

EMBARGO UNTIL
10:00 AM
9 DECEMBER

**STATEMENT OF THE
HEAD OF THE DELEGATION
OF ERITREA,**

Mr. TEKLEAB MESGHENA

**TO THE IIIrd SESSION OF
THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES,
FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE
CHANGE**

9 DECEMBER 1997

KYOTO - JAPAN

Mr. President, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to join other delegations in congratulating you for your election as President of the 3rd Session of the Conference of the parties.

It is fitting to recognize this most wonderful city of Kyoto hosting the 3rd session for making us feel at home. Our thanks also go to the Government and people of Japan who have spared no effort in welcoming us here as we try to develop a reasonably adequate set of measures to protect global climate.

My country emits an insignificant amount of greenhouse gases. In comparison with countries in the industrialized North we produce 80-100 times less CO₂ per capita. We consume infinitely less amount of energy, although what we do consume has some important consequences for the balance of biomass in our country. Wood is our main fuel supply and as we progressively extract it in larger and larger quantities, from our fragile ecosystem, we expand our arid lands turning them into even more unproductive deserts.

Mr. President, Eritrea could quite reasonably argue that Climate Change is non of our doing. Neither in the historical past nor in the distant future are we likely to be a threat, even remotely-to the global climate system.

So why is Eritrea an active member of the FrameWork Convention on Climate Change? and why are we here in Kyoto? Why are we likely to continue to do our modest share in protecting global climate?

We are here because of some sobering facts.

- We are a member of the community of nations and as such not immune from the undesirable impacts of climate change. In other words we are likely to be victims of a disorder we had little part in creating.

- We take note with grave concern that although we are not accountable for historical green house gases we will be the ones to suffer the most acute negative impacts,
- By most accounts one of the continent that is likely to suffer most from climate change is the continent of Africa.
- Erratic rainfall patterns have always been a major cause of humans and livestock concern to our subregion. Three major droughts have killed millions of humans and livestock in the last three decades. Our concern that these tragedies are not repeated is one reason we are here.
- We must elevate our standard of living. We must break out of this chain of debilitating poverty. Higher energy consumption is, most inevitably, the road we are likely to follow in escaping from poverty. Of course we will endeavour to achieve efficiently and sustainability.
- But we cannot fore close development. We cannot continue to suffer.
- What we can do and what we are doing is to link our development to more sensible and climate friendly forms of energy use.
- We are encouraging greater use of renewable energy. We have opened a renewable Energy Center that is actively promoting environmentally efficient energy.
- We intend to expand the use of fuel efficient stoves.
- We are most encouraged by recent studies carried out jointly by the Ministry of Agriculture and FAO which indicate that forest cover in our country is gradually rising as we enforce more and more forest enclosures and as we mobilize our people to plant more trees.
- Every summer 30,000 school children traverse the length and breadth of our country planting trees. One of the most fitting ways we have decided to remember our 65,000 martyrs is to plant as many trees as possible for each of them. We guard those trees planted in the name of martyrs with zealous attention. Hence, their incredibly high rate of survival.

- In some years, when all the trees have grown up, we can proudly say we have turned our country green. Along the way we will also have contributed to increasing anthropogenic sinks, and lessened in a modest way the impact of Climate Change.

Mr. Chairman, these are but some of our modest contributions to global climate protection.

But, by any means we are not the main actors in this Arena. In this august body, there are many countries, especially the bigger industrialized countries that we wish to appeal to:-

- accept legally binding obligations for significant and early overall reduction of CO₂ and other green house gases.
- reduce current perverse subsidies to fossil fuels and reallocate current subsidies to fossil fuels to renewable energy and to energy and to energy efficiency.
- adopt measures which will advance the implementation of article 4.1 without introducing new commitments for Non-annex 1 parties.
- facilitate the transfer of technology and help capacity building efforts of developing countries in the area of climate protection.

Mr. President,

My delegation is aware what our respective obligations are. Postponing early action by annex 1 countries, or not removing the lack of clarity on how legally binding emission obligations are to be accepted, may pose a danger for all of us. Precaution is an important principle, in the circumstance.

Let us act now and let us act decisively. We have no right to condemn future generation to a life of risk and uncertainty.

I thank you.