



**TOWARDS A FUTURE
OF RENEWED SOCIO-
ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL
DEVELOPMENT IN ERITREA**

RETHINKING GOVERNANCE, CIVIC SPACE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WITH SUPPORT FROM



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BRIEF ABOUT THE ERITREAN MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS (EMDHR)

The Eritrean Movement for Democracy and Human Rights was established in 2003 and registered as an organization in South Africa in 2004 as a Non-Profit-Organization (NPO).

The vision of the Movement is a free, just, democratic, peaceful and prosperous Eritrea that values and protects the rights, dignity and equality of its citizens and everyone who lives in it.

The mission of the EMDHR is to defend and promote the values of human rights, as established in relevant international instruments and covenants, and advance democratic change, rule of law, and constitutionalism in Eritrea with the ultimate aim of building a society in which citizens exercise their basic rights and live in peace, dignity and prosperity.

BRIEF ABOUT TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERS NETWORK - AFRICA (TRANET-AFRICA)

The Transformative Leaders Network- Africa (TRANET-Africa) is a grant making, capacity building and advocacy organization founded and registered in Uganda and involved in strengthening civil society, deepening understanding on public policy and fostering social justice in Africa among others. Core to the mandate of TRANET –Africa is policy research, analysis and advocating and creating platforms through which citizens can engage in constructive dialogue with duty bearers on matters of policy, decision making and governance among others. Over the years, TRANET-Africa's work has centred on initiatives that aim to create a future of sustainable and collaborative partnerships by delving in research, policy analysis and undertaking advocacy at national, regional and international level. For more information, please visit www.tranetafrica.org.

BRIEF ABOUT SURBANA MEDIA

Surbana is a registered non-profit organization, which was established to provide temporary sanctuary to and other services needed by Eritrean immigrants in Libya and elsewhere until they get a permanent solution. These include: In Libya, immigrants who have different problems; women and children with special needs; refugees who cannot get shelter. It has also opened two shelters in Ethiopia and is giving similar services. In addition, it provides vocational and livelihood training to Eritrean immigrants in Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt so as to enable them to get better work. It provides moral and legal support to sexually-abused women and stands on their behalf while giving them small scale support; It enables Eritrean refugees wherever they are to communicate with the international humanitarian organizations and get services; It encourages and supports Eritrean artists (scriptwriters and actors) in Africa to contribute in the lives of Eritreans.

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(EMDHR)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

a	ACHPR	African Commission on Human and People's Rights
b	AfCTCA	Africa Continental Free Trade Area
c	AU	African Union
d	CSO	Civil Society Organisation
e	EMDHR	Eritrean Movement for Democracy and Human Rights
f	EU	European Union
g	GDP	Gross Domestic Product
h	IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
i	MMC	Mixed Migration Centre
j	NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
k	ODA	Official Development Aid
l	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
m	TRANET-Africa	Transformative Leaders Network-Africa
n	UK	United Kingdom
o	UN	United Nations
p	UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
q	UPR	Universal Periodic Review
r	USA	United States of America

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The development of the second paper brief has been a very demanding and challenging process both financially and in terms of time. However, in spite of every difficulty, we are glad that the process has culminated into a document that could, if the content is taken from a non biased perspective by the government of Eritrea and development actors, could be a landmark document that could cause significant socio-economic and political growth and development in Eritrea.

On that note, we would like to thank organizations and individuals that have played a significant role in the development of this paper brief. Those that we are not able to mention here, we recognise the significant role that you played.

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Thank you so much.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2023, the Eritrean Movement for Democracy and Human Rights (EMDHR) with technical support from the Transformative Leaders Network-Africa (TRANET-Africa) and financial support from Surbana Media developed a paper brief whose intention was to create awareness about the civic space and operating environment for civil society organizations in Eritrea.

Consequently, key proposals were made and formed a critical part of the 4th Cycle of the UPR on Eritrea in 2024.

Therefore, this paper brief emanates from the position of the Eritrean government on the proposals made at the 4th UPR cycle where it accepted certain recommendations and rejected others while taking note of some. Part of the recommendations during the 4th UPR cycle were as a result of the intensive research and study the Eritrean Movement for Democracy and Human Rights (EMDHR) undertook with support from Surbana Vision Media and Community Services Inc, the Transformative Leaders Network- Africa culminating into the 1st paper brief coinciding with the 4th UPR cycle during the review of Eritrea.

The Paper provides a summary of the background, the purpose, the justification, alternative proposals, recommendations and sources cited during the development of the paper.

This paper brief presents the background to the development of this second policy brief, summary of the outcome of the 4th cycle of the UPR on Eritrea, key issues that require urgent action by the government of Eritrea in reference to the 4th cycle of the universal periodic review, the alternative proposals for consideration by the government of Eritrea, a conclusion and recommendations while providing the references and works cited during the paper development process.

Throughout the development of this paper, it has been observed that the resultant effect of the analysis was a policy brief dubbed, *“harnessing independent civil society organizations as critical partners in fostering socio-economic development in Eritrea: why the government need rethink regulation of non-governmental organizations”*.

This second paper brief dubbed, **“towards a future of renewed socio-economic and political development in Eritrea: Rethinking governance, civic space and economic development.”** takes a critical view of the socio-economic and political landscape within Eritrea and seeks to present alternative proposals that could be adopted by the government of Eritrea, development partners, private sector and the civil society amongst others amidst shifting global geo-economic politics.

The paper emanates from the fact that there has been an increased outflux of Eritrean citizens to other countries either as asylum seekers, voluntary immigrants and or refugees both as regular and irregular immigrants. This phenomenon, coupled with the transcendence in the global geo-economic politics and its associated effects on the civil society, philanthropy and the law in and outside Africa leaves African countries, Eritrea in particular in a state of quagmire.

This paper identifies 9 key issues that are deemed essential and require the urgent attention of the government of Eritrea if it is to attain accelerated socio-economic development in the shortest time possible.

The key issues are;

The government of Eritrea should continue with the release of all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience and undertake a compulsory national compensation for the time wasted in detention and undertake proper community reintegration programmes. A national dialogue and referendum are a

prerequisite for functional democracy, ratify the agreement establishing the Africa continental free trade area, cultivate a favourable investment climate for both Eritreans and non-Eritreans, review and or rescind the NGO Proclamation 145/2005 and ensure the opening of civil society space for the development of local civil society organisations, establish framework for alternative financing for development and End indefinite and mandatory national service.

Further to that, the Paper provides alternative proposals that the government of Eritrea could consider for the sake of fostering inclusive and people centred governance and development policies. These among others include; adopt a national employment and volunteer policy, review the macro and micro economic policies including tax and income laws in the country to allow for legally guided local giving to flourish, strengthen relations between the Eritrean CSOs operating outside the country and the government of Eritrea, open the private sector to allow business licenses to enable Eritreans to establish private businesses, mitigate the factors promoting Eritreans leaving the country and address the ongoing suffering of Eritrean refugees and ensure that there is an end to their predicament, widen the tax base to generate capital to address national reconstruction and address the mandatory national service, address incidences that could promote fear among multinational corporations from investing in the country, review the NGO proclamation 145/2005 to allow independent non-government aligned organizations to operate and receive funding from international organizations and donors, liberalize the sector to not only limit the work of NGOs to relief and infrastructure development and to social services provision and hold a national referendum

Under the rationale, as a critical part of the paper development process, key justifications are provided therefore, the following justification forms the foundation for this paper: The justification is provided on an issue-based manner rather than in general. This is to ensure that arguments are not presented as a whole, but rather as stand-alone issues yet building on each other.

Therefore, in the overview, the justifications are; Opening up the business and investment climate will enhance job creation which would consequently improve the purchasing power and the standard of living. This would enable the Eritrean economy in the sense that the tax base could expand and ultimately more revenue is generated translating to improved ability to provide public services. Further to that, it is believed that improving the investment climate would decrease the rate and number of Eritreans leaving the country in search of better opportunities. Considering that Eritrea has endured decades of recovery from the 30-year war that devastated the country, several governance and development transcendence has been observed. This necessitates that a process to obtain the views of the people on how they should be governed is necessary. Therefore, a national referendum would be a peaceful, diplomatic and non-confrontational approach to seek the opinions of how Eritreans wish they should be governed and set a new trend or path for the political and governance approaches in the country.

In addition to that, opening up space for civil society organizations (NGOs) will not only enable the country to receive foreign funding, but also allow the Civil society organisation whether humanitarian or policy and governance focused play an essential role in supporting the government and the citizens at the same time. With a flourishing NGO sector, there shall be diversification of job creation and more people with various qualifications will get employment. Through a ripple effect, people depending on those employed by the NGO sector shall have their lives improved through indirect benefits.

Conclusively, it is noted that Africa, in the recent past decades has been advocating for mutual development cooperation with the Global North and West. This advocacy, while well intentioned, comes with a cost. A less well thought out plan ruins the independent progress of a country especially if critical sectors of that country still rely largely on foreign funding, something experts view as harbouring hidden challenges if not well negotiated. For a more comprehensive analysis of the justifications, please refer to the justification section.

The global north has poured huge chunks of resources to development in Africa through official development aid (ODA) and Civil society. Eritrea in particular has been reluctant to obtain development aid restricting the work of civil society organizations even in their non independent nature, to relief and national reconstruction.

Continuing to insist on non cooperation with other countries, the government of Eritrea risks the well being not only of her country, but also for the citizens. This will worsen the relationship between the government and her people hence a likelihood of a national turmoil which has engulfed the region.

In conclusion, the growth and development of a country depends largely on the growth of her people. Therefore, there is a need for a concerted effort and political will to introduce and implement national legal and policy reforms to address micro and macro-economic issues. Political reforms are equally critical in enabling the citizens to be involved in the governance and decision-making processes of their country hence promoting ownership and patriotism

The government of Eritrea has the power to change whatever it needs in the country. It has the choice to continue being rigid and hide in the name of fostering national security as the country is taking a wrong trajectory and or instead transcend to the rapidly shifting development and international partnerships dynamics. Either way, the citizens, many of whom are ordinary people, will still have a price to pay and in the end, they will be disgruntled and the resulting end effect will be dozens of draconian laws to silence rising discomfort among citizens. A growing trend among African countries where rather than address the root causes of discontentment among the citizenry, laws aimed at targeting civil society and activists with the claim they are agents of the western world who they perceive to be enemies of African countries has become the norm across Africa.

While national sovereignty is paramount, Eritrea just like other African countries should hold honest conversations on matters of governance, human rights, accountability and transparency and put in place systems and mechanisms that aim at generating locally led solutions to our challenges. Without that, African countries will aim at people and institutions that are not the problem and in the long run, the problem will persist and this time, in a very big magnitude.

In terms of recommendations, the Paper lists general and specific recommendations. In summary, the general recommendations are; The government of Eritrea needs to find a way to work with the Special Rapporteur from the Human Rights Council and international organizations to combat the human rights issues mentioned in the UPR of 2024, Conduct a national referendum to obtain views and positions of the citizenry on how they wish to be governed, Review and implement the 1997 constitution, Re-open the Eritrean National Assembly, review and or revoke the NGO Proclamation 145/2005, open civic space and create the framework and mechanisms to enable local civil society organisations to flourish and operate, ensure freedom of expression, assembly and association, Ensure legal frameworks and mechanisms are put in place to ensure transparency and financial accountability, Ensure that all those who have committed crimes are held accountable and that the due process of the law is upheld. Enable the operation of Independent media and the release of all journalists held in detention, Independent investigation into crimes committed against Eritrean conscripts during national and military service. It is imperative that compensation is given to all victims including mental, emotional and psychological support to them and their families. The Eritrean Government to open the space for dialogue with independent Eritrean civil society organisations in the diaspora thereby opening the way for national dialogue to take place and create strong institutions and ensure that they are protected by the law.

In regard to the Specific recommendations; the Government of Eritrea; needs to Rescind the NGO proclamation 145/2005, Find mechanisms to facilitate smooth return of Eritreans to the country, Put an end to situations and conditions that are forcing Eritreans out of their country, end indefinite national service and institute national voluntarism and service laws. Provide the means for job creation to take place, Provide the space for Eritreans in the diaspora to invest in their country, Provide the space for

Eritreans inside the country to open businesses, Eritrea to provide a 5 year development plan on how the failed recommendations that were agreed during the UPR could be implemented with a phased approach, and ensure Freedom of Assembly and Association. Eritreans should not be targeted for their political and or religious beliefs. The Eritrean Government should pave the way to dialogue with Eritrean organisations who provided the recommendations during the UPR but also inclusive to all Eritrean organisations in the diaspora, Ensure Freedom of expression and freedom of speech, release all journalists and human rights defenders that have been imprisoned. The Eritrean Government should create the space for civil society to operate without fear, harassment and intimidation against them and Re-open the Eritrean National Assembly.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) needs to hold Eritrea accountable for human rights violations and apparent lack of open civic space and institute mechanisms that facilitate fair and free movement of goods and services as people as humans within the echelons of

the region. This may include introduction of regional visa and residence framework for people of the IGAD member countries.

The African Union

needs to strengthen mechanisms for holding member countries accountable on forced displacements and migration, Adopt clear and unified mechanisms for facilitating movement and protection of asylum seekers and refugees, AU to support efforts in Eritrea in relation to good governance, capacity building and the development and implementation of the judiciary, legal systems and processes, assist the Eritrean Government and the diaspora by creating the space for dialogue to take place, and work towards the country's development.

The United Nations

needs to extend the mandate of the special rapporteur on Eritrea, assist Eritrean civil society organisations to build capacity and be a partner in the development of Eritrea, Create the framework for the Eritrean Government to work on the implementation of the UPR recommendations that it supported and create an independent body to investigate the human rights situation inside the country.

The civil society actors

The international civil society needs to support Eritrean civil society organisations by strengthening their capacity and access to resources, assist with advocacy on the human rights situation in Eritrea, assist on supporting Eritrean asylum seekers & refugees and assist with the protection of Eritrean human rights defenders and civil society organisations

To the donors

Find mechanisms to support Eritrean civil society organisations operating and registered outside the country to continue with the advocacy and support to Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers and rethink any such funding policy setbacks that could limit/ prevent such organizations from accessing funding.

To the media

Continue creating awareness about the situation in Eritrea and strengthen investigative strategies to let known the challenges faced by Eritreans.

1. BACKGROUND

In 2023, the Eritrean Movement for Democracy and Human Rights (EMDHR) in partnership with Surbana Media and the Transformative Leaders' Network-Africa (TRANET-Africa) undertook a comprehensive analysis of the civic space and development issues in Eritrea and developed a paper that formed a basis of advocacy at various levels globally.

Consequently, the end resultant of that analysis was a policy brief dubbed, *“harnessing independent civil society organizations as critical partners in fostering socio-economic development in Eritrea: why the government need rethink regulation of non-governmental organizations”*.

Thus, this second paper brief, dubbed **“towards a future of renewed socio-economic and political development in Eritrea: Rethinking governance, civic space and economic development,”** takes critical view of the socio-economic and political landscape within Eritrea and seeks to present alternative proposals that could be adopted by the government of Eritrea, development partners, private sector and the civil society amongst others.

The paper emanates from the fact that there has been an increased outflux of Eritrean citizens to other countries either as asylum seekers, voluntary immigrants and or refugees both as regular and irregular migrants. This phenomenon, coupled with the transcendence in the global geo-economic politics and its related effects on the civil society, philanthropy and the law in and outside Africa leaves African countries, Eritrea in particular in a state of quagmire.

Civil society organisations in their breadth continue to play a significant part in supporting communities and contributing to the socio-economic development of countries in diverse ways. Ever since the emergence of the civil society sector, the continuous changes in the global economic and political processes especially from the perspective of the Global North and the Global South have contributed to an increasing negative perception that contributes to a biased narrative ultimately translating to unfair operating legal environments for CSOs. In Eritrea and most of Africa, this manifestation is now a political excuse to pass laws that are making the lives of the citizenry even worse.

In Africa, the perceptions of both the state and non-state actors are perpetuating a narrative that has far reaching effects on both the philanthropy sector and the sustainability of CSOs. Civil society leaders are in most situations referred to as enemies of the state and agents of the western world, terrorists and economic saboteurs among others. This narrative further fosters a negative feeling among the public and potential beneficiaries of initiatives of civil society organizations leading to a pushback effect against civil society actors hence having a bearing on the successful implementation of programmes most times already funded by the donor, who usually demand for accountability of the resources received. The negative narrative is playing a critical role in shaping the mindset, decision making of donors and philanthropic agencies and individuals. This effect is already being felt by organizations in Africa as donors and philanthropists are either withdrawing and or reducing

the nature of support being provided. Some are hesitant to support activities related to advocacy, human rights and governance for fear of being labelled by African countries as being meddling in the affairs of a particular country and for fear of their funds not being utilised effectively.

There is a growing trend in the formulation of laws branded as seeking to provide a good operating environment for Civil Society Organizations especially non-governmental organizations. Yet under the real experiences of CSOs, they are being suffocated. This is now the standard measure of hiding in sovereignty yet undermining the democratic ideals socio-economic reality of those who benefit from CSOs.

In Eritrea, the government enacted the NGO Proclamation 145/2005 and is reluctant to make any significant amends to enable independent civil society to thrive and receive foreign funding. The

current proclamation allows associations disguised as non-governmental organizations to operate yet in reality they are State aligned. The proclamation further allows the organizations to only implement programmes related to the national reconstruction and recovery from the destruction caused by the 30 year long liberation war. This means that organizations cannot implement programmes and activities outside relief and national reconstruction. In particular organizations cannot implement activities related to governance, accountability, democracy, human rights, freedom of assembly and or advocacy in general which in the current day understanding of the states in Africa is an equivalence of working against the African governments.

In spite of recommendations made during the UPR in 2024, the government of Eritrea remained cagey by simply noting the recommendations without stating any clear plans for the implementation of the recommendations accepted especially in regard to SDG 16, peace, justice and strong institutions focusing mostly on freedom of speech, association and assembly.

In the 1940s and 1950s, Eritrea had a thriving civil society and had many independent media outlets. The start of the liberation movement for independence in Eritrea increasingly led Eritrean civil society to be militarized. The thirty-year war for independence was the longest war in Africa and the baggage that came from this is immense. The economic infrastructure was completely destroyed, the psychological effects on the Eritrean people inside and outside the country is something that has not been adequately addressed. Furthermore, during the thirty-year war for independence Eritrea remained isolated and this made Eritreans look inward to survive the conflict. This created a mindset of self-reliance which transformed Eritrean society. This outlook enabled Eritreans to survive within the country and to the ever-growing Eritrean diaspora.

Whilst self-reliance was a very important component during the war for independence, this was not sustainable from the time Eritrea was liberated. The many years of isolation left Eritreans suspicious of others and unable to build relations and drive the country forward.

The mental shift that was required in creating diplomatic relations with states having clear legal frameworks and mechanisms, independent judiciary, functioning constitution, and ensuring the structures were in place deemed significant in rebuilding the Eritrean economy, were all missing. The Eritrean youth were used as cannon fodder and were forcibly conscripted into the army and the environment was not conducive for the youth during military service. The Eritrean Government did not include the Eritrean youth as an integral part of the development of the country and this has driven many young people to leave the country. The Government lacked the foresight to ensure the security of the nation whilst ensuring economic, social and cultural growth. The control of the state in every facet of the lives of Eritreans and the lack of academic freedom, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and association led to the brightest minds leaving Eritrea. Many also have never known peace and hence it was difficult to change. The lack of understanding towards the Eritrean people, by neither consulting or having the space to dialogue with the various segments of Eritrean society, left a huge gap and this gave Ethiopia an opportunity to undermine the State of Eritrea.

Therefore, what the Government did in trying to govern the country by the way it operated during the war for independence spectacularly back-fired. It is imperative to maintain self-reliance, but also fomenting that by creating the environment for diplomatic relations with other states thereby creating the basis for economic, political, social and cultural development without compromising sovereignty. This however, requires transparency from the government and ensuring that the Eritrean people are stakeholders in this process to ensure sustainable development.

The 1998-2000 border conflict with Ethiopia gave way for the government's repressive policies as they played on the psychology of the Eritreans disguised as nationalism. The Eritrean Government used the sovereignty card as they knew that as long as people felt threatened by the Ethiopian regime, they could govern unchallenged. Whilst the threat from Ethiopia is real and the long history of conflict has

created an environment of mistrust, it is important for Eritrea to change its course and not remain a hostage to the past. Eritrea has the potential to develop and be a key player in the region and beyond, however for this to take place, the country needs to be stable internally and this needs an independent judiciary and a functioning legal system, opening of civil society space, strong institutions and an environment where its citizens can live with their human rights upheld, free from torture, forced disappearance, and arbitrary detention to enable its citizens to live in dignity.

The Eritrean government, in response to a desire to be independent from other countries, adopted the indefinite national service that has been the main reason for the exodus from Eritrea and has been described as slavery in the UN Commission of Inquiry Report on Eritrea 2016. Whilst national service is important and can have a positive impact on national development if utilised in the proper manner, the nature in which it is implemented is dehumanising. Indefinite national service is neither good for the individuals nor the government. It denies the individuals involved not only the freedom to choose, but also the right to decent work since those recruited are given a commission rather than a salary.

This occurrence denies the country an opportunity to have a professional army, navy, Airforce and a functioning intelligence service. The reliance on indefinite national service impacts every segment of Eritrean society forcing many to leave thereby subjecting them to harsh socio-economic, immigration and political challenges. Many Eritreans who are caught in this immigration debacle are left at the mercy of the host country. Travel from their home countries to the destination is usually cruel with most of them subjected to rape, trafficked, defiled for young ones and subjected to slavery amongst others.

Eritreans however, are contributing to economic and community development in East Africa and other parts of the diaspora. This contribution would improve the economic situation in Eritrea, but due to the glaring lack of national reforms both from the economic and political realms demands a swift transcendence, a future of inclusiveness, reconciliation and dialogue.

The lack of clear micro and macroeconomic policies coupled with a harsh investment climate, and lack of transparency has driven Eritreans to invest outside of their home country. This critically affects the GDP and national income of the country. In the end, the country will continue to rely on indefinite national service, a cowardly and weak strategy to rebuild the country. There are also many educated Eritreans who are able to contribute to the rebuilding of the country and many who have businesses in the diaspora yet due to the uncertainty in the country they call home, they are unable to provide service. For instance, according to the New Vision Newspaper, “At least 70% of Ugandan exports to South Sudan are by Eritreans”.¹

In lieu of the above brief analytical background, the Eritrean Movement for Democracy and Human Rights (EMDHR) with the financial support of Surbana Vision Media and Community Services technical support of TRANET-Africa deemed it necessary to develop a second paper brief to respond to the outcome of the 4TH UPR Cycle on Eritrea and to suggest alternative proposals that could be adopted to enable the Eritrean government to have strong institutions and make critical and significant national development policies reforms.

2. THE 4TH CYCLE OF THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR): KEY PICK OUT RECOMMENDATIONS SUPPORTED BY THE ERITREAN GOVERNMENT

Eritrea was reviewed by UPR Working Group 46, in May of 2024. It received 293 recommendations and it supported 126 recommendations at the adoption of its UPR outcome at Human Rights Council

¹ https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/business/eritreans-lauded-for-contribution-to-ugandas-NV_213061

57, in October 2024 (a decrease of 3.8% with respect to the 3rd cycle). Supported recommendations related to: Legal and general framework of implementation, international humanitarian law, universal and cross-cutting issues, civil and political rights, economic, social, and cultural rights, women's rights, children's rights, and rights of other specific groups and persons.

After carefully considering all 293 recommendations, the government of Eritrea decided to fully accept 126 recommendations, of which it has taken note of 160 others. Additional clarification was provided on another 7 recommendations, indicating which part of the recommendation has been supported and which part noted. Clarification is also provided on the remaining 5 recommendations which are rejected on the basis of factual mistakes and their irrelevance to Eritrea's national context.²

Table highlighting key recommendations during the 4th UPR Cycle that are critical to this paper brief

NO.	RECOMMENDATION	STATUS
131.197	Allow all human rights defenders and civil society organizations to exercise their rights to freedom of expression, opinion and association without threat or harassment	Supported Status: Not implemented.
131.196	Ensure that journalists, human rights defenders and independent civil society organizations operate in a free and safe environment	Supported Status: Not implemented.
131.194	Adopt measures guaranteeing the fundamental freedoms of journalists, civil society organizations and political parties	Supported Status: Not implemented.
131.193	Adopt all the necessary measures to ensure a safe environment for the exercise of freedom of expression for those who work to promote and protect human rights, including human rights defenders and journalists, and investigate and punish all acts of violence against them	Supported Status: Not implemented.
131.192	Ensure that journalists and human rights defenders can exercise their rights to freedom of expression, opinion and association and that appropriate follow-up is given to cases of intimidation and harassment against them	Supported Status: Not implemented.
131.191	Allow plurality of the media and genuine freedom of expression	
131.188	Review and amend legal and procedural barriers that may hinder the enjoyment of the rights of freedom of expression and access to information	
131.186	Take concrete measures to ensure full respect for the rights to freedom of expression and opinion, as well as freedom of religion or belief, including as they pertain to the press and other media	Supported Status: Not implemented.
131.185	Protect freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, as well as freedom of religion	

While the recommendations were accepted, the implementation largely remains rhetoric and no clear plan issued by the government to implement them.

² Eritrea's opening Statement during the consideration and adoption of the Universal Periodic Review outcomes 26 September – 1 October 2024. "After carefully considering all 293 recommendations, we are pleased to inform you that Eritrea has decided to fully accept 126 recommendations, and that it has taken note of 160 others. Additional clarification is provided on another 7 recommendations, indicating which part of the recommendation has been supported and which part noted. Clarification is also provided on the remaining 5 recommendations which are rejected on the basis of factual mistakes and their irrelevance to our national context."

3. KEY ISSUES THAT REQUIRE URGENT ACTION BY THE GOVERNMENT OF ERITREA IN REFERENCE TO THE 4TH CYCLE OF THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

The following issues are identified as priority and most pressing for the government of Eritrea to implement and or resolve;

i. Continue with the release of all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience

There has been a recent occurrence in the release of some prisoners that have been in detention. This approach is laudable and it should continue. Protection mechanisms for those released need to be put in place. Society has a way of believing that each and everyone who is arrested and detained is a criminal and are highly likely to experience social discrimination or at the worst being targeted for harm as a result of their previous history of detention. To abet this, the government should devise a protection mechanism.

ii. Design and implement community reintegration programmes for prisoners of conscience and voluntary returnees

Many Eritrean citizens have been in custody dating back to 2006 and the early nineties. If these individuals including those that were sent to detention in the recent years are to be released, the probability that they may reestablish their lives is possibly non-existent since they may not even remember where their homes were, they will have no capacity to start any economic ventures and the worst is that they could be physically frail and psychologically disoriented.

Coupled with the recent trajectory of national refugee and asylum seeker policy developments in Africa and across the globe, the number of Eritreans likely to return to their homes is high. However, the question would be, what country would they return to? The same country that denied them human and civil rights and gave them survival in other countries where they had limited freedom?

From the United Kingdom (UK), to the United States of America (USA) and to Uganda in the Horn of Africa, the language appears to be the same...they are beginning to say no to refugees and asylum seekers.

Therefore, there is a need to establish community reintegration initiatives to enable reintegration of detainees and returnees into their communities. The initiatives should by any nature encompass financial compensation, startup packages and psychosocial support among others.

The Eritrean people need to have the assurance to return with no consequences. This can only happen if the country is governed by the rule of law through a transparent operational mechanism of the government.

Detention for such a long period of time affects the productive life of detainees resulting to a situation where they are unproductive, have no financial mantle and many aspects of their life are affected.

iii. Review and implement the 1997 Constitution

The constitution is the bedrock of a nation's legal basis and without its implementation, a country bleeds. The current president of Eritrea, Mr. Isaias Afewerki, an epitome of a one man's rule since 1993 presides over a country with no proper legislation relying heavily on proclamations usually drafted not on the basis of majority civilian interests, but on a minority interest of mostly the armed forces.

Eritrea is a nation that has its own customary laws, which require it to be reviewed and updated to meet the current challenges of the Eritrean people and be the backbone of developing a legal system in Eritrea that shall deliver justice to the people of Eritrea.

The 4th cycle of the Universal Periodic Review recommended that for strong institutions to exist in Eritrea in line with SDG No. 16, the government of Eritrea needs to urgently review and implement the constitution of 1997 that would give room for the citizens to exercise their civil liberties in choosing who would lead them.

Without the implementation of the constitution, freedom of assembly, speech and association is not guaranteed as these rely on the assessment of the military and the sitting government which usually is from a biased point of view leading to government extremism against unarmed civilians.

iv. Investment climate

The private sector plays a critical role in creating jobs for those who may not have the capacity to be employed in the informal sector, civil society sector and or the public sector.

Therefore, to address issues of decent work raised during the Universal Periodic Review, the government of Eritrea needs to create legal and policy reforms that provide a fair ground to both local and international investors.

This involves having frameworks that provide a window of hope during the incubation period especially for vulnerable groups such as youth, women and minority groups who may not have the sufficient capital.

Unlike other countries, the government of Eritrea needs an investment policy that does not discriminate against local investors and favour foreign investors by ensuring that all go through an assessment process to establish if and when they may be suitable to be granted tax holidays and or land lease agreements among others.

v. Review and or rescind the current proclamation on NGOs to ensure a fair Operating environment for independent Civil Society

The civil society is a critical actor in the development process whose contribution is usually undermined yet vital, critical and usually timely. In the absence or shortage of government public services delivery the NGO sector had been the last resort.

The current NGO proclamation does not allow independent non- governmental organizations to operate within the country. What exists in Eritrea is a state aligned civil society. The proclamation further limits the nature of development programmes an NGO can engage in as well as restricting access to funding especially from foreign funding. The proclamation does not allow international civil society to operate in the country. Projects to be implemented must be approved by the government.

While there is need to recognize national sovereignty, the government of Eritrea needs to understand that in the current globalization agenda, where countries have to cooperate at various levels, civil society organizations alike, provide an alternative for especially the vulnerable and marginalized groups to not only participate in the decision-making processes, but to also elevate themselves through CSO led interventions. Many of them would never have benefited through the usual public services systems that are usually marred with nepotism, bribery and favouritism.

vi. Alternative financing for development

Eritrea has enforced compulsory national service which in nature is indefinite in response to the perceived possibility of external influence on the governance of the country if it were to receive foreign funding. This is further informed by the need to rebuild the country from the devastating 30 year long civil war.

The country needs to draw a broad national development strategy that will enable the country to have alternative sources of financing for development projects while ensuring her national sovereignty.

This will, in the long run, erase indefinite national service and forced conscription into the army- a contributing factor to the forced displacement of her citizens to other countries.

While the Eritrean government argues that the national service is definite with the longest service being 18 months, many conscripts of the national service have served for a very long time with others dating back to 2006 or beyond.

vii. End indefinite, compulsory national service and the forced conscription into the army

A nation's purchasing power and a population's contribution to development rely on how many of her people have access to financial resources. Having many people leaving the country more so in a forced way is the foundation of the destruction of production sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, processing and the services among others...yet agriculture for instance is the fulcrum of many nations' economies in Africa.

While voluntary movement out of the country may be inevitable, Eritrea has become a hallmark of forced displacement of her citizens to other countries. Most times, they are running away from

forced and indefinite, compulsory national service and conscription into the army³, harsh weather and unfavourable living conditions.

"If you run away from the national service, the coupon is taken away from you and you won't be able to access other services" a testimony from one of those who left national service and preferred to remain anonymous.

In particular, the government of Eritrea must address these key factors if the productive population must stay within the country and contribute to the agricultural sector and the services sector.

The most paramount is that the government of Eritrea must guarantee the security of her citizens who feel they are secure in other countries than within Eritrea, yet majority end up being exposed to the most dehumanizing situations like in Libya where Eritrean women running away from harsh conditions end up being gang raped instead in territories where they felt they would be secure.⁴

viii. Ratify the Agreement Establishing the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and erase barriers to cross border trade

Eritrea has enjoyed frosty border relations with her neighbours namely Djibouti and Ethiopia. This phenomenon casts doubt on the ability of the Eritreans and the neighbouring countries to trade among themselves. Cross border trade facilitates access to goods and services that may not be readily available within that country. This in the long run benefits locals especially those along the border lines.

The Agreement Establishing the Africa Continental Free Trade Area requires countries in Africa to eliminate any such physical and nonphysical barriers to cross border trade so as to boost intra Africa trade. With stringent border management frameworks, movement in and out of the country will be difficult. This in turn affects movement of goods because goods have to be moved by the people.

Rather than focusing on limiting cross border movement, they need to rethink the peace and security approaches of the country, a basis for which movement is usually limited.

3 Compilation of information prepared by the OHCHR. Human Rights Council Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review Forty-sixth session 29 April–10 May 2024.

4 Where to next? Eritrean displacement amidst shrinking spaces of refuge MMC Research Report, April 2025 by Mixed Migration Centre

ix. Hold a national dialogue and referendum

The African continent is witnessing a rising level of discontentment in the manner in which they are governed/ ruled. This phenomenon is likely to cause a tide across the continent of continued protests, civil uprising and political tensions.

To avert this, as the saying goes, “*prevention is better than cure*”, the Eritrean government need not wait for the wave to sweep across the country. Therefore, there is a need to have the citizens decide on how they feel their country should be governed beyond the independence era. This is only possible through a referendum.

Eritrea last held a referendum in 1993. This referendum was largely viewed as getting the views of the people regarding Eritrea’s independence, which according to reports, there was an overwhelming YES vote.⁵

While it is laudable for Eritrea to have held the Referendum then, it is imperative to acknowledge that the times have changed and many aspects of development have transcended hence the need for a referendum to enable citizens have another opportunity to decide what direction their nation must take.

After the post elections violence in Kenya in 2007, Kenyans went into a referendum that ushered in a new constitution. This constitution has been lauded for bringing in place an era of renewed national governance and balanced resource distribution, national policy reforms and a significant level of transparency and accountability among others.

In the actualisation of a referendum, the government should put in place for all Eritreans living out of the country to meaningfully be part of the change process.

4. WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVE PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE GOVERNMENT OF ERITREA

a. Adopt a national employment and volunteer policy

Instead of the indefinite national service, the government of Eritrea needs to adopt a national service and volunteer policy that does not harm the inherent rights of her citizens.

A national volunteer policy would spell out how national volunteers are recruited, tenure, scope of work and services, remuneration and compensation among others. National volunteers would then be adopted as permanent employees in the longer run once they have obtained the requisite skills since they have served for a certain period of time. This, in the long run, would prevent forced displacement of citizens to other countries as a result of fear of serving in the army, something according to people familiar with the system in Eritrea, attracts very low pay and many feel it would be a waste of their entire life with no gainful benefits.

A national employment policy should equally spell the terms and conditions under which Eritreans would be required to serve in the army and or any other national forces.

⁵ “By Proclamation 22/1992, a nationwide and internationally supervised referendum was held in April 1993 with a 99.8% result YES vote for independence. The process and outcome demonstrated the level of consciousness, devotion and capability of the people and the leadership to build the nation. Hence, establishing a constructive environment and basis for nation building has been the major priority.” ERITREA: INITIAL NATIONAL REPORT (1999-2016) Prepared on the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (ACHPR) 28 March 2017, The State of Eritrea, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

b. Review the macro and micro economic policies including tax and income laws in the country to allow for legally guided local giving to flourish

Governments in Africa accuse civil society organizations for receiving donations from givers especially the Global North and the conceptual West to destabilise what they term as democratically elected governments yet make no efforts to create an environment that enables local giving to flourish.

The Eritrean government should therefore take significant steps in revising several macro and micro economic policies that first and foremost enable private businesses to thrive and review the existing tax policies to enable individuals and corporate companies among others to give a percentage of their earning to charity and perhaps be exempted from paying tax or only pay a certain amount of tax after they have given a certain percentage of their earnings to charity. The government can further consult with development partners both within and outside the country including Eritrean asylum seekers and refugees.

c. Strengthen relations between the Eritrean CSOs operating outside the country and the government of Eritrea

The outright negative perception about CSOs is not only misleading but utterly detrimental to the understanding of the dynamics of the operations of the sector. This phenomenon prevents the government officers and agencies from broadening their understanding and conceptualization of the sector. Therefore, there is a need for the government of Eritrea to establish mechanisms to engage with CSOs rather than reinforcing the already preconceived bias.

There is need for the government to make concerted efforts in dialoguing with the Eritrean civil society on pertinent matters such as human rights violations inside the country especially freedom of assembly, speech and the release of all political prisoners, prisoners of conscience and those arrested on religious basis. It is important that the conversation between the government and civil society takes place, by dialoguing on things that both agree on and working upwards to things that are more complex.

d. Open the private sector to allow business licenses to enable Eritreans to establish private businesses

The private sector plays a great role in the creation of jobs and expanding the tax base for the government. It is highly advisable that the Eritrean government should make concerted efforts to revise investment policies to enable Eritreans and foreign investors to establish private businesses.

Financial transparency and accountability of the state is paramount in providing confidence for Eritreans to invest in their country. However, while doing so, the government should put in place social safeguards to prevent consumer exploitation and ensure sale and consumption of quality yet relatively cheaper services and goods. This way, many people will earn income from employment and similarly contribute to the tax base through pay as you earn and paying indirect tax through purchase of goods and services with indirect tax and causing a ripple effect of the salary where many people rely on those who are employed. The government can retain control of key social sectors such as education, transport, health, water and electricity amongst others to ensure that the citizens have access to cheap social services. Creating sustainable development is the responsibility of all Eritreans and government projects should include the private sector in consultation with the Eritrean people.

e. Mitigate the factors promoting Eritreans leaving the country and address the ongoing suffering of Eritrean refugees and ensure that there is an end to their predicament

Many of the Eritrean asylum seekers and refugees leave the country for a reason. Among them is the compulsory yet indefinite national service and poor human rights record of the country where people live in fear. The Eritrean government should address the fears of the people and address such factors

that might instigate further out flux of Eritreans to other countries. The government should revise the national service policy and just like other countries with national service, devise a timeframe under which someone serves under the national service and ensure that the conditions under which they live at the time of the national service are humane, free from torture, harassment and psychologically traumatizing situations.

f. Widen the tax base to generate capital to address national reconstruction and address the mandatory national service

Taxation is the backbone of the country's resource development. Eritrea needs to review both its macro and micro economic policies and ensure that the tax base is widened. This involves widening avenues through which both direct and indirect taxes can be generated. One such essential way is by ensuring that the investment climate is favourable to both local and foreign investors. Critically, the government should create a favourable environment for doing business especially by fostering local businesses for youth and women by ensuring that the tax holidays are provided for in the law. Many African countries have a tendency to grant tax holidays to and land lease holidays to foreign investors while neglecting the local investors. In the end, the foreign investors become more successful than the local investors.

g. Address incidences that could promote fear among multinational corporations from investing in the country

Several African countries have used the guise of national sovereignty to shelve their wrong doings claiming there is western influence, yet glaringly, there is a serious problem that if not addressed on a timely basis, it is a time bomb waiting to explode.

Investors take into account so many factors before investing in a country that is not of their origin. These, among others include, security, protection of the investors and their investments. In some countries, there has been a tendency by some governments to deny some companies and investors their entitlements, usually through the law that is blind to the realities of investments.

This alone is enough to scare away the potential investors including those already investing in the country if any. Consequently, in a seemingly capitalist era, there is a big price to pay...fewer tax avenues and hence limited resources to invest in the public sector.

5. WHY THESE PROPOSALS ARE NECESSARY- JUSTIFICATION

There is an emergence of global shifts in the management of refugees and asylum seekers evidenced in the recent few years. If the government of Eritrea does not put in place concerted efforts to address the issues that are forcing Eritreans out of their country and cultivating a conducive

environment within the country itself, their citizens could end up being caught in very challenging situations that will worsen their socio-economic wellbeing that is already fragile.

Eritrea is once again in a fragile place in relation to Ethiopia, the peace plan from 2018 is now a distant memory and Ethiopia's fragility is a potential security challenge for Eritrea. Ethiopia, a nation of 120 million people would open up an array of security challenges to Eritrea and the region if the state disintegrated. The ongoing internal conflicts inside Ethiopia are concerning on many levels. The current geo-politics in the region with competing foreign nations vying for control of the Red Sea opens the region to further conflict in a fragile region. Therefore, Eritrea needs to rethink how it operates in an environment which is volatile and continues to remain fluid. Creating internal stability by ensuring proper governance, independent judiciary & legal systems, transparency, financial accountability and

human rights upheld will not only benefit Eritrea but the region. Eritrea's stability could form the basis of regional peace, justice and stability and create the framework for regional trade and development. This would also enable Eritreans to return and contribute to the re-building of the nation.

a. Opening up the business and investment climate will enhance job creation, enhance livelihoods and improve the purchasing power of the locals hence increasing the GDP

With an improved GDP, the government of Eritrea will have enough resources to enable them to hire staff on full time employment basis to undertake both national reconstruction and social services provision at the grassroots as opposed to the compulsory national service that is against the freedom of choice and decision of the citizens.

Furthermore, a proper investment climate will reduce the number of Eritreans investing in other countries. Higher numbers within the country improves the purchasing power of the country and increases the number of people consuming goods hence improving demand leading to higher sales and consequently gross national product.

b. Decrease in the rate and number of Eritreans leaving the country

The world in the modern day is witnessing unprecedented levels of racial discrimination, torture of migrant workers, and black people forcing themselves to countries where they are immediately declared illegal immigrants upon arrival. In the Middle East, over 500 young men and women on a regular basis are always running away from torture in the hands of their sponsors. Those mostly from African countries are highly likely to face life imprisonment if something is not done to protect them.

Migrant workers' rights violation in the Middle East is on the worrying end. The climate crisis is worsening forcing many to flee harsh weather, yet multinational companies from Europe and the US that are contributors to this crisis are not willing to meet the costs of the damage caused by their businesses.

Tribal and civil tensions are worsening unwanted migration. With regional economic integration, young men and women who are attempting to partake in cross border businesses are harassed, financially exploited and thrown into jails in their fellow African countries yet mechanisms to facilitate cross border trade have been put in place.

Since 2022, Eritrean Movement for Democracy and Human Rights, Surbana Vision Media and Community Services Inc and the Transformative Leaders Network - Africa have been working with each other over the past 3 years to address the deepening challenges of shrinking civic space, irregular migration and the dire situation of migrants in foreign lands. Through the interventions, other African civil society organisations have gained knowledge about Eritrea and the challenges that Eritreans are facing in Eritrea but also in the diaspora.

Following our advocacy efforts, the government of Eritrea has adopted, though yet to be implemented, some of the recommendations that include, allowing foreign funding and opening up space for dialogue with dissenting voices both with Eritreans inside the country and those in the diaspora.

Eritrea is one of the highest refugee and asylum seeker producing countries, and a major factor is the indefinite national service but also the inability to have businesses and the opening of civil society space that would bring much needed investment into the country. However, for people to invest in a country and for economic and social development to take place, there need to be certain changes that need to occur for it to work.

In 2023, EMDHR had commissioned the development of the policy brief to enable the opening of civil society in Eritrea. The policy brief was circulated in various places including the UN in Geneva and the Eritrean Government had accepted some of the recommendations.

It is important to note that the Eritrean government has started to make some strides, but more work needs to be done in ensuring that there are clear timelines and clarification on when the opening of the civil society will take place in Eritrea. There needs to be clear legal frameworks, mechanisms, timelines, review and implementation of the 1997 constitution, implementation of the opening of civil society space and the opportunity for investment in Eritrea.

While we applaud the Eritrean government for beginning to take some steps, a problem still exists. The current investment climate in some of the African countries and Eritrea in particular is volatile and does not allow its citizens to invest locally, but choose to invest in outside countries.

This robs the country of GDP and job creation that would improve the livelihoods of mostly the youth and women. The Eritrean government is still not allowing independent civil society as well as the international non-governmental organizations to operate in the country. This will affect the ability of the Eritreans and other Africans to benefit from the regional integration such as the IGAD and the Africa continental free trade area. Instead, increased outward movement of Eritreans where they live as either asylum seekers or refugees in other countries seems to be even worsening.

There can be no economic development if there is no social development and poverty reduction is a key element of this. Therefore, it is imperative that the Eritrean Government paves the way for Eritreans to invest in their country, ensure that Eritrean citizens are empowered to open businesses,

local CSOs, external investment, and strengthening the resilience of Eritrean communities and opening the civic space inside Eritrea.

Unless massive awareness is created to encourage young people to explore alternative employment and income generating opportunities as opposed to seeking for “greener pastures” in countries where they are treated appallingly and empower organizations supporting young people, as well as demand for the upholding of the rights of migrant workers world over, many Eritreans will come back as cargo in coffins.

c. National referendum

Eritrea has about 30 years of non-implementation of the constitution and no elections to determine the president. This has bred a pushback from the Eritreans against their government. This is manifested in voluntary leaving of the country and investing out of the country.

Therefore, holding a national referendum will enable the government of Eritrea to get a popular view of the majority Eritreans on many of the national governance, decision making and political processes. With this, they will feel involved, appreciated and reduce the backlash against the government.

Rather than clinging on to the authoritarian approach of silencing dissenting voices, a binding referendum is critical in ensuring that friction between the citizens is reduced.

More specifically, the referendum should focus on how the president, members of the national assembly and other representatives should be elected. The national assembly which was shut down in 2001 needs to be re-opened.

d. Widen the tax base

A wider tax base presents the government with an opportunity to raise more resources to run the national service. However, a wider tax base can only be possible if the country makes significant macro and micro economic policy reforms. The reforms should allow many citizens to have access to several financial resources and improve their purchasing power enabling the country to generate taxes both directly and indirectly.

e. Opening up space for civil society organizations (NGOs)

Non-governmental organizations play a significant role in complementing the government in which it falls short of providing social services. By opening the operating environment to allow especially independent non-government aligned organizations, the government of Eritrea will enable many Eritreans to get employed and social services provision will improve as evidenced in other countries in Africa that were once hit by war and non-governmental organizations played a significant role in socio-economic development.

The non-governmental organizations work with and support the public sector and the private sector.

6. CONCLUSION

Africa in the recent past decades has been advocating for mutual development cooperation with the global north. This advocacy, while well intentioned, comes with a cost. A less well thought out plan ruins the independent progress of a country especially if critical sectors of that country still rely largely on foreign funding.

The global north has poured huge chunks of resources to development in Africa through official aid and Civil society.

Eritrea in particular has been reluctant to obtain development aid restricting the work of civil society organizations even in their non independent nature, to relief and national reconstruction.

Continuing to insist on no cooperation with other countries, the government of Eritrea risks the well being not only of its country, but also for her citizens. This will worsen the relationship between the government and her people hence a likelihood of a national turmoil which has engulfed the region.

Conclusively, the growth and development of a country relies largely on the growth of her people. Therefore, there is a need for a concerted effort and political will to introduce and implement national legal and policy reforms to address micro and macro-economic issues. Political reforms are equally critical in enabling the citizens to be involved in the governance and decision-making processes of their country hence promoting ownership and patriotism.

While national sovereignty is critical and an essential aspect of international law and international relations, hiding in the name of civil society prompting the interest of the western super powers is a scapegoat that will not solve the problems of a country. Allowing multiparty dispensation while upholding the right of the citizens to choose who they support will foster unity in diversity and hence national development.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. There is a need to find a way to work with the Special Rapporteur from the Human Rights Council and international organizations to combat the allegations mentioned in the UPR of 2024 to ensure a continuation in improving human rights situations in the State.
- b. There is a need to conduct a national referendum to obtain views and positions of the citizenry how they wish to be governed.
- c. There is need to review and implement the 1997 constitution (also review and update Eritrean customary laws and assess if there is any scope that this could either be included in the constitution or complement it)
- d. There is need to re-open the Eritrean National Assembly to allow the citizens to be represented by their leaders and have national development priorities debated.
- e. There is need to revoke Proclamation 145/2005, open civic space and create the framework and mechanisms to enable local civil society organisations to flourish and operate.
- f. There is need to ensure freedom of expression, assembly and association. This includes the release of all journalists, and develop the bedrock for independent media in Eritrea.

7.2 SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

a. To the Government of Eritrea

- There is need to review and or rescind the NGO proclamation 145/2005 to create a conducive and favourable operating environment for civil society organisations to flourish.
- There is need to provide amnesty to facilitate Eritrean asylum seekers and refugees to return to their country without the possibility of being targeted for their prior actions.
- There is need to put an end to situations and conditions that are forcing Eritreans out of their country i.e. indefinite national service and the improvement of human rights inside the country
- There is need to cultivate a policy and legal framework that will facilitate the means for accelerated job creation and self employment to take place.
- There is need to develop a national policy framework for Eritreans in the diaspora to invest in their country without repercussions.
- There is need to rethink national investment policy and ensure local investors enjoy the possibility of tax holiday during the early life of their businesses.
- There is need to urgently provide a 5-year development plan on how the failed recommendations that were agreed during the UPR could be implemented through a phased approach.
- Ensure Freedom of Assembly and Association and Eritreans should not be targeted for their political beliefs or religious beliefs. The Eritrean Government should pave the way to dialogue with Eritrean organisations who provided the recommendations during the UPR but also inclusive to all Eritrean organisations in the diaspora.
- There is need to cultivate an environment that fosters Freedom of expression, freedom of speech and assembly.

- Release all journalists and human rights defenders that have been imprisoned. The Eritrean Government should create the space for civil society to operate without fear, harassment and intimidation against them.
- There is need to re-open the Eritrean National Assembly to allow Eritrean citizens to decide how they should be governed through their representatives to the assembly and reflect the ideals of democracy.
- There is need to institute a truth and reconciliation commission to support Eritreans through a process of national recovery and heal wounds caused by the past and recent actions of the Eritrean government that could have caused Eritreans to suffer.

b. To IGAD

- There is need to closely hold Eritrea accountable for human rights violations and apparent lack of open civic space.
- There is need to rethink cross border movement across the region and develop a regional framework to facilitate the smooth movement and resettlement of migrants in host countries.

c. To AU

- There is need to strengthen mechanisms for holding member countries accountable on forced displacements and migration.
- There is need to adopt a clear and unified mechanism for facilitating movement and protection of asylum seekers and refugees in accordance with the African reality and conditions.
- There is need to support efforts in Eritrea in relation to good governance, capacity building and the development and implementation of the judiciary, legal systems and processes.
- There is need to assist the Eritrean government and the diaspora by creating the space for dialogue to take place, and work towards the country's development.

d. To the UN

- There is a need to indefinitely extend the mandate of the special rapporteur on Eritrea until such time when the Eritrean government has of the recommendations at the 4th UPR Cycle.
- There is need to enhance the capacity of Eritrean civil society organisations operating out of their country to be able to participate in UN processes and enhance their access to resources.
- There is need to create the framework for the Eritrean Government to work on the implementation of the UPR recommendations that it supported during the 4th UPR cycle.

e. To civil society actors

- There is need to continue supporting Eritrean civil society organisations through capacity building and access to resources of various nature.
- There is need to heighten advocacy on the human rights and political situation in Eritrea.
- There is need to support Eritrean asylum seekers & refugees in resettlement in host countries and access to opportunities.
- There is need to assist with the protection of Eritrean human rights defenders and civil society organisations.

f. To donors

- There is need to enhance access to funding for Eritrean civil society organisations operating out of their country.
- There is need to ensure that all investments made in Eritrea are compliant to International Human Rights Law and do not damage the wellbeing of individuals.

g. To the media

- There is need to raise awareness about the human rights situations of Eritreans in and out of their country.
- There is need to heighten awareness about the contribution of civil society to their development of Eritrea and Africa as a whole.

h. To the European Union (EU)

- There is need to engage in bilateral relations with the Eritrean government on bilateral cooperation hinged on promotion of rights to freedom of assembly, expression and choice.

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