout the country. This will be increased over time to 2000MW.
- Other sectoral development programmes include: mining, agriculture, fisheries and housing.
- All these programmes cannot be implemented efficiently without human capital. So Education remains our highest priority. In this regard, the education system will be reviewed from Kindergarten up to the tertiary level. This is the broad road-map for 2026-2030.

## **Q7: On the Role of the Diaspora**

The role of our diaspora, during our liberation struggle, was tremendous and unparalleled by all standards. This remains true in the post-independence period too as their patriotism is palpable indeed.

An actionable programme to ensure their increased participation was worked out in the past years. Indeed, they have been very active in the political, diplomatic and information domains to supplement the work undertaken by our embassies.

The plan now is to enhance their vigorous participation in all the tasks of nation-building. In the first place, they will be encouraged to invest – individually or in groups – in all developmental sectors: mining, agriculture, fisheries etc.

Their involvement in development of human capital will be of paramount importance too. They will be involved in introduction of new technology, research and other professional expertise that the nation needs.

The Government has worked out a road-map for effective Diaspora involvement in all these areas. Of course, the task will require the development of a workable data-base to better identify all the resources and expertise that is available out there. This has been on the pipeline for some years now and it remains work-in-progress as there are elements of cyber-security that have to be worked out for obvious reasons.

In a nutshell, the drive is to ensure wider and qualitative participation of the Diaspora in nation-building. The requisite institutional framework is being developed to that end.

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