

Eritrea at 35: Honouring Independence, Building Partnership



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This month, Eritreans across the country and around the world celebrate 35 years of independence. Marked this year under the theme “Our Resilience: Our Guarantee,” it is a milestone that resonates with particular force for a young independent state. Independence was not handed to Eritrea. It was won through a long struggle of three decades. Because this history is still recent, and within the lived experience of a generation, every family and every community continues to carry some memory of the struggle – and the cost of freedom.

This milestone is an opportunity to reflect on what has been built since 1991: national institutions, schools, clinics, roads, water systems, and a strong sense of shared identity, guided by the values of self-reliance and social justice.

For the United Nations, this anniversary carries special meaning. Eritrea is one of the younger Member States of the United Nations – following its internationally observed referendum and formal independence, Eritrea joined the United Nations in May 1993 as the 182nd Member State. That moment placed Eritrea’s flag among the nations of the world and affirmed a principle at the heart of the UN Charter. Every nation, regardless of size or history, has an equal place in the international community.

This principle matters. Eritrea is not simply a country where the United Nations works – it is a sovereign Member State of the United Nations, with its own voice and role. It contributes to global discussions as an equal member of the international community, bringing its perspectives and priorities, shaped by a firm belief in national ownership and regional leadership.

The relationship between Eritrea and the United Nations has not always been easy, and this should be acknowledged. The UN is first and foremost a space for engagement among Member States, which means it brings together diverse and sometimes competing views, priorities, and responses. The years after independence were marked by difficult moments related to borders, peace, and the implementation of international decisions, and some aspects of the relationship remain complex. These issues are part of the history of the relationship, but do not define the whole or the future. As Eritrea marks 35 years of independence, there is reason to recognize a partnership that is growing through honest engagement and shared work.



On the global stage, Eritrea's role in multilateral spaces is becoming more visible. In New York, Eritrea's Permanent Representative has led the Group of African Ambassadors, served as Vice-President of the UNICEF Executive Board, one of the United Nations' largest agencies, and has given visibility to women's leadership in the multilateral space. In Geneva, Eritrea has served on the Human Rights Council. And across forums, the country has helped draw attention to the issue of unilateral coercive measures and has actively engaged on development, education, climate, and the concerns of least developed countries. This growing presence reflects a Member State using its voice in ways that reach beyond its borders.

Here in Eritrea, the partnership between the Government and the United Nations Country Team has grown significantly over the years. The Government of the State of Eritrea has achieved important development gains through its own leadership and national effort. The United Nations has been privileged to partner where it can add value, through technical support, capacity building, data, global expertise, and resource mobilization.

The most recent 2025 UN in Eritrea Annual Results Report gives a few practical examples of what this partnership looks like. In health, skilled attendance at birth rose from 81 percent in 2024 to 85 percent in 2025, with more than 66,000 facility deliveries supported by trained professionals. Immunization coverage also remained strong, above 95 percent, and more than 160,000 children under two received their full schedule of essential vaccines. Behind these numbers are mothers receiving care, children protected from disease, and communities benefiting from stronger services.

At Mendefera Referral Hospital, a hybrid solar-powered oxygen system now serves a catchment population of more than 1 million people and supplies dozens of health facilities. This is a practical example of partnership aligned with national priorities, one that supports health services while drawing on renewable energy and local capacity.

This milestone also coincides with the start of the next chapter of the UN-Eritrea partnership. The current UN Cooperation Framework is drawing to a close, and the Government and UN are preparing the next five-year Cooperation Framework (2027 – 2031). This is a moment to take stock of what the partnership has achieved and to set a new direction together. The new framework will be our shared partnership agreement, guiding the way the UN Country Team works with national institutions to support Eritrea's priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals.



As Eritrea marks 35 years of independence, the United Nations is also reflecting on 80 years since its founding. This is a difficult moment for multilateralism. Global challenges have proliferated, while official development assistance has fallen sharply. It is a moment that calls for a shift in how development partnerships are understood: from a narrow focus on funding projects to a broader focus on financing transformation. Eritrea's experience with self-reliance, strong coordination, and nationally led development offers useful perspectives at a time when

development financing models are evolving. The UN aims to support that ambition into the next chapter of our partnership, helping connect national priorities with the expertise, partnerships, and financing needed to accelerate sustainable development.

Looking forward, important challenges remain, particularly in expanding economic opportunities and ensuring that development gains are inclusive and reach all communities, including those who may be hardest to reach. At the same time, the country is well positioned to accelerate its progress in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, improved health and education outcomes, and greater opportunities for young people and women – all important elements for economic transformation.

Eritrea's voice in the world is growing. Its partnership with the United Nations is growing too. On this 35th anniversary, the United Nations extends warm congratulations to the people and Government of Eritrea and reaffirms its commitment to this shared journey ahead.