

Your Excellency Mr. Toshihisa TAKATA
Amb. Of Japan to Eritrea

I would like to express my pleasure and those of my colleagues here and that of my Government in welcoming you here to Eritrea. Thank you for the visit.

This is an opportunity for all of us to discuss and assess the results of our co-operation within the context of the regular Economic Co-operation consultation.

We hope also that your Excellency had a chance to see a little bit of Eritrea during the short time that you had and perhaps an opportunity to see some of the infrastructure built in Eritrea with the Japanese support.

Your Excellency.

In the socio-economic development program of Eritrea, the country aims at moving the economy towards self-sustaining growth with social justice. Eritrea also believes that regional and international co-operation is vital for achieving this objective. Within this context, Japanese support for the

development of Eritrea, which started right after the formal declaration of independence and continues to this day has been significant as well as consistent with our development priorities.

Your Excellency

As we assess the results of our past and current Co-operation and indicate our future line of co-operation, it is important to put in brief and plain terms our national development objectives which guide our future co-operation.

The essence of our National development Objectives as has been articulated by the EPLF can be briefly summed in the following priorities. The focus of the Government effort is to satisfy the continuously increasing material needs of the population in terms of:-

- food safety and security
- water and sanitation
- housing and amenities
- transport and communication

As well as the cultural needs of the population in terms of:-

- health
- education and training
- skills development
- Sport and other cultural actives

In short it is a development program which essentially put the Eritrean citizen at the center of it all .i.e. the development of the potential of every citizen:

- as the bases
- as the means
- and as the ultimate purpose of all development efforts

Your Excellency,

The Ministry of National Development would like to express its appreciation to the Japanese people and Government for giving Eritrea a helping hand in our national effort towards the realization of the above stated socio-economic objectives.

Despite the numerous and well known obstacles including the no-war no-peace situation with Ethiopia our achievements so far are commendable.

To mention some examples:

- Life Expectancy in Eritrea has reached now between 62-63 years both for men and for women. This is up from an estimated 44 years at the time of independence.
- During this period maternal, infant and child mortality rates have all been reduced by half as confirmed by numerous surveys and reflected in

UNDP, WHO and other international publications.

- In the education sector the participation rate of the school age population is close to 73% level or in absolute terms it is up from around 200,000 at the time of independence now to over 600,000 according to MOE statistics. The future work-force of Eritrea is being equipped with Knowledge, skill and motivation.

To provide this work-force with modern Job opportunities, the Government has been mobilizing resources for investment in economic infrastructure such as

- energy
- water
- transport/ communication/ storage
- industrial parks
- housing and office buildings
- expanding banking and insurance services

as well as promoting investment in enterprises both public and private.

It is worth mentioning that Japanese Government support has been precisely on these socio-economic development priorities of the Eritrean Government. My colleagues present here in this consultation forum will next present briefly the results of our joint effort

each in the specific area of co-operation under his guidance.

Concluding my brief introductory remarks I would like once again to express my appreciation for the important support as mentioned earlier which we hope will continue and expand in the future.

Your Excellency,

- Last but not least, I would like to express my sympathy and solidarity with the Japanese people and Government who have suffered a great deal in lives lost and material wealth destroyed through the scourge of the TSUNANMI, we are confident that the Japanese People and Government will overcome this challenge and wish you success.

Thank you.

Giorgis Teklemikael (Dr.)
Minister of National Development
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