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## **New Year's Message 2023**

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My fellow Eritreans at home and abroad,  
Gallant Eritrean Defence Forces,

On the eve of the New Year, I begin my message by welcoming the entire people of Eritrea at home and abroad to a safe transition to the Year 2023. I also extend warm congratulations to the gallant Eritrean Defence Forces (EDF) for foiling the expansionist designs driven by an outdated narrative, successfully challenging all external machinations, and safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the State of Eritrea.

At the outset, I would like to underscore that to oppose an autocratic regime, to expose its harmful policies and practices, and to fight for change while advocating for the sovereignty and security of the people and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the State is a democratic right and a national responsibility of citizenship.

Eritrea's geographic location at the junction of the Red Sea and Nile River basins is a great natural asset that lends it significant geostrategic, geopolitical and geoeconomic prospects. With the complement of good governance that caters to the needs of our civilised, illustrious, and hardworking people, this great national asset would allow the development of their creative potential, facilitate the use of the nation's natural and human resources for the improvement of the people's standard of living, and generate development rather than regression, wealth rather than poverty, placidity rather than depression, and prosperity rather than privation.

Were the Eritrean people able to establish a functional government committed to the rule of law, bound by a social contract, and exercising good governance, they had, undoubtedly, a great potential to develop their country, improve their livelihood, build functional institutions, and ensure justice and prosperity, at least on par with the other peoples of Africa and the world.

Instead, Eritrea has, during the last quarter century, been condemned to regress on a downward slide in all spheres of national life, constantly descending from the lower to the lowest rungs of the development ladder. This statement is not a subjective opinion but an objective assessment of the concrete reality on the ground. For instance, in 2020 (1) the UN Human Development Index ranks Eritrea 176<sup>th</sup> out of 191 countries; (2) the UN Ease of Doing Business ranks Eritrea 189<sup>th</sup> out of 190 countries; and the Mo Ibrahim Governance Rank ranks Eritrea 52<sup>nd</sup> out of 54 African countries.

It cannot be denied that the domestic reality of our country has been characterised by political paralysis, economic decline, and severe repression. These consequences of bad governance have driven mass exodus and caused the disruption of the very fabric of society and the virtual disintegration of the nuclear family. That Eritrea ranks at the bottom of the development scale among virtually all African countries according to several criteria is a fact corroborated by statistical evidence, reflected by the living conditions of the Eritrean people, and impossible to hide by official or apologetic propaganda.

Certainly, Eritrea possesses adequate natural and human resources which, with prudent management, are capable of crystallising sustainable national development, attaining social progress, and uplifting the standard of living of the people. However, it is quite shameful to find Eritrea ranked among the world's most regressive, poorest, and lowest countries and a sad reality to see its people live under a dismal state of misery due to bad government, lack of good governance and the rabid malevolence of an autocrat.

In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is only the people of Eritrea who depend on coupon rations for their daily sustenance. It is only the regime in Eritrea that is unable or unwilling to deliver vital social services and public goods, such as adequate healthcare, proper education, Internet service, potable water, edible foodstuffs, power, energy, housing, etc., to its people. It is only the regime in Eritrea that deliberately pushes the dispersion of its people and squanders the productive brain and labour of its youth in an indefinite national service at a time of relative peace in violation of its legal limits. It is only the regime in Eritrea that jails ordinary citizens and government officials without due process and condemns them to indefinite detention without charge or court ruling.

It is only the regime in Eritrea that has imposed a ban on housing construction for over 16 years and counting, aggravating a long-lasting acute shortage of living quarters. It is only the regime

in Eritrea that evicts whole families, including children, from their homes, throws them out to the street and seals their homes shut in retaliation for children not found at home during house searches for recruitment to national service.

Almost everyone in Eritrea today, whether an ordinary citizen or a government official, wants to see change in the country, the sooner the better. For far too long, most of the Eritrean people and government officials have been held hostage through fear and reciprocal distrust instilled by brutal repression and a policy of divide and rule shrouded in threats to national security and hovering war clouds. Otherwise, there may be only very few Eritreans who are happy or content with the prevailing domestic reality or the international status of Eritrea. How can most Eritreans be happy with the present dismal human condition in the country?

What must be done to break free from such fetters of repression, regression, and poverty?

First and foremost, make all possible effort to help crystallise Eritrean owned and homegrown change.

Second, establish constitutional governance; institute rule of law; reform the composition of the government apparatus; render functional the respective mandates of the principal branches, organs, and institutions in a manner that ensures accountability.

Third, introduce new economic governance that promotes rapid recovery and sustainable development; bring about change in the arrangement, structure, and management of economic enterprises; in the mandates of the public and private sectors; in the interaction of the forces of production and the relations of production.

Fourth, demarcate Eritrea's international borders in a manner that safeguards its sovereignty and territorial integrity and ensures durable peace and friendly relations with all neighbouring countries. With Ethiopia in particular, agree bilaterally to delimit and expeditiously demarcate the boundary based on the colonial treaties and in accordance with the *Demarcation Directions* of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission. The Eritrean and Ethiopian armies should then redeploy to their respective sides of the common border.

In this connection, I would like to remind all patriotic Eritreans, whether supporters, opponents, or silent spectators, who wish freedom, justice, and prosperity for the Eritrean people that they have a noble moral responsibility to:

- (1) Advocate for the interest of the Eritrean people and the State of Eritrea.
- (2) Work for the establishment of constitutional governance in Eritrea that applies rule of law, administers justice, and safeguards the basic rights and fundamental freedoms of its citizens.
- (3) Actively fight for the institution of economic governance that promotes inclusive development, produces wealth, and creates prosperity.
- (4) Firmly oppose any foreign hostility or existential threat directed against the people and the State of Eritrea.

I would also like to remind the international community, on its part, to (1) support the would be bilateral agreement to delimit and demarcate the Eritrea-Ethiopia boundary and cooperate towards its facilitation; (2) adopt a balanced nonaligned stance to play a constructive role as an honest broker in the search for durable resolution to Ethiopia's structural crisis based on the rule of law that embraces all stakeholders, ensures accountability, and administers justice.

Finally, I wish the year 2023 will be a year that heralds peace, change, justice, and prosperity.

Happy New Year 2023!

Long Live an Independent Sovereign State of Eritrea!

Eternal Glory to Our Martyrs!

God Bless Eritrea and its People!