

OPENING STATEMENT

BY

THE HIGH LEVEL DELEGATION

GOVERNMENT OF

THE STATE OF ERITREA

PRESENTED AT

**THE 69th SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF
THE CHILD**

(Geneva, 18 May - 5 June 2015)

**Honourable Chairperson,
Distinguished Members of the Committee,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

On behalf of the high level delegation of the Government of the State of Eritrea and myself, I feel extremely delighted and honoured to address this august body, the Committee on the Rights of the Child . My delegation further takes this occasion as an opportunity to express its highest appreciation of this effective and constructive engagement with this Committee which constitutes a very important plenary to respond to the issues and questions arising from the consideration of the **Fourth Periodic Report of Eritrea** on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

My delegation recalls with pride Eritrea's ratification of the CRC in 1994, welcoming it as the first international convention which the country acceded to immediately after formally joining the community of independent sovereign states on the 24th of May 1993. This signifies the great importance and full commitment that my Government has accorded to the promotion of the rights of the child as one of the topmost priorities of its national development agenda.

The concept and principles of "the best interest of the child" enshrined in the Convention are highly valued traits inherent in the customs and culture of the Eritrean people. These are expressed in a variety of sayings such as, "Give the best to children!", "Our children are our future!", "Never harm a growing child!"...etc., which clearly attest to the high position a child occupies in the Eritrean society.

Based on these inherent traditions, the progressive political orientation of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) had fully respected the rights and the interests of the child even during the protracted struggle for independence, with the strong conviction that the child is the seed and heir of any stable society in the world. The Government of the State of Eritrea once again re-affirms its strong commitment to the welfare, survival and development of the child, and its full respect for the principles contained in the CRC. Eritrea's experience has proven beyond doubt that the youth which has achieved the

country's independence, laid the foundation for national reconstruction and development and upheld its sovereignty and security comprises the children who had been properly nurtured in the past.

Honourable Chairperson

Ladies and Gentlemen

I do not wish to take much of your precious time belabouring the demonstrated importance which my Government attaches to the provisions of the CRC. I will thus focus on the purpose of our gathering here, namely the consideration of Eritrea's Fourth Periodic Report on the implementation of the CRC. In this connection, I would like to dwell specifically on the points and issues raised by the esteemed Committee in February 2015 and our response submitted in April 2015. Some issues raised by the Committee pertain to the First and Consolidated Second and Third Periodic Reports, which, I believe, reinforce each other.

Allow me please, to make a few remarks on the substantive issues raised by the Committee during its consideration of the Fourth Periodic Report for which a reply has been forwarded.

The Fourth Periodic Report builds upon the previous three reports and should thus not be seen in isolation. The Fourth Report more specifically presents policy initiatives, child-friendly legislation, programmes implemented and special protection measures put in place contemplating children in difficult social and economic circumstances. It also provides accounts of the progress made in the areas of the rights of the child, youth and women, the justice system, food security, social protection, education and health. It further highlights local coordination mechanisms in place for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of these actions at various levels of the administrative structure. The establishment of Child Wellbeing Committees in 43 sub-regions out of 56 sub-regions is a great achievement made during the Fourth reporting period.

Honourable Chairperson

Ladies and Gentlemen

My Government recognizes that the implementation of the provisions of the CRC requires the strong commitment, zeal and concerted efforts of several stakeholders, including government institutions, civil society organizations, community and family structures and the participation of children themselves. It also needs support from international partners. The achievement of the goals requires a very protracted and sustained process. Time is of great essence, especially for developing countries like Eritrea, which are resource deficit and where constraints are in abundance.

Despite resource shortages, and the unjust sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council, Eritrea has made impressive progress towards the attainment of some of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) concerning children in several areas. These achievements are attested by the data and statistics provided in the successive reports. The reduction of malaria by over 90%, the declaration of Eritrea free from Polio and Neonatal Tetanus, the remarkable decline of HIV/AIDS prevalence to below 1%, the rising health professional assisted child deliveries, the expansion of schools and health facilities and the increased enrolment of students and enhanced access to health facilities by various communities, including the remote and difficult to reach areas, can be cited as a few of the achievements made in ensuring the welfare and development of Eritrean children.

The integration of orphans in extended families/relatives has proven to be a cost effective, sustainable and useful approach to the psychosocial healing of such children. The Community based rehabilitation program in Eritrea better serves the best interest of the child, as opposed to institutionalized mechanisms. Institutional facilities are used as the last resort in finding solutions to the numerous problems faced by children in difficult circumstances.

Honourable Chairperson

Ladies and Gentlemen

The issues and thematic areas that the Fourth Periodic Report has dealt with are so numerous and diverse that I cannot fully address them within this short time. Although we believe that the written reply forwarded to the esteemed Committee in April 2015 sufficiently addresses the concerns and provides clarification on the queries raised, my delegation partakes of this opportunity to further elaborate matters on which the Committee may need additional inputs.

I wish to reiterate that my delegation intends to enter into constructive dialogue with the Committee and we presume the Committee will reciprocate this fundamental principle.

Finally, my delegation believes that this plenary session will be fruitful in enlightening the Committee with the knowledge and understanding of the Eritrean context and on matters arising from the review of the Fourth Periodic Report. Moreover, my delegation wants to reassure the Committee that the Government of the State of Eritrea has no greater agenda than the best interests of its children in the discharge of its responsibilities. The various policies issued by the different government entities on the rights and welfare of the Eritrean child attest to the endeavours being made by the government to guarantee the welfare and development of the child to the maximum extent possible.

Ultimately, honourable chairperson, ladies and gentlemen, I feel once again proud to conclude my opening remarks by informing everybody here that the codified national body of laws of Eritrea, we have all been anticipating eagerly is now ready for enactment.

I thank you all for your attention.