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and UNECA
Press Section**



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 **Eritrean Mission to
AU & ECA**

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President Isaias Paid Working Visit to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



President Isaias Afwerki paid a three day working visit to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from 19-21 December 2015.

During his stay, President Isaias met with King Salman Bin Abdelaziz on the strengthening of bilateral ties as well as on regional and international

developments of mutual interest to both countries.

The two leaders further reviewed progress of implementation of previous agreements and explored ways and means of coordination in the fight against terrorism.

President Isaias Afwerki also held similar talks with Deputy Crown Prince and the Minister of Defense of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Prince Mohammed Bin Salman.

It is recalled that President Isaias had paid a similar working visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in April this year.

Emir of Qatar Visited Eritrea



On 18th December, Emir of the State of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, paid a one-day working visit to Eritrea

Sheikh Tamim Al-Thani was accorded a warm welcome by President Isaias Afwerki on arrival at the Asmara International Airport.

The two leaders subsequently held talks at the State House. In the meeting, the two leaders

reviewed the ties of friendship and cooperation that exist between the two countries and discussed various matters that will further promote the mutual interests of both countries and peoples.

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani affirmed that the State of Qatar will expand, both in scope and quality, its current investments in Eritrea as well as embark on new ventures.

President Isaias and Sheikh Tamim Al-Thani also exchanged views on the overall political developments and trends unfolding in the wider Horn of Africa and Middle Eastern region.

The Emir of the State of Qatar was seen off at Asmara Airport on his departure by President Isaias Afwerki, Foreign Minister Osman Saleh, and Mr. Yemane Gebreab, Head of PFDJ Political Affairs.

Press Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea on Saudi Arabia’s Initiative in the Fight Against Terrorism



The Government of Eritrea views the initiative launched by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to form an alliance against terrorism as a vital

step in the promotion of peace and stability in our region and the world as a whole.

The Government of Eritrea believes that the initiative is part and parcel of ongoing endeavors towards the establishment of broad strategic cooperation to combat terrorism and lawlessness and thereby guarantee peace and security in our region. In this spirit, the Government of Eritrea expresses its readiness to support the initiative

without reservations and to extend its contribution to the alliance.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Asmara
21 Dec. 2015

Germany’s Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development Visited Eritrea

On 15 December 2015, President Isaias Afwerki received at State House a senior German delegation led by Dr. Gerd Muller, the Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development.



President Isaias also underlined Eritrea’s readiness to discuss with Germany and other partners its perspectives on political developments including issues of a political democratic order and human rights that are intertwined with the tasks and challenges of nation building.

Both sides exchanged views on broader political developments in Eritrea and the region as a whole. The senior German delegation inspected new facilities that are under construction at the Orotta National Referral Hospital through bilateral cooperation. Minister Muller was accompanied by Ms. Amna Nurhusein, Eritrea’s Health Minister, during the visit to the hospital premises.

Both sides discussed in depth the prospects of resuming bilateral ties of cooperation between the two countries.

President Isaias explained in greater detail the policies and programmes that the GOE is pursuing in the political, economic and social tasks and dimensions of nation-building. In this connection, President Isaias expressed Eritrea’s readiness and desire to foster solid ties of partnership with Germany in furthering these objectives.

The German delegation visited the Eritrean Institute of Technology at Mai Nefhi. Minister Muller was briefed on the academic programmes of the Institute and had discussions with students there.

The delegation’s one-day working visit was concluded with a public meeting with civil society associations, investors and the youth at the Head Quarters of the National Confederation of Eritrean Workers.

Eritrea Participated at Plenary Session of the African Civil Aviation Commission

A delegation led by Eritrea’s Ambassador to Egypt, Mr. Fasil Ghebresilassie, participated in the 25th Plenary Session of the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC) held in Cairo, Egypt from 8-10 December 2015.

The plenary session discussed safety and security challenges of civil aviation in Africa, air transport issues, as well as the environmental impact of global air service.

AFCAC was established in 1964 and is composed of 54 member states. It functions as a specialized



agency of the African Union and has a vision of fostering a safe, secure, efficient, cost effective, sustainable and environmentally

friendly civil aviation in Africa.



Press Statement

UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines: Factual Findings or Recycled Defamation?

Summary

In April 2009, the UNHCR issued a 35-page booklet entitled “*UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs for Asylum-Seekers from Eritrea*”. UNHCR further published the second Guidelines on 20 April 2011. This 37-page document was essentially a replica of the first publication in terms of format, language and substantive contents albeit few, insignificant and inconsequential, updates.

UNHCR’s purported purpose in issuing these guidelines was to “assist decision-makers, including UNHCR staff, Governments and private practitioners in assessing the protection needs of Eritrean asylum-seekers”. The organization flaunted these guidelines as “authoritative legal interpretations of the refugee criteria in respect of specific groups on the basis of objectively assessed social, political, economic, security, human rights and humanitarian conditions in the country of origin concerned”. It further asserted that “the guidelines are researched strictly and are written based on factual evidence provided by UNHCR’s global network of field offices and information from independent country specialists, researchers and other sources which is rigorously reviewed for reliability”.

As we will demonstrate in subsequent sections, nothing can be farther from the truth. First off, UNHCR “Guidelines on Eritrea” do not emanate from a “rigorous and independent fact-finding work” conducted by the agency in Eritrea and elsewhere abroad. This is borne out by the following salient facts:

- Both reports epitomize sloppy, cut-and-paste,

desk “research”, characterized as they were, by wholesale regurgitation of prevalent, negative literature on Eritrea from biased and politically motivated entities. This is indeed amplified by a cursory scrutiny of the footnotes and references. The two booklets contain 473 references. The bulk of these footnotes are, however, iterative attributions to i) US State Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights; ii) Amnesty International; iii) Human Rights Watch; iv) Reporters Without Borders; and, v) a couple of notorious Eritrean quisling publications.

- A largely recycled document from suspect entities can hardly qualify for “factual evidences collected and rigorously validated by the UNHCR” or provided by other “independent country specialists”.
- UNHCR’s lopsided methodology of information collection and validation is extremely hard to explain. Along with other UN agencies including the UNDP, UNICEF, and the WHO, UNHCR has a duly accredited and fully functioning UN office in Eritrea headed by a Resident Representative. But there are no indications whatsoever that the “findings” the booklets enumerate largely quoting the usual, Eritrea-bashing sources cited above, have been validated or reviewed by the UNHCR Office in Asmara for purposes of “rigorous factual accuracy and reliability”. If anything, the UNHCR Office in Asmara and UNHCR’s global network of field offices are conspicuous in the booklets for their almost total absence as credible sources of information and/or validation for UNHCR’s “findings and conclusions”.

Secondly, most of the “findings” are replete with presumptuous caveats and qualifications such as “reportedly”, “allegedly”, etc. In view of the gravity of the subject matter and its ramifications for the country in question, UNHCR’s approach accentuates an

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UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines: Factual Findings or Recycled Defamation?

appalling lack of responsibility and professionalism. This contrasts starkly with, and undermines, UNHCR’s proclaimed standards of “objectivity, accuracy and reliability”.

Thirdly, the UNHCR is guilty of a breach of trust to the host nation. Common sense, normative decency and agreed ground rules dictate that the UNHCR communicate its findings, however unsavory, to the host nation. The UNHCR is also duty-bound to request policy clarifications from the host nation instead of second-guessing them and/or seeking third party interpretation; particularly when the latter are not disinterested entities and/or when they harbor hostile political agendas. In the case of these booklets, however, the whole exercise was shrouded in secrecy in as far as Eritrea is concerned. The UNHCR did not, in fact, communicate its findings formally to the GOE while circulating them to other entities.

The UNHCR tries to justify this wayward approach under the lame excuse that “access to independently verifiable information on the situation in Eritrea is difficult to obtain given the Eritrean Government’s control over virtually every aspect of life in the country, the lack of independent media and the curtailment of NGOs activities”.

In Eritrea as elsewhere, the statutory mandate of NGOs is to carry out humanitarian/development work. Why the UNHCR conflates the development work of NGOs with anti-government, alternative media is difficult to comprehend. Furthermore, there are a plethora of UN agencies in Eritrea that produce comprehensive annual/periodic reports on the country. Eritrea’s development partners (the European Union, Africa Development Fund etc.) also produce periodic reports that focus on their specific projects but that also include the underlying political, economic, security and social realities in the country. More importantly, not visiting the country for any reason, does not give

UNHCR any moral ground or responsibility to scavenge on unaccounted, fabricated information on the country’s situation.

In view of these facts, UNHCR’s preference to rely solely and fully on narratives peddled by Eritrea’s known detractors cannot be shrugged off as oversight or poor judgment. It may indeed belie an underlying agenda that may have been imposed on it by its principal funders.

Full text can be accessed at <http://www.shabait.com/news/local-news/20954-unhcr-eligibility-guidelines-factual-findings-or-recycled-defamation>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

17 December 2015

Asmara

