

President Isaias Afwerki gave extensive briefings pertaining to domestic, regional and international issues in an interview he conducted from the 6th to 8th of September 2013 with local media outlets. Excerpts of the interview follow:

Your Excellency, according to the Geez Calendar we are changing from summer to harvest season, so our first question will be in relation to food security as it is common in this region, this year's rain season was not satisfactory. What is the government national plan to utilize the many dams and wells it has been constructing to yield a concrete result in agriculture and agro-industry? How far have we gone in this respect?

Rain is not dependable. If we take for instance the record of the amount of rain in the past, we would ultimately come to the conclusion that there is no other option than freeing ourselves from depending solely from rain. If we could be able to collect the rain and use it in the places we want and in amount we control, we would be able to manage well even in seasons where there is no enough rain. However, we cannot altogether be free from rain-fed agriculture. That is why we need to ask what we need in order to make the transition towards an agricultural practice where irrigation plays predominant role and where our yield goes beyond consumption to become export oriented.

The theme we've been following that is preserving every drop of water and the soil should be accompanied by small and medium projects of constructing different dams in order for it to be effective. There has to be a practical plan. To make the transition from a rain fed agriculture to agriculture with 70 or 80 percent irrigation based such projects should not be interrupted. But this is easier said than done. Our land terrain might sometimes be a blessing, and we can accomplish a lot with such a terrain. But one needs to study the record of the amount of rain and the different diversion schemes, terraces and other activities that need to be done in each and every watershed. This also has to have a time frame. Even after this preparing the land that needs to be cultivated is by itself a big work. This requires a massive technological and economic power. If we properly manage the watershed area the water could either drawn and enriches underground water or heads towards dams. There is no such land as unproductive if there is a plan to properly manage the resources on the land.

The other issue that comes after water reservoir and irrigation facilities is the question of technology. Every reservoir along with rain should at least be able to produce two harvests if not three. Furrow or drill system is not affordable. By employing all the techniques mentioned above and making massive investment we have to utilize every drop of water to get the maximum output. To this end we have to introduce advanced irrigation technology and use better seeds. We can procure these or we can produce some of them ourselves. But in any case it is a lot of hard work. Even if the technology is acquired the question of energy to run the technology is another issue. Especially because the dams and water reservoir are usually away from electric services, hence one needs to find its own energy sources. We can of course consider other alternative energy sources like solar and wind. We can also employ the use of gravity coupled with other technological alternatives.

In order to maximize our productivity, we need take the experiment in a given area and find ways of applying it to the whole nation. Places might differ in their size and the amount of rain they get so we can add water reservoir, diversion schemes, and irrigation techniques to some places. We might want to speed up such program and projects, but the issue should be seen from the point of view of one's capacity in terms economy, technology machinery, on top of other government priority we have to take in to consideration all this factor be practical.

All in all, there might be seemingly big projects that are accomplished, but in light of what we need to achieve what has been done is very marginal. There are other related topics like distribution mobility of people, services and others. If a reservoir is built in a place where no one lives, it didn't hit its target. These are social issues that need to be taken in to consideration. The reservoirs are not the governments they have to be inhabited by people ultimately. And for these inhabitants to whole heartedly accept the new places and properly use the place to become highly production, then they need to be trained. The new villages that are established around the vicinities of such places have to be provided with social services like health, education, transportation, energy, communications, and other services. Some places have good services but in other remote places where there is the potential for agricultural activities new settlements cannot be done only in papers. The bottom line is whatever facilities one puts in place for agricultural purposes, man power is absolutely essential. Besides, food security goes beyond producing for domestic consumption and aims for export.

In general our agricultural output fluctuates as far as meeting the national demand is concerned. We should be able to meet this demand through irrigation even when there is no enough rain. And we are on the verge of achieving this goal. We cannot altogether be independent from rain-fed agriculture, however we have not also reached to the point where we can confidently say we have made the transition to irrigation led agriculture. But whatever the condition of the rain is we are on the right track towards our goal. It needs time. This year's rainy season might not have been enough in Asmara and its vicinity while in other place it might have been satisfactory. In any case we will have time to evaluate this year's rainy season at the end of September.

Mr. President, can you elaborate on the Agro-Industrial institutions?

If you are thinking of your products in terms of local consumption and exports, you need to have agro industries. What is the use if you sell your products raw? Processed and packed products are more advantageous for both local and foreign markets. And to undertake such processing ventures for all types of products, you will need industries. Such projects lead you to the importance of power supply. Electricity is vital for establishing industries and other investment ventures.

For instance if u have an area suitable for cultivating cotton, you are in need of many facilities for processing it. Is it better to export the raw material or the manufactured fabrics? If it's the latter, then u will need an industry. If you want to manufacture clothes from the fabrics, you

will need yet another industry... it's a continuous chain and only when you are capable to provide all the chain components, you should be able to say you have fully realized the project.

These projects might seem small. Some of them might be aimed for domestic markets but they will still demand the necessary packing facilities, efficient transport system. We should not look at the phrase "food security" alone; we should be able to view it from different perspectives. You should not neglect your envisioned projects because of shortage of water. Agro industries are vital and complementary with all food security endeavors.

The topic of agro industries is a vast one. But we have been working on it and have registered some successful results. There have been negative ones also but they shouldn't keep us from lurching forward, except maybe the availability of resources or funding. But I think the picture is clear.

On the issue of the provision of potable water supply in urban and rural areas, water supply problems persist in several Eritrean cities, including Asmara. What plans are there to eradicate such problems?

There is one plain truth here: humans should go to where there is water and not the other way around. If we take this statement as a rule, all projects should take into consideration the development endeavors and economic progress being registered.

When talking about water supply, we will remain disoriented if we are going to focus only on the urban centers. There should be a general understanding when we say people should go to where there is water.

As we observe through history, civilizations tend to live in specific places where there is water because water is a necessity for living. And then they would settle there and with the advent of modernization (roads, electricity and other developments) cities emerge.

In our case, there are areas where the natural resources have not yet been exploited and where we can carry out development endeavors. These are giving good signs of economic progress through the different projects being implemented. The bottom-line is however the fact that the flow of people needs to be adjusted with the different factors defining economy and its growth.

Coming back to your point, it's being said that there is water shortage in Asmara. If you ask me, I don't think that's a priority for me. Of course, that doesn't mean water is not essential in Asmara or that people shouldn't drink water or improve their livelihood.

But who is given the priority? With people moving towards bigger cities, and water consumption going over the line, it would be problematic to ensure adequate supply. If water is considered as a national resource, then who is really making good use of it? People living

outside the urban and semi urban areas barely have enough water for their mouths, let alone for their showers. These are also citizens and have their rights, and therefore should have access to the basic services, most of all potable water. It's not a matter of charity, it is their right. If you are layering the necessary infrastructure to provide these urban and semi urban areas with potable water, then you also need to draw the other people to places with enough water and basic living necessities.

If we take a look at foreign cities and towns and their master plans, the first thing that comes, apart from energy, is water. For instance it rains for nine months in Singapore. The city is like a village in size and yet, with all their water, every hotel has a notice cautioning against the waste of water. We saw the same when we went to New York the year before last, and stayed in a hotel by the Hudson River. The city has a population size of let's say 15 or 20 million, but they have enough water and didn't need to put up similar cautions.

We are not even close to their stage, but they can serve as examples to consider how water supply, its infrastructure and related services can be planned in cities, towns and rural areas. Housing, water supply, its distribution and efficient use should be carefully considered so as to improve the living standards of the people. The ongoing endeavors of food security, agriculture, dams and irrigation, all need to be geared towards that goal.

People should not be forced to move to where there is water, it should be by choice. But one cannot and doesn't have the right to say 'I'll stay here just make sure to provide me with all the water I want.' Some cities had water treatment facilities installed during their foundation, which perhaps need to be updated and modernized so as to be able to recycle the floodwater and factory wastages.

We need to look at the issue of "water shortage" from a wider perspective. Just because tap water or the water truck didn't come one day, there is no need to blow the case out of proportion.

Nevertheless, these people reserve their right to potable water. And since water is a right, there needs to be efficient planning on its utilization. People can complain but how can these complaints be addressed? Are they even justified? These and other questions need to be considered.

If the media broadcasts provide good campaigns on the usage and importance of water, every citizen would raise his or her awareness and we would have abundant water, enabling us to use it effectively in the dams, distribution centers and even our homes.

When it comes to infrastructure, especially road networks and railway, there have been a number of activities carried out in the last a few years. Still, as part of the national master plan, there are short and long term plans related to construction – mainly road networks and the like. Given that considerable expenses will be incurred for doing these things, how is the domestic capacity for the implementation of such plans? What about the possibility of other means of funding these projects?

Of the seven infrastructural areas, road network is the basic one. Roads, dams, residential and other houses, electricity, communication technology, mining are interrelated and they influence each other. In this case, roads are just like muscles. They are basically important for achieving development goals. Agricultural activities, the construction of dams, soil conservation activities and other activities can hardly be carried out successfully without having road networks connecting different places. We may divide roads into two categories – asphalted roads and those roads that have not been asphalted. We do not have a finalized plan in relation to the need to have effectively adequate road networks.

This is an issue that has to be handled flexibly. Basically, it is not that possible to implement development plans, which we aspire to realize, based on the inherited asphalted roads. By the standards of these days, in terms of their width, their quality and the places they connect, the inherited roads we have in Eritrea are not effective.

This indicates the need to have new road networks in the country. This does not mean that the roads we already have are entirely useless. To this effect, maintaining and further improving these roads will be also very helpful for realizing development goals.

Which road network is more effective? The one that connects Keren, Aqurdat and Barentu or the one that connects Liban Habela, Mensura, Aqurdat and Sawa (up to the border between Eritrea and Sudan) without going through Barentu? The importance of the latter one is not a controversial one. One important issue is what type of road should this be – what can this road be used for? What about the expenses that have to be incurred in a kilometer? What will be its use for all types of trucks? Will it be helpful for passengers? Given the topography of the area, we need to consider the resources that have to be used for this investment. Such road networks can be considered major roads.

The existing roads – such as Asmara-Keren, Keren-Nakfa, Asmara-Adikhala, Asmara-Senafe – should be further improved according to the demands associated with such services. Considering their current situation, these roads can hardly be considered modern ‘asphalted’ roads because they are very narrow. Hence, we should not be limited to these roads. Instead of the Massawa-Asmara road, we may alternatively think of going to Teseney from either Foro or Wia through Adiqeyih, Mendefera and Barentu. There is also a need for road networks connecting different places in Gash-Barka where there are various significant development projects and programs. In line with the expansion of services and development plans and projects associated with our economy, we need to have a number of asphalted roads. It is important to have roads connecting the coastal areas of Massawa and Qarora, Massawa and Assab, and beyond that it is very helpful to have roads connecting these parts to Djibouti. It is very useful to have a road directly connecting Gulbub, Afabet and Zara without the need to go through Keren as these areas have important resources for developing our economy. So far there is no road that connects these areas. You go to these areas through indirect roads that make you incur a lot of expenses. This is not cost-effective. All these are associated with important plans that are helpful for developing the economy. Until we are able to realize what we aspire in this case, the roads that are not so far asphalted – the existing roads in general – will certainly remain useful. But eventually they have to be asphalted and further improved.

It is not possible to have investments, for example, agricultural projects, if there are no roads that are helpful for transporting your produce in a cost-effective manner. Therefore, different factors must be considered when we want to have a particular road network in place.

This has to be studied extensively. While we have a general picture about what has to be done in relation to this issue, there is no a finalized plan related to road networks. We are in the process of developing specific plans as there are preliminary studies that can guide us on how to proceed with the issue of constructing effective road networks.

At this time, it may be difficult to assume the responsibilities of having well-developed road networks using our domestic capacity. But little by little it is possible to develop domestic

capacity for dealing with such issues. In many countries, it is often believed that such major projects are better handled by foreign companies. This belief is also reinforced by the influence of the companies themselves. While it is true that it may not be realistic for a country like Eritrea to claim that it can do everything by itself since such countries certainly have limited domestic capacity, but it is not impossible to develop domestic capacity step by step. As mentioned earlier, it is very difficult to construct the Asmara-Liban Habela-Mensura potential road with the help of domestic resources only. However, after some years it will be possible to do this with the help of cumulative experiences acquired over the years. Here it must be noted that those roads that are part of our immediate priorities and that cannot be dealt with our domestic capacity should be constructed with the help of external resources. Generally, everything that can be done with domestic capacity has to be done domestically simply because, unlike the case of doing things with the help of foreign companies, this will enable us to acquire relevant experiences related to road construction. In this case, assessing your domestic capacity is imperative so as to tell things that can be done domestically from those that can be done with the help to external support.

The major existing construction companies in Eritrea such as Segen, Asbieko, Bidho, and Keyh Bahri has acquired good cumulative experiences. 80% - 90% of the roads I am talking about can be constructed with the help of these companies. The next important issue is the issue of machinery. The machinery we already have has significantly improved our capacity to implement such projects. In addition to the issue of machinery, manpower requirements, and the need to have experienced and capable companies, one has to think in terms of construction raw materials.

Another important issue is the issue of funding the aforesaid projects. Compared to those projects that can be financed through our own currency, those dimensions of the projects that can be financed through hard currency create more pressure. Of all the concerns that have described above, oil is the most important factor. This is the most constraining factor as it is imported with the help of hard currency. Hence, we need to take into account the effect of what we do on the need for oil as we have limited resources.

When it comes to energy issues, one of the biggest problems we have is associated with the issue of electric services. Another challenge associated with infrastructural projects such as building houses and other similar projects is the corresponding requirement for cement as it has very strategic importance. To this effect, we have established a cement factory as it is far better to have your own locally produced cement factory than to import cement. However, as there is not electric supply that enables this factory to be operational for 24 hours, currently the factory is not functional. To this degree, energy is one of the most important factors that affect important infrastructural projects.

Overall, at this moment, we are in a better position when we consider the road network conceptual plans we have if we think in terms of resources mobilization, time frame, and our domestic capacity to implement such projects. However, it has to be noted that there is a need to be cautious in managing the strategic resources.

The role of a railway network is also very significant in facilitating the implementation of development goals. At this time, this has not been considered as part of our top (immediate) priorities because the demanding efforts related to this investment are not that easy and affordable. However, it doesn't mean that this will remain postponed for ever.

Mr. President, ports, harbors and airports play a great role as facilities for development and economic growth. What has been done so far towards the improvement of such infrastructures and for adding new harbors and airports with the help of domestic

capacity? What are the plans for making these infrastructures effective enough for local and global services, that is, the intention for making them attractive for business and trade activities? Would you also please tell us about the free zones for which much money and energy have been invested?

The ports we have in Eritrea – Assab and Massawa - are not that effective. These ports are used for importing goods to Eritrea and for exporting goods from Eritrea. Their services should not be limited to this level only; they need to be expanded further.

A lot is said about the Port of Assab. These are just talks that are colored by political motivations. I don't want to talk much about this issue. The Assab Port, however, has to be expanded further. People may tend to feel that the Port of Assab is there just to be used only by Ethiopia. But if it is improved and expanded to the required extent, it will certainly be of service to regional as well as global actors. This issue should not be associated with and hindered by the current security problems. Expanding and improving this port is a strategic project. When and how we do this could be a different issue.

Given its infrastructure, you can't claim that the existing Port of Assab is a real 'port'. The Port of Assab has not eclectic supply. It also lacks water supply system. If its situation in the 21st century is the same as its situation was during World War II, let alone by global standards you can't consider it a port even by regional standards. Regardless of what we may face during implementation, we have prepared a plan for expanding the ports. Whenever we think to implement this plan, we need to think in terms of the corresponding demands for energy, electricity and water. One has also to think in terms of the need for corresponding airports. Regardless of our capability, we should consider the corresponding need for relevant infrastructural projects. Ports and free zones are very important as there are more activities carried out in these areas than in Asmara. Therefore, ports should be associated not only with importing and exporting goods but they should be used as fruitful grounds for free zone activities and should be used as trade and manufacturing centers. To this effect, as stated above, there are plans prepared for expanding the ports of Assab and Massawa. But there are some constraints for implementing these plans. Once these plans are put into practice, the ports will be regionally and globally competitive. It is only then that we can talk about the relative importance of the ports.

When we were intending to build the Massaw Airport, many funding institutions told us that we don't need to have it and we were told that doing it was not within reach taking into account our domestic capacity. While we have not been using it effectively, this is an asset for the future; its services will certainly be very useful for future purposes.

It is not only ports that need to be rehabilitated and further expanded; harbors too should be rehabilitated and further expanded. There must be many small and medium harbors. All activities should not be limited only to the two large ports – Assab and Massawa. There must be also road networks connecting all the infrastructures that we intend to build. There should also be more airports that will be used for the said purpose. Then not only Ethiopia but even Djibouti can make use of these infrastructures. Overall we should not be too late for implementing the aforesaid plans.

In relation to the issue of airports, we can't limit ourselves to the Asmara Airport. This too cannot be considered a really effective airport by modern standards. There should not be an airport in the country that is better than the Massawa airport. Therefore, the Massawa airport should be expanded soon and all the facilities that make it operational should be in place as soon as possible. Such airports are important not only for port purposes, but they are also very important for trade, industry and tourism purposes. This can be further justified by the concerned technical experts, but the Asmara Airport cannot be as useful as the Massawa Airport. Energy consumption and the corresponding costs incurred while using the Massawa Airport for transporting people and goods are much less when compared to that of the Asmara Airport. When we think in terms of the airports we need to have, that is when they are ranged in terms of their importance that of Massawa will be the first, that of Assab the second and that of Tesseney and its environs will be the third. The Asmara Airport may be considered a fourth or fifth in importance. There can be also other airports like that of Sawa. The Sawa Airport is not being used currently, but it will be very useful in the future. It is also very important to have an airport around Tesseney.

What have been planned in relation to the said infrastructural projects cannot be put into effect using only our own capacity. We need to make use of external resources, skills and expertise until we can gradually develop our domestic capacity. Therefore, we will work in partnership with others so as to realize what we aspire in connection to having the required infrastructure in place. If we are to integrate our economy to the global economy, we cannot do things by ourselves only.

When we think of the infrastructural investments associated with ports, airports and harbors, we need to take into account the situation of the Red Sea region. What we do is likely to be dictated by our location. To make an effective use of the location we have, we need to contemplate on what infrastructural projects would be more helpful for our purpose. This is to mean that there are situations that certainly affect what we do and what we are going to have – our choice. In this case, we need to be very concerned about the standards of our infrastructural investments. One way or the other, the aforementioned infrastructural investments have to be realized as soon as possible. This must be considered in comparison with the other priorities we have. However, these are projects that should not be delayed.

Your Excellency, Could you explain the ways and means of expanding the scope of the free zone in line with the plans to upgrade the potentials of sea ports or building new ones?

The Free zone is just at the stage of the conceived idea. It is important to issue the necessary proclamation, and thus to expand its scope stage by stage. However, it is not possible to create a free zone without putting in place the necessary infrastructures as I have mentioned earlier. If one plans to use Massawa as a hub of investment, there is a critical question that needs to be posed. Is there any viable supply of electricity? Is there sufficient water supply? Is there suitable land, marine, air and other transportations facility for transporting goods and people? And is the potential investor capable of using it as an investment hub? Nowadays, free zone is not a bad concept. But, it is unrealistic to say we have created an actual free zone. But, this does not mean we should give up for it has not succeeded despite the attempts made to develop a free zone through issuing proclamations and working for years towards its implementation. We cannot say we have developed the capability to develop an actual free zone that could motivate potential investors and owners of business ventures by just issuing

proclamations and rectifying policies alone. There are also other complicated issues. We have not even fully utilized our national potential. A few small-scale plants have been put in place. In case of effective harnessing of fishery resources and exporting national products via Massawa port, we should ask whether we have the required facilities or not. Sustainability of water supply is also among the uncertainties in that environ. In case of fishing, especially around the port city of Massawa, do we possess the preservative and packing facilities aimed at export? The capacity for fishing by itself is insufficient vis-à-vis the required potential for related services. Export of fish can also be considered on the basis of free zone. Fishing activities in Assab area may have their own territory. The Launching of a free zone is a good idea. It is not only an impressive idea, but it can also be implemented on the ground. We should not however forget that there are numerous factors that need to be implemented so as to make it reach a higher level of standards.

You have been touching the issue of electricity supply earlier on different topics. Is the capacity in this sector insufficient? Scarcity of electricity supply has been negatively affecting different production plants. It has indeed been a constraint. What clarification could you give us about plans charted out to bring sustainable solution so as to positively impact economic growth at a national level?

Among the major constraints in economic growth is the supply of electricity along with that of fuel. During inception, the electricity supply system was interconnected, which could serve only to a limited part of the country. It is an outdated system. Its nominal capacity did not exceed 120 megawatt. It could not meet the national demand apart from that of households and services which do not involve significant consumption. It was installed from the viewpoint that its capacity would be extended phase by phase. We cannot say it is working at its full capacity. There exists maintenance problem as well as spare parts deficiency. The disconnection of supply of electricity here and there is an indication of the existent situation of the power plant. The available electricity supply potential has ensured only limited outreach with a major lack of potential towards areas of the western lowland such as Omhajer, Teseney, Haykota, Akordet and Barentu. The charting of a plan to this end is a vital prerequisite so as to gradually meet the growing demand at national level. We are just on the way of tackling the crisis. There has been a technical problem in the supply of electricity that needs to be addressed. Solving the technical problem would not, of course, solve the problem in its entirety. Thus, mapping out of capacity expansion plan along with tackling of all sorts of constraints is a necessity to deal with each development. Since the local experts we have could understand it better, it would not be difficult for them. This is not only about upgrading the supply capacity but also about expanding power distribution networks. To what extent could one central power station cover? Is it better to reach all areas from the central power station or there should be a network of two or three sub-centers? It is to be decided by experts if the western lowland needs separate power station and whether Assab and its environs must be connected with the power plant at Hirgigo or not? If Assab and the areas around it are to grow as economic zones, it is significant to work on integrated services of sea ports, airports, water supply and transportations that could promote links not only inside the country but also with neighboring countries. How much would be the demand of electricity supply? An installation of new power plant may be required in line with different development programs to be carried out on the northern part of the country. The available potential of electricity supply is totally insufficient. We have been focusing on means and ways of upgrading this capacity. Attempts made to install new generators that aimed at bringing transient solutions

for household consumption in some areas and particularly in some cities have not borne fruitful outcome. So, there should be a lasting solution that goes beyond what has been done and in the case of carrying out major agro-industrial projects and industrial activities, due assessment of electricity supply demand need to be done. In this objective situation, all activities that require supply of electricity are not functional including that of the cement factory. Middle and small-scale business ventures have been affected by such scarcity and nobody can deny this. But, this problem could not be solved in isolation.

Above all, the main victim of such scarcity is the cement factory. It is to be noted that cement demand in this country is not of a small amount. Despite the ability to produce cost effective cement at local basis we have been obliged to import cement due to the scarcity of electricity supply and the effect of which has been a constrain in the implementation of different infrastructures in other programs. Hence, sustainable production of cement could not be realized without bringing a lasting solution. Upgrading the potential of electric supply alone could not enable the cement factory give a 24 hours service. Thus, the cement factory need to have an alternative or substitute power plant of its own so as to meet the demand required for all round infrastructural programs. The issue of the cement factors is a clear indication as to what extent huge the problem is. Industrial plants like textile factory and other small-scale business ventures and all activities that relay on electricity supply have been affected by such deficit. But, are we still using the electricity supply in its full capacity? If we are producing thousands of megawatts but we are not making use of it, what is then its significance?

Besides, it is to be noted that the power generation currently at use has been driven by heat engines that are fuelled by furnace or gas and not by other means such as water or wind. No matter how huge the amount of such like power generation would be, what matters is the ultimate cost it requires to produce one megawatt and on what projects shall this energy be utilized. The end result of putting in place the power plant is aimed at minimizing the costs of different items and thereby to make due contribution in the overall economic growth. Hence, until necessary preparations and assessment to maximize electricity supply potential is carried out, we have only mapped out transitional plans that could help us address the current crisis. At this time, an extension of energy supply may be required. For the time being, new power stations that could correspond with the size and production capacity of each respective sector of economic growth would be put in place. Finally, different economic zones of the country would have their own networks. All the distribution lines that pass through Foro, She'eb, and that reach around AKordet, Barentu, and distribution lines around Teseney would be joined to a centralized national network. But, where is this supply of electrify generated from? What are the ways and means of expanding the capacity and ensuring the sustainability of the current potential of the transitional electricity supply? These are questions that deserve no hasty answer. It is to be noted that a hasty decision of finding alternative ways that lead to no way out situation would not be taken under the pressure of such crisis. Through making maximum use of the resources we have at hand, we will find a medium term solution that would alleviate the scarcity and thereby we would be able to chart plans directed towards the promotion of other programs. There is imbalance of demand and supply of electricity in some sectors, industrial plants and in smaller-scale business ventures. I have been bringing these all additionally points just to make it clear that the issue of electricity supply need to be seen in a wider range of time and under a broader context.

Your Excellency, as you mentioned it earlier thermal energy is expensive. So are we going to depend on this source for the future or are there other options? For instance, is there a plan to supply it from the neighboring countries? Solar energy, thermal energy or other renewable resources? What can you tell us about this issue?

Ideologically it is feasible. Sudan for example has energy harnessing projects in *Merewi*, *source* and *setit abara* generally supplying thousand mega watts. Since water is the main source it has more advantage than the thermal energy. We need to put in consideration the regional issues if we set up the electric line to the west and we could provide a temporary source for the time being and we could also develop this. In a nut shell the use of the steam energy is very expensive. You have to know the price for one watt per hour or its fairness. If I get electric source in fair price from the neighboring countries, I don't think I will face any problems if there is a mutual agreement. This doesn't mean that we haven't considered this option. For instance, we could buy supply rights from Ethiopia's millennium source if they are selling such rights (aside the border issue) the same applies with South Sudan if there is such a source in the country. The infrastructure programs are the basic factors which influences the cooperation and support of regional issues. You can interrelate in different infrastructure programs without trade and other assistance. For instance, Djibouti; do they have it or not is another question; however it is said that they are going to harness geothermal energy source. If they are selling it and if the kilowatt per hour is favorable in terms of price and provision we can buy from there too. Around Tesseni and Assab we have our natural resources capable of harnessing these energies. This meant that we can initiate it as any "Rift valley" countries. Who knows we might be able to have other resources. At last what is important is, are we competent to minimize our expenditure in energy; be it that we harness it ourselves or else that we got from our neighbors. If there is an opportunity there is no difficulty to buy it. We shouldn't be influenced with a narrow way of thinking. We are working by thinking ahead comparing our past and present and if possible it is good to enhance our own capacity. There are also programs of renewable energy as a pilot study. We can also incorporate all the aforementioned possibilities. In terms of solar energy we can determine the potential according to its mega watt. We do have the potential but exploiting it is a bit expensive. Overall, as a final procedure of this process is to open an agenda and do all the paperwork on this topic and evaluate all the feasible possibilities that can eventually yield us the targeted growth when applied in relation to strengthening the cells of the source of electricity at affordable costs. These points need prior considerations beforehand and that is why we are evaluating the whole process. It is already on agenda with our neighboring countries. The main point is that whether or not this web of sourcing can reach our borders. If so, can we connect it to our system? Is it compatible? Is the supply we get from them secured? Is it affordable? Does it match our level and the stage we currently are on? These are some of the many questions that are put aside for consideration. However, right now the immediate plans are directed towards the infrastructure projects that need immediate attending.

Mr. President the price of housing both for sale and rent is creating a huge pressure on the public, how do we come up with a permanent solution for the problem of housing and buildings and its consequences? How does the national plan look like towards the development in housing and its prioritization and implementation? Is there any plan to develop and strengthen the domestic produce of cement, bricks and other construction materials?

Yes there is a plan but in a nutshell the plans we being pursuing so far remain to be as ‘good plan’ inspired from good intentions and wishes. Good wishes are always good initiators but finally by the end of the day one must be able to accomplish these wishes through tangible actions. In accordance to our historical heritage and riches, the demand of housing for residence and other service rendering places in cities, towns and villages for the purpose of attracting tourists and tourism aside, if seen only from the domestic perspective, it is safe to conclude that all the program inspired by the goodwill were not successful. As a wish all the lacking, the one who is sacrificing his/her time, efforts and desires for the nation could be able to have a house to live in. but despite all the planning and efforts, this hasn’t worked yet. there are some works to encourage private investors.

For example let’s take for instance the Kushet housing, how is it? How far has it solved the problem of housing in the city? It can’t even be backed up with numbers and statistics. It can’t even be categorized as houses. But in contrast the Sembel, Massawa and the Korea project can be mentioned as good examples of projects towards addressing this question of housing. I can’t say it is the best yet but it has served the purpose of its construction- it has lightened the pressure of housing demands in the city. The journey we embarked to be self-reliant in our approaches towards construction like that in Massawa undertaken by Musa Ali Construction Company hasn’t yet being finished due to some obstacles. The same goes to the Mai- Hutsa project. The only houses that have gained good evaluation are the villas that are currently inhabited by government officials. But how much of the problem has been solved with this? What have we accomplished so far with our plans and wishes to have nothing but the best? Nothing has been solved yet. It can be done through a private sector, Eritreans in Diaspora have a keen interest in this arena. They want to work and accomplish for themselves and the nation at large. But the path we have embarked so far will take us nowhere. We need to revise our policies and plans and come up with much more effective and practical plans and policies that can yield tangible results and that can also root out our problems of housing. So we are starting afresh.

Here there are some basic materials that should be supplied. One of the many is technology. We tried the *thermonor technology* in Asmara in a certain zone but the program could not be pursued any further neither the technology. Again there was this project in Masswa in Alebu where the N-2 technology is applied, it was considered effective, efficient and cost-effective, yet we were not able to use this either. A successful project is the one in Massawa , the Precast project, we have managed to build bridges and other infrastructures. In contrast to other technologies, we have applied before it is the best so far in terms of cost-effectiveness and efficiency. Other than this other private projects have not solved anything big the minor and immediate problems aside. Nevertheless, when will be the time to own a house or build one for those who are currently sacrificing their time and effort working for governmental posts? Moreover, how will he/she afford the price? What kind of house will that be and where is it going to be built? These aforementioned questions and more should be researched in regards to their social and economic aspects and should be provided with the right technology and resources.

The plan to apply the most cost-effective, efficient and quality technology that will help us approach our goals in constructing efficient houses will serve us as a stepping-stone towards addressing the issue of housing in general. This should not only be confined in Asmara and its surroundings but should also cover all the other towns and their surroundings’ too. In the future we should muster all our experiences, research the target areas and apply the best technology to a synergic effect when take on projects

We have machineries and other construction materials. This goes well with the construction of roads and infrastructure and it is suffice to say that we have no weakness in that arena. In short, we have amassed enough raw materials. This complies with the broad plan we have in securing housing demands in the country. Such plans cannot be undertaken by importing cements from abroad. In addition, we cannot build houses only with bricks. There is a huge demand for cements and the factory has been set up for this purpose. This factory has to be able to operate 24 hours of a day without depending on a supply of electricity from the Hirgigo electric source to meet the demand of the cement for all construction purposes of houses, infrastructure, and other programs. Nevertheless, for the immediate solution we have installed the technology and have initiated the housing projects, regardless of the current position of the cement factory, we have supplied cement from abroad for now and the plan is on the go. It also requires other building materials. Let's not forget the question of bricks here. Ginda'e bricks factory cannot even begin to sate the local demand and its quality could use some refinement. We need a factory that produces a product that meets the requested demand, quality and affordable. Parallel to the housing programs we need to supply the entire infrastructure needs like health services, education, sports activities, recreation centers, markets. Let's use this technology in an open areas and opportunities until we master the use of this technology. Even if we cannot take on such projects on our own, we could broaden our expertise through cooperation with our partners. Therefore, this is a just pilot project. We have to get ready thoroughly and cover all the basic factors before we take on the big projects. We need to fulfill provision of electricity services and other economic services. We can say that although it needs some refinements, we have general national plan for housing- both residential and other services in the country.

Feedbacks have been accepted and we have learned a lot from our experiences to start afresh. This does not mean that the new plan we are incorporating now is perfect with no flaws and that it will solve every problem. However, since the question of housing is one of the very big issues with a high priority on the agenda, we have tried to fulfill what it requires to embark on a journey to address this issue. However, to address this issue properly and say that we have taken all the proper measurement we need to secure enough cement provision for cement is the basic factor in construction.

Who is the beneficiary of this project is another topic of discussion for another time being. It is safe to conclude that we have come so far from the point of the start although so many shortcomings were observed with our previous approaches. We are in stage where we can march forward with our strengthened good wishes and aspirations. It is not always bad to be modest, sometimes big bubbles just burst easily.

Your Excellency, it is to be recalled that the housing projects by civilians was stopped and hence the people involving in the field were particularly hurt. But since the sector has the potential to open up opportunity in terms of huge employment and the growth of private sectors what is the plant to encourage housing project by individuals at the moment?

Many good intentions have not been used to do good works. It might not be the right time for criticism but it is those private sectors who are engaged in disseminating propaganda saying that they could do better job than what the government is doing. I call this "wall street lobby". However, if the private sector had done a good job in utilizing and exploiting the different opportunity the government had created in housing project, agriculture, and other areas we

would have been held back. How these opportunities been properly used? Or have they been squandered? We need to answer this with proofs. The issue is not about separating the private sector from the government. There is no such thing. Leaving every projects and services up to the private sector is like following the '*Tatcher program*'. We need to be thorough in our definition of the private sector. What is this sector? How does it function? In which fields does it operate? How about its finance? We have to talk issue by issue with concrete proof.

When we talk about the private sector in relation to housing projects the issue and focus should not be confined only in Asmara. What has it achieved? Even in the relatively successful projects like Enda Koria (Dembe Sembel) complex, there are a lot of misdeeds encircling it. The speculation and misdeed in the Tesa (traditional land allocation system) is staggering. There might admittedly be financial constraints but ultimately the land has to be properly used. How was the hundredth of hectares of land that were permitted people who supposedly were to develop it and export its yield used? We need not go in to details.

Development programs like Bademit and Gerset have to be ultimately developed by individuals. But such people have also to be qualified and able to utilize the resources properly. And the projects must ultimately benefit the wider people who are going to till it. These people can get training and gradually garner know-how and money to join the private sector. It is the people who can work off this projects that can be called the private sector. The concerned bodies in various fields might better answer this but the involvement of the private sector should be scrutinized in terms of how much investment and work has it done and what the outcome was in its contribution to development . the issue therefore is not about the dichotomy between private sector and the government. First off the private sector cannot replace government institutions. Without being pressured by the western economic philosophy we need to first create the condition and environment to develop the private sector. There has to be the proper infrastructure, declaration, and policies to accommodate the sector. Having private sector here and there, and speculation couldn't even sustain the developed countries as the crises they are in attest to this fact. We don't want to repeat this experience. Without going to the philosophical debate, we need to deeply understand ways that could create conducive environment to the flourishing of the sector.

We cannot develop our economy otherwise; the government should contribute its due share in this respect. After we prepare the condition then the people must be the beneficiaries. We didn't struggle so that only the few could benefit. And we cannot build a nation like this. Some criticize saying 'opportunities for investment are not given'. But the people need to be aware of the ground reality about the preparation that has been made in every sector and their development. You, the journalists should show the picture by seeking answer from the concerned bodies.

As you have stated the solution for the housing problem is constructing new ones. But what can be done to alleviate the problems in relation to the high price of rent temporarily? Is the government also getting its due share from it in terms of tax?

It is a big and an important issue. We can talk a lot about it and identify the problems of the costs of shortages of houses. As I said before the good intention and wish we have could not get us to the place we want simply because of shortage of supply. There should be enough houses with reasonable price. We can ask why the price went so high but the ultimate solution

is to build more. But the current price of houses are very contentious issue and the concerned offices should give explanation in another occasion. The issue might have more to do with Asmara. Are the houses in Asmara enough to accommodate its population? How about the problem associated with circulation of ownership? Issue by issue they need to be investigated.

Especially in Asmara, there are numerous illegal practice that harm people. It is said that the demand and supply is causing the soaring of rent price. Although inflation is natural in an economy, this particular issue of house rent needs to be seen in comparison to other economic activities. The main victim here is wage workers who work in government institutions and who pay rent. Indeed this also include people who live in government owned houses. But how could other manage to live in rent houses owned by individuals with the wage they get? If there are legal contracts how can the price go high? The other issue is that the owners who rent their house have to pay the proper tax to the government progressive with their income. But there is a scenario where owners could increase the price of rent by threatening customers of eviction while not increasing their payment of tax accordingly. Such practice need to be promptly curbed before it becomes part of the common practice or culture. The perpetrators also need to be held accountable to their action. Protecting customers from unjust practice is the responsibility of the government and its institutions. Otherwise what does authority mean? What does being citizen or right mean? What does law and order mean? The issue could only get worse with time. There might be some corrupt officials engaged in corrupt actions and abuse of power. But ultimately rent price need to be fair.

At independence in 1991 the first action of the government was to return the houses that was confiscated by the Dergue regime to their rightful owners. It is ironical to watch now owners doing whatever they want in house transactions under shady agreements where the government is deprived of its rightful benefit. The issue is not one we can just address in this interview. We need to study the issue of house rent to bring the solution. Owners have the right to make a decent profit through renting their house. But the practice of house renting that is harming the customers needs to be rectified. It is an unacceptable scenario in need of a thorough diagnosis and solution. The concerned government institution and bodies must address the issue properly.

Mr. President, the role of communication and especially telephone and internet service is evident in this era of technology. Is there any plan to expand and develop these communication technologies?

We can see this issue from two points. The first one is the service that is being provided by Eri-Tel. Comparing the ability to communicate now with few years before, we can say that Eri-Tel is doing a good job. But we have yet to reach to our goals. Communication service can be used for individual purposes and it can also be used in various development programs. In any case it is a great facilitator technological infrastructure. Our long held view is that there must be an effective communication web or system inside the country. The land line and mobile telephone service is progressing well. But ultimately the whole system needs to be interconnected with fiber. We could employ the service of micro-wave but in this era the best option has been found to be fiber. There is a fiber line in Asmara that passes through the Red Sea. There were also some projects targeting Africa and there are also other services owned by other companies. Whether as service provider or consumers we have many options and we need to select the most effective and affordable one. We need to make a study of the market to

determine the most appropriate one for us. We don't have the fastest and more reliable internet service in this country that we can use for everything we need. The right experts can study this but we have the fiber web or microwave as options. This is needed in order to make Eri-Tel expand its services in the country. Eri-Tel has employed this in certain cities. But why didn't we expand it there are a lot of technical reasons. There could also be financial constraints but if the technical issue is solved, the financial aspects couldn't be that difficult. But at the moment the priority remain connecting all educational institutions and colleges through micro-wave. Communication is of great importance in educational institutions. Hence without being tied up by the issue of fiber, we need to first and foremost put in place a plan where computer labs all over the country's educational institutions could develop and give satisfactory service. There is of course shortage of quality and number of teachers; there are schools that are not getting proper service due to their remoteness; there is shortage of libraries, workshops, laboratories, books and the likes. So to compensate for these shortages, communication and information technologies can play decisive role. We can transfer knowledge to 20 or 30 thousand students at a time through these technologies, as they can multiply our resources. To use these technologies to give such service in education we can increase the band width of the micro-wave while exploring the possibilities to employ fiber. So we are working toward connecting educational institution through micro-wave web.

Since one of the important use of internet is to form a connection within and outside the country, where educational institution form relation with each other and with other institution from outside the country; it is the priority of the country. The quality of education is the outcome of the endeavor towards improving it. And technology is one aspect of the endeavor that can make up for the shortages there of. There is a computer assembling facility and we are trying to equip every school with computers. So while the ultimate solution will come through stages of development, we are making efforts to alleviate, albeit temporarily, the shortages of communication technologies in our educational institutions for better outcomes.

Let's pass to mining. There is an investment made in this sector. Can you give us a picture of those sites that are in production stage and the future plan in the sector as a whole? Also there is a lot of information from the web-sites of the companies involved in mining in Eritrea. But the government of Eritrea has chosen to be cautious in dealing with the issue. Can you give us your explanation?

I have commented a lot on this issue though I am not keen to do so. To give hope and to deceive are two different things. Do we really have to talk about some of these issues even? The companies can talk about it as they want. The point ultimately is how much is the dividend of the government from the profit the companies declare? And how much can that cover from the government's expenses? It is not difficult to guess just how big and costly all the projects we have mentioned before are. People would be left amazed if we talk about the sector in numbers. It is pointless to talk about high hopes without reasonable estimates and evaluation. There could be no resources only the few benefits from; nor is there that is reserved. There should not be any deception. We can talk about what the companies are saying or writing about. As a policy we should focus on programs that can bring about permanent and sustainable solution to our challenges than focusing our attention to the misconception that these resources will solve all our problems and become idle. We can't put aside the major infrastructure projects that are underway just to alleviate temporary problems. The development programs we have mentioned and not mentioned so far demand 4 up to 5

billion dollars. To carry out all these depend on our income. The number the companies display cannot even cover the budget for fuel expenses for half a year. I can debate anyone who claims to have information on the matter if necessary. But what's important is that no matter its magnitude the resources are being used for the right purposes and that there is no corruption or wastage. There needs to be careful plan as to use this resource for essential current and future programs. For instance we have mentioned about Massawa and Assab earlier. If we try to engage on programs that are not our priority we could incur opportunity cost. In light of our relation with the global and regional economy, this cannot be our priority. We cannot put this in the same level of importance as those of building water reservoir, road construction and energy programs. The execution of the program therefore can take time according to our capacity and ability. Idles can talk but cannot bring solutions.

We don't want to talk about it much but we are not getting our fair share from the mining because we didn't have strong capacity all along from exploration to extraction, and hence we lose many shares we should have gotten. The countries engaged in mining are right to do so because it is very profitable. We don't have any option as we have no expertise, technologies or facilities. Every expense is included in the cost and the share becomes less. This is one of the policies and issues that need to be revised. We need to have a clear picture about the management of our mines. There were explorations during the Italian colonial period and afterwards, and there is also an ongoing exploration projects. In order to determine our resources and manage them better we have to have strong institutions and systems. We need to evaluate our experience so far to determine the way ahead. How can we work with the companies in partnership? We will work towards developing our resources to improve our people's livelihood by getting our fair share of the deals we are going to make in the future. We have acquired the expertise; we have technology, machineries and facilities. We have learned a lot. We have managed to do this with the entire belligerence forwarded against us to curb the development of our mining activities. We will revisit our experience so far with the different companies we have engaged with or will in the future. But I can only wish that what people talk about all the money being made from projects like Bisha be true. Giving hope to people is one thing but deceiving them is wrong. The government doesn't intend to deceive people with its policy. We don't have government that steals or squander the resources.

Mr. President, the government has been subsidizing on basic consumer goods in a bid to facilitate people's livelihood. Just to have a better understanding, how much do these subsidies amount to? And what is being done to mitigate rising prices, inflation and fluctuating markets?

We can talk in figures. In 2013 for instance, we had an expenditure of over USD 320 million for diesel, petrol, furnace and gas. This is a big chunk from our electricity and energy programs. How much furnace does the Hirghigo power plant consume in a month? And how much is paid for one kilowatt/hour? Customers, businesses, factories and industries, big or small they consume power but they can't pay for it in dollars. You are selling in Nakfa what you have bought in dollars: do the tariffs you charge cover your expenses? You have to provide fuel in spite of the price fluctuations worldwide, but you can't but fuel in Nakfas. These subsidies pose a big burden and challenge on the economy.

Most of our agricultural projects are run by the government. All the tractors require fuel to operate and so do the dozers and other machineries employed in the construction of roads, dams and other infrastructure. There are no immediate returns of all this fuel consumption but we are working with a belief that it will have contributions to the future economic development.

We should not look at the government as an abstract entity with unlimited resources. Many of our services are flabby but we are continually trying to improve them. If we take buses for instance, anybody can attest to the improvement of transportation services in the past 2-3 years. It may not be a big thing, because we don't even have adequate road systems, but we are trying.

Subsidy is not charity; it should only be regarded as a long-term investment.

For obvious reasons, there are different social responsibilities in this country. There are the disadvantaged sections of society who fall under the government's responsibility. Education for example is free for all. And so are health services. Apart from the locally produced medications, the price of drugs that the government imports in dollars doesn't even come close to the revenues it gets. This is not something that the government does because it is generous. You shouldn't even differentiate saying that it's the job of the government or the people or the nation. All policies issued by the government belong to the people.

The solution at the end is to boost the productivity in every sector. There is no such thing as "for free," the nation as a whole needs to work and avoid unnecessary expectations.

The national commercial revenues have a significant role in creating great job opportunities for citizens. Is the existing policy concerning business license really geared toward that objective? How will it be handled in the future? And in line with this, what plans are there to refine the taxation system?

This issue would need its own program because the rumors are too many. I was talking with various concerned authorities in the past 2-3 weeks. There should be a reference as to who is qualified to obtain a business license.

There is this document I wrote in 2009. “The question of who is entitled to a business license should be revised; the conditions that must be met for obtaining a business license should be known; all details should be pointed out, including the legal obligations that should be met; policies and even the forms used should be enhanced and redrawn...” this was the gist of the document. Had it continued in the way it was going, it would have probably gone astray. 1

Trade has to be purely trade and not that something you do in the sidelines. Anybody has the right. If one wants to engage in trading he can do so, as long as there is transparency and he fulfills all obligations and pays proper taxes.

In the end, you need to have the mechanisms to monitor the policies and procedure guidelines issued. If there are no monitoring bodies, you can't say trade or investment activities are going well just because you have put in place good policies or good strategies. The worst thing is when those monitoring partners get involved in embezzlement and corruption. This has been discussed upon since 2009.

There is also the issue of contraband goods and illegal trading activities. It has already been 4 years since this became a serious topic. Because it's a topic that demands more attention, I would rather not just touch the issue in a 5 or 10-minutes answer. And since it's an issue that directly involves the people's livelihood, I think it should be given more ample time for discussion with the people so they can have a clear image.

Mr. President, previously there have been two conferences held to promote investment. What has been done in their aftermath? Could you give us an elaboration on the investment opportunities, the nation's unexploited resources, and the expected domestic and foreign investments?

There should be not only an interview but an open forum for discussion. There is nothing like transparency. If the population at home and abroad is to participate in development, it has to do so aware and sensitized. You should not only issue policies but provide suitable ground and favorable environment as well. The past conferences set a good initiative in terms of that.

One can say I'll invest in anything but he should be asked what his capacities are. He doesn't need to necessarily have millions. The good will doesn't hurt but it's not enough. The concerned government bodies and the line ministries in particular need to draft roadmaps of

the different investment opportunities in their respective sectors. And the media needs to focus on these lenient points.

The investment opportunities do not concern only those in the Diaspora or those with foreign currency or generally those with money. There are also those who can invest their intellect, profession or knowledge. If one has ideas but is short with money, and provided he finds someone who can lend him, then there is no reason why that person shouldn't invest, work hard, return his loan and move forward.

Therefore, the investment opportunities are vast and the citizens at home should participate at large. I think it is a timely and important issue for you to organize an interactive discussion with the different concerned bodies and ask them for their investment roadmaps and what offers they have so far obtained following the conferences, so as to get a general image.

We will now move on to the health sector Mr. President. Eritrea has been lauded for showing commendable progress in the eradication of polio and malaria as well as in mother and infant healthcare with respect to the Millennium Development Goals. Yet, Eritreans are nowadays traveling to neighboring countries for better and advanced medical services. What is being done to improve or expand the existing health services?

The number is not that significant. Health service is among the principal demands and surely needs to improve in number and kind. There is a referral hospital in every region, with adjunct health centers everywhere. These could be fitted with the necessary medical equipment and medicines. But in the end it all comes down to the human resources. That's the biggest challenge. What is the current status? Is the demand being met? When it comes to some grave illnesses or health problems that cannot be treated here, patients must be provided with services here. There were cases where patients were sent to the Middle East, Italy, Germany and other countries, apart from patients who went on their own for medical treatment. The government has the responsibility to look after the life of its citizens. If a medical service cannot be provided here then definitely that patient has to go abroad. And this applies to everyone and not a few privileged only.

The rumors that "there is no good health service here but abroad" are simply emotional and basically associated with perception. Just because you go abroad doesn't necessarily mean you get the best treatment.

But what is the best alternative? With which countries can we collaborate? We can work together with Sudan in developing our human resources. There is a medical college and various training programs in this country. There is also the skill we acquire on top of the collaborations we have with Sudan, Germany, Italy, China and other countries. That's the primary aim of these collaborations. The question of adequate medical equipment might come next.

We can share experiences by bringing foreign doctors and their equipment so they can work here and sending our doctors to work over there; their students coming here and ours going there and so on. It's easier to send people to Sudan instead of sending them to far places and pay for their transportation and living expenses. Going to Sudan is like going to Tesseney, on top of its cultural advantages. The principal aim of these programs is like I mentioned before: the advantage of professional exchange.

However, this is not solving the basic medical needs at the national level. Therefore, if we are to boost our capacity in terms of medical supply, equipment and human resources at all levels, we need to incorporate them with the other development endeavors.

While in the same topic, Mr. President, private clinics are not permitted in this country. There are hospitals with excess number of physicians, negatively resulting in the hoarding of people in one place. Shouldn't private clinics be allowed to operate?

I would rather you directed this question at the officials in the Ministry of Health. I can only share my observations. Medicine, just like any other profession, has ethics and professionalism. The ethical side is much stronger.

Private clinics can function well. I say that the private clinics in Sudan are among the most successful experiences. But it's quite ineffective to attempt doing so here just because it succeeded over there. First of all, there is no capability. A doctor can be called fully capable only when he has worked for several years under an experienced doctor after graduating from medical college. Otherwise, anybody will be able to open a clinic.

There are stories that doctors neglect you in hospitals but welcome you with open arms in their private clinics. Ethically speaking, why would you harm the public service? Why would you want to abandon it in favor of working elsewhere (in your clinic)? Is money all you care

about? Why would you put people's lives at risk? Do you even have the aptitude of a doctor? So many topics can be raised so it would be better if they were raised at another time.

One of the interesting television shows is I think the "Doctors on the Studio" program. Amid its challenges, I think it endorses the concept "prevention before cure." It plays a role in raising the awareness of people. The advices the doctors give in the studio is like they are giving it to you in their clinics... so it should be encouraged more. But this doesn't mean that there should not be private clinics. If a private clinic can provide the services that public health institutions cannot, and if it makes its due contribution to the public health, then there is no problem. But in our case, it should be handled carefully because it's an issue that raises a lot of questions.

Your Excellency, we have talked about different development programs. In the end, their implementation relies on effective management (administration). Do we have the desired organization and management system for implementing the development programs we are planning? What about the reorganization and structural adjustment that has been promised?

Management is dynamic and should have a spiral growth trend. The different government bodies should be organized with regard to their roles. Restructuring should not be only for the sake of restructuring; time went by as we tried to eliminate our shortcomings, garner our strengths, sift the ideas and information from different corners and reach to a solution, all this in an attempt to achieve high organizational capabilities. Given the dynamic nature of management, the adjustments you make cannot be the final and efficient ones, but you move on carrying out more modifications on the way. Efforts are being done to organize training programs so as to boost capacity as well.

The need to reform the existing structure and organizational system in the line ministries and other government institutions prompted a method of carrying out internal adjustments as required. But we cannot say it has been finalized.

We have three development programs. From the available projects (road, bridge and dams or what we call as the strategic projects), each company has taken up the feasibility plans of a project. Whether these companies will be working jointly or individually in scattered places will be seen within the framework of the restructuring.

Then we have the housing projects. We have had a number of companies but taking into consideration the reasons I have just mentioned, it was decided that they needed restructuring. Therefore, all the construction companies have been incorporated into three major ones, each with its own technology, machineries and skilled personnel. And for the time being, each will take active part in the housing projects around Asmara. They will then proceed to the regions.

I say that rearranging the development programs should be given priority because you need to be standing strong if you are going to implement massive development programs.

At present fuel provision is our biggest challenge. Since we incurred heavy expenses in 2012, can we now manage with the plans drafted for housing and other infrastructure projects? What can be done for these companies to start operation before 2014?

So far they are only teetering to carry out the necessary reparation works but when the restructuring process is complete, each will take part in the aforementioned programs. The same goes for all ministries and sectors.

At the end of the day, this restructuring is dynamic and will keep undergoing different adjustments with time.

The task of mobilizing and arming citizens has been carried out extensively. What should be done in order for the activities and requirements associated with the Popular Army to be in harmony with the economy and the lives of the citizens? More importantly, there is a need to consider the effects these activities may potentially have on the productivity of government employees and by implication on the provision of public services.

The very need to have popular army is basically part and parcel of our doctrine in Eritrea. If there is anyone who tends to feel that there is a better alternative to this option, that person must be someone who has not properly learned from history – cumulative experience. As we have learned from the experiences of the last 20 years, there may be influences intended to make us believe doing these things is not going to be useful at all. Having popular army is the basis of our existence as a sovereign state. Those who tend to say that this is useless have to be those who are not properly aware of the things that promote the national interest of this country. Mobilizing the citizens for this purpose has been postponed due to the border war and other concerns that preoccupied our mind. Not only for the purpose of war, but for other purposes too, the people have to be physically and mentally prepared and mobilized. Those who oppose this issue may have a different agenda of their own.

Even the participation of women has been weakened for the last few years. National service, too, is not being practiced to the required extent because of the fear of the effect (disruption) it may have on education and the acquisition of different skills. For this reason, in the last few years, national service has been practiced only conceptually and the young people have not been forced to go to the fronts or join the army. There is a center for vocational training that has been established at Sawa for equipping the youth with vocational skills. The army is also involved in all the activities that are being carried out by the different sectors in the country as the Eritrean Defense Forces are there not only to defend their country. Generally, it is the people that are considered the army in Eritrea. To this effect, the way we organize ourselves and mobilized our resources is consistent with the situations we face and mobilizing the Popular Army is a doctrine that is very relevant in our case.

We have three fronts. Depending on our experience, there must be a reserved army that is expected to support the defense forces whenever there is a need to do so - in an attempt to defend our country. In addition to this, it is also important to have an effectively mobilized popular army for purposes associated with development process. Unlike what is articulated for political reasons, to me the strongest army in the world is that of Israel. This has its own historical reasons. The regular army in Israel is not more than 200,000. Their reserved army, however, is more than 500,000. Let alone the citizens living in Israel, even those Israeli citizens living outside the country are part of their country's reserved army. In Eritrea or in any other society, what has to be done by the regular army must be supplemented by the

reserved army. Arming and mobilizing the people is not a new thing in Eritrea. We are just revitalizing what we used to do (as part of our tradition) in the past regardless of the names given to it. While almost all citizens have been part of this process in a short period of time, still there are rooms for improvement to materialize our goals to the extent required. It takes a long time to effectively mobilize an army that is ready enough to face all types of eventualities. So this is a process that needs to be improved continuously. Doing these things is not associated with threats or current problems we may face. Rather it has just been part of our tradition, as stated above. Promoting national security is not thinkable without the help of what I am saying. Military capability cannot be assessed taking into account the warplanes, the weapons, the artillery and tanks one may happen to be equipped with. Considering the experience in Eritrea, if one tends to measure military capability taking into account the aforementioned factors, that one must be someone who has not properly understood history. One way or the other, every citizen must take an active part in defending the country and developing the economy.

Mr. President, let us proceed to political and diplomatic issues. While the sanction imposed against Eritrea by the Security Council of the United Nations has been proved that it is baseless, why is it still not undone? What about its impact? There have been also campaigns that attempt to prevent remittances coming to Eritrean families from the citizens who are in the Diaspora. Would you please explain to us about the popular, legal and diplomatic efforts that are meant to overcome these campaigns?

So far there is no as baseless and shameful sanction as this one that undermines justice and rule of law in the world. If we try to retrospectively examine things, it is utterly clear what the main purpose of this sanction was. We never accepted the sanction and we can never accept such a sanction under any circumstances not because it affects us but basically it is a legally baseless sanction. We can list a number of conspiracy plans, military and security, that were designed to weaken Eritrea. Sanction is just one of these conspiracies. Another part of such conspiracies is the different forms of attempts to waste the resource of this country, especially those campaigns that are intended to make the youth victims of human trafficking. A third part of these conspiracies is aimed at retarding development endeavors in the country by targeting the income sources of Eritrea. These are conspiracies for devastating our economy. To this effect, the conspirators wish to stop our mining activities and they wish too to incapacitate our ability to defend the nation. What is remitted to Eritrea by the Eritrean citizens in the Diaspora is not something that is given to them in the form of donation; rather it is earned. It is a right to get rewarded for whatever work that you contribute in any part of

the world. It is also a right to spend the money you earned in whatever way you like. All such attempts are shameful and baseless.

Last year it was allegedly said that weapons were transported from Eritrea to Somalia through a plane. This is a clear fabrication and there are a number of such fabrications. Due to such conspiracies, some young people have left the country. Overall, however, the conspirators have not been successful. All the abuses and fabrications in the name of human right were eventually proved to be baseless. At this time, there is nobody who can believe the justifications (fabrications) for the sanction. Many UN member states that wrongly supported the sanction confess and regret that they were not properly aware of the situation and that was why they wrongly supported the sanction. The sanction issue has been a forgotten issue and it seems that there are other issues that are more important than this one at this time.

Overall, while we have been able not to be disrupted in our development endeavors because of the sanction, we can't say that the sanction that was declared before four years has not any effect at all. Despite all the challenges, we have been able to carry out our development efforts. All the attempts that were intended to destabilize the Eritrean people have, to the contrary, further strengthened the people.

When it comes to the Eritrea-Ethiopian issue, you have already talked about the public relations games that are meant to cover up certain crimes and to further complicate things. Would you please further explain to us about this issue? And how is the Eritrea-Ethiopian issue as well as that of Eritrea and Djibouti issue to be finally settled?

It seems that the root causes of all the problems associated with the border issue and all the aforesaid conspiracies are the Woyane; the main actors behind such issues are different. It can be misleading to consider that these issues are mainly related to Ethiopia and Djibouti. If we try to retrospectively examine historical events, Ethiopia has been an instrument of all colonial powers. Even in the past, Ethiopians could not be considered our direct colonial rulers. The Ethiopian rulers were just agents of the main actors in relation to the colonial history of Eritrea. Starting from the cold war, we were fighting not against Ethiopian colonial rulers, we were fighting against the western super powers and the Soviet Union that were considerably supporting Ethiopia. It cannot be claimed that we were struggling against

Ethiopia as a state or a regime. What is happening after our independence is just a continuation of this history.

We can also relate this to what happened between Eritrea and Yemen. This issue was not raised before 1991. Why was this issue not raised or discussed between the then Yemeni government and the Ethiopian government as a power (agent) colonizing Eritrea? Why was this became an issue immediately when Eritrea gained its independence? The same is also true with the Badme issue or the border issue between Eritrea and Ethiopia. Why was this issue emerged? What happened between Eritrea and Djibouti was not an issue before that time. Why was this issue not raised previously? Did Djibouti talk about this issue in the past (between 1977 and 1991)? This is just to say that all the claims and attempts against Eritrea are the reflections of external agendas that are engineered elsewhere. In these cases, those who appear to be directly related to us are just agents of the forces that mastermind these issues and the corresponding conspiracies.

While Woyane may be benefited from such games, the public relations games and related agendas too are not initiated by the Woyane itself. In this case, the Woyane may be considered a messenger or medium of communication - just a servile agent – of those who engineer these things. Starting from 2009, all the conspiracies associated with the mining activities and other aspects of the economy are not initiated by the Ethiopian regime. It is just a committed agent of those who are one way or the other motivated to engineer these conspiracies. All individuals who tried to come up with different attempts – from Turkey, Europe and others – tended to initiate such attempts just due to lack of awareness. They just claim that there will be a change as the Ethiopian Prime Minister has passed away. This makes you feel that these individuals tend to feel that we have a problem (hostility or hatred) that is associated with individuals. Who is the root cause of the problem between the two countries? Why such public relations attempts after a number of conspiracies?

Your Excellency, Eritrea has presented its written petition to the United Nations regarding the fact that it has been a victim of human trafficking activities. However, similarly there are also campaigns that intend to accuse the Eritrean Government of human trafficking, violation of human rights and religious rights. What is the ultimate goal of these

campaigns? What about the progress of overcoming these challenges through diplomatic and political efforts?

This has to be seen within a broader context. There are various conspiracy campaigns and they have to be dealt with one by one. The case of human trafficking in particular has been one of the most important war fronts within the last fifteen years. This is being practiced because it is believed that the basis of Eritrea's strength is its people. That is why human trafficking is considered a means to weaken the unity of the Eritrean people – the most important strength of Eritrea. To undermine Eritrea, it is believed, one has to weaken the people. In this case, those who intend to weaken the people have to particularly target the youth. As was the case during the liberation struggle, it is the young people who can protect and promote the national interest of Eritrea through their participation in the national service. Therefore, human trafficking has to be seen within such a broader context. We have been looking at this issue for years. We can see that there are many countries that have been part of this process through their intelligence agents. The main actor in this case is the American intelligence agency – CIA. The main task in this case is to make the youth feel that there are good job opportunities and other opportunities that make the destination countries appear to have heavenly opportunities. The process of human trafficking is networked – that is, the human trafficking dealers are networked and help the young people in Eritrea leave the country through different outlets. How you enable people to leave Eritrea as a process is networked from Eritrea to the cities in Sudan. It is also similarly networked how you further enable young people to cross the borders up to Libya or Egypt and finally up to Israel and elsewhere. Young people are being sold like commodities in the process. The networks are adequately equipped with the required facilities such as cars and other communication technology devices. As there are businessmen and intelligence agents as part of this network, the network is very large.

The money paid to those who enable the people cross a border – the human trafficking dealers – can be at times 12,000-13,000 US dollars. Where does this fund come from? We studied the details of this issue for long. We also presented our concern (petition) about this issue to different countries. It is amazing that the American government officially declared that there are favors to Eritrean and Somali immigrants to America. Why is it that there are UN agents that preferentially treat Eritrean immigrants? Many members of such agents have been informally involved as part of the aforesaid network. We have gathered adequately detailed

information regarding this issue. Before presenting our petition, first we talked about this issue with the countries that are being used as outlets for human trafficking activities. Recently, we have started to work in collaboration with the Government of Sudan as human trafficking is a crime that has to be tackled through joint efforts. As the network can be easily tracked through cooperative means, we have been exchanging information regarding on how to deal with the chief criminals who play a key role in the human trafficking process. In the case of Egypt, as the former government was involved in the process, it was not that possible to win the support of that government and accordingly tackle the problem jointly. After that regime was changed, we officially communicated our concerns to President Mohammed Morsi (before he was removed from office). It was agreed that not only to collaborate with each other but more importantly, since human trafficking is a serious crime, we have also agreed to jointly fight it and to diplomatically and politically campaign against it. When it comes to Libya, we disagreed many times about this issue with the Gaddafi regime. While their number may not be that large, those who immigrate to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea go through Libya.

There was a time when something unbearable happened to some citizens. Security members of the Gaddafi regime sold 40 female young people to an Italian bandit group. This was done while we were talking about sending them back to Eritrea. This is just to indicate that some of initiatives to deal with this problem jointly were not successful in the case of the attempts associated with some countries. The reason is that the network is very large and it has different influences. It is also rumored that there are some who were killed during night by unmanned-airplanes in the border between Egypt and Sudan in an area called Jebel Awlad. Those who were killed were mostly Eritreans. There are also much more terrible stories related to human trafficking. In order to control human trafficking, we did our best to jointly tackle this problem with different governments and institutions that are concerned about the issue. While the achievements are not that significant, this was considered one option of dealing with the problem. We just started to present our petition when the problem became very complicated and uncontrollable. This is a serious crime that is being committed against Eritrean citizens.

Why are young people leaving Eritrea? Is it because there is a political problem? Is it because they are oppressed? Is it because there is no a democratic political system? Because there are sophisticated media and propaganda institutions in the west, there have been extensive

campaigns that try to indicate there is political oppression in Eritrea. There are campaigns against Eritrea about the violation of religious rights and other rights. These are just meant to serve as cover ups of their crimes associated with human trafficking. It is really amazing to claim that it is the Eritrean Government that has to be accused of the crimes that are being committed by those who tend to accuse the Eritrean Government through their campaigns. For example, the case of those 30,000 young people living in Israel is very terrible. The crimes associated with the issue have to be first investigated before these individuals are returned as crime has happened to these people. They have to be compensated for their lost opportunities and the time they spent without being productive. The Eritrean people and its government have the obligation to defend the Eritrean citizens who have been the victims of human trafficking activities.

As the young people were part of the national service in Eritrea, it was naively believed to topple the Eritrean Government by making them part of an opposition in the Diaspora, just without the need to train them as they are already trained. What worried much those who hoped to make these citizens opponents of their government is that almost all of the young people, unlike their expectations, were, to the contrary, more concerned about their families and their government. We are also doing our best to have back home those who want to return to Eritrea. However, as I said earlier, the crimes must be first investigated and they have to be accordingly compensated. Now everything has started to be disclosed and we have adequate evidence related to this issue. Therefore, the issue has to be investigated by an independent body. Basically, it is our obligation to defend our citizens and have their rights respected.

Mr. President, earlier you mentioned about the issue of Israel. It is being said that Israel will deport - to a third country (either Uganda, Juba or.....) - those people who entered to the country through human trafficking processes. How does the Eritrean Government see this issue?

In this case, I don't want to say this and that for the purpose of news consumption. We are talking about this issue with the Israeli government just like what we are doing with others in relation to the issue at hand. For this reason, we don't want to respond to hearsay as we are officially talking about it with the concerned governments and institutions.

Let us proceed to regional and global issues of concern. Our region, that is, the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the Middle East has been seriously affected and destabilized in the last 20 years due to political and economic crisis and upheavals as well as external political and military interventions like what happened in Iraq and Somalia. These problems have been also further worsened because of piracy and human trafficking issues like what you said earlier. Would you please explain to us about the perspectives and policies of the Eritrean Government in relation to the possibility of avoiding or overcoming these problems so that the countries in our region would complement each other and cooperate with each other?

We can talk about how our policies have been in the last 20 years. These issues have to be discussed taking into consideration the broader context. What has been the root cause of all the upheavals and instability in the last 20 years? On our part, we want to have trusted, and stable neighbors, which of course would make the region a region that is characterized by complementarities. And our policies reflect these intentions. Different countries can have different policies, strategies and priorities consistent with their respective perspectives regarding their security matters. To this effect, our policies reflect our own given conditions. What determines the policies, strategies and priorities of one state's national security matters? These issues are not determined by what a particular state wants to do or achieve. What takes place in our region is determined by what is happening elsewhere in the world. Why do we consider complementing and cooperating with others to be the best alternative in our region? It is because the choice associated with national security, as stated earlier, is determined not by yourself; rather it is mainly determined by what takes place in your wider environment. If we try to examine things retrospectively and go back to what was happening in the world before Eritrea became an independent state, what were the effects of such historical events on our region? What were our choices by then? And how were we able to get where we are now? There were changes in the world during the time we gained our independence. 1990 and 1991 were the years when the history of the two blocks (Eastern and Western blocks) that prevailed after World War II ended. At that time, there were changes in Somalia and Ethiopia. In 1989, there were also changes in Sudan. At that time there were evidently better opportunities for the peoples of our region. This was an appropriate time (a fruitful ground) for complementing with each other and having cooperation policies with neighboring states in connection to different sectors of the economy. Our policies for promoting cooperation among the neighboring states in our region were developed considering these historical events – even though we also had the same concerns even before the end of the cold war. During the cold war, both during the Haile Selassie and the Derg regimes, we were not being supported by any of the two super powers. But we were able to overcome the problems we faced at that time. Therefore, to properly understand what we have been facing during the last two years, we need to properly assess the situation that resulted after the end of the cold war. Since then, the world has been dominated by a single economic super power that is led by Washington.

What's the danger of this scenario? What are the target of each policies and their vantage point? After the end of the cold war the victorious camp claimed the world and started to plan the world's path, according to their terminology "consolidation of hegemony". The plan for hegemony was even there before the demise of the Soviet Union. The cold war was basically a struggle for hegemony. After the cold war the victorious camp embarked on consolidation of its hegemony. As it is found in their documents they designed a strategy "to manage the world for the next 50 years." The main point of this strategy is to control the world's resources; and it tends to do this by force after dividing the world according to its geographic or economic importance. And the control could be directly if possible or through proxies. To attain this

goal there has to be a representative power in every region that is going to secure their interest. So to control resource centers and security, according to them National Security strategy, they nominate proxies. In addition to this institutions like the World Bank, IMF, UN, Security Council, regional organization, NGOs, charity organization, cultural centers, educational centers and financial centers; all have to be under their control as they are important tentacles for control. If you are going to dominate all these have to be part of one integrated strategic plan. For 20 years this was the policy.

Let's see ourselves in this framework. How was this strategy implemented in Asia, Australia, South America, Africa and other regions? In their paper Africa is divided into different regions. In each region is to be appointed a proxy and in the horn of Africa Ethiopia was nominated with Kenya playing supporting role, and through this power securing their economic and security interests. And our region, due to the Red Sea and its proximity to the oil rich region, has a more significance than other regions. So the development in horn of Africa has to be understood in relation to this fact.

The reason why Eritrea couldn't get her independence after Second World War was due to their decision and not the decision of the authorities in Addis Abeba. The independence of Eritrea was not compatible with their global domination strategy, and hence Eritrea had to be made extension of Ethiopia. After 1991 this strategy took another form, but it was in conflict with our choices. In the 90's we established IGAD with the aim of controlling desertification and drought in our attempt to develop our own mechanism of liberating ourselves from this problem. In order to make it holistic Kenya, Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Sudan, Ethiopia were the members of IGAD. However, this couldn't function because it was in conflict with America's strategy of domination.

Why the issue of Somalia could get resolved; or why the Sudan case end up in secession while it could be resolved through other means; the problem in Ethiopia or in Kenya; our border problems with Yemen, Djibouti, and Ethiopia; all these problems is explained within the perimeters of the strategy of domination. They would do anything to achieve what they want and they employ lies, deception, and force. IGAD therefore is nonexistent today. And so all organization like AU, ECOWAS, SADC, Jemaa Al Arabia must conform to the strategy or they must be weakened or destroyed. The belligerence aimed at Eritrea could not be seen out of this reality and context.

Despite all these however, we didn't choose to be hostage of this history and tried to collaborate when common interest is at stake in regional and international arena. Even this was not seen favorably by the strategy. All our problem arising from the border conflict, economic pressure, economic sanction, can only be seen within this strategy.

The development this strategy brought in the last 20 years is displacement. We can perhaps treat the issue of terrorism aside. The destruction of IGAD was not a peculiar example in this sense. Whatever Saddam was the fact that Iraq was disintegrated and was put out of the picture of the Arab Gulf was a big factor for displacement in the region. This is one of Washington's National Security strategies. The action that took place in Afghanistan with a pretext of fighting terrorism has become a reason for havoc. The plan to put Egypt out of the geography was in fact a result of the past 30 or 40 years of plotting.

If it is not to advance their interest, there really isn't any reason to create proxies. This strategy has been there since the onset of the cold war, only now with a different form. All the

current changes in the world arena are the cumulative effect of this strategy. Egypt hasn't had significant role on the Red Sea, North-West and East Africa, as well as in the Nile riparian and the Middle East. And this was planned. On regional scale the vacuum the absence of Egypt has created is not small. All the chaos in the past 20 years is the result of the strategy. But our line and choice intact. Our foreign policy is based on the idea of cooperation the people in the region. This management through proxies for the interest of others must stop and that is why we work for the development of peaceful and stable region. And here Egypt has to play its due role towards this end. The countries that allowed to be used as instrument for domination by being proxies are always in need of support. The three successive regimes in Ethiopia could only dominate the region by being proxy. If we take Israel's domination of the region it has its own dynamics. And all the parties in the region that are now fighting to get the favor powerful countries, they all have the desire to dominate the region by serving as proxies. We don't want that here for it can only bring havoc and chaos. And our foreign policy has its base in this conviction. The only solution for us is to ensure a region with a relation based on cooperation. The past 20 years have taught us that foreign intervention has been to the large part the reason but agony, problem and chaos. One can claim to be religious, advocate of democracy, or human rights, but since this is not genuine the result of one's action is not as grand in reality.

Mr. President the popular uprisings in North Africa and Middle East that started in 2011 haven't settled down. And in Egypt it has in fact worsened and become unsettling. What is the Eritrean government stand on the Egyptian issue? And if you can tell us about the government's stand on the issue of the Ethiopian Millennium Dam?

If we follow the media, everyone wants to know your stand if a certain leader or government is removed. The reason for Egypt's fall is the result of 30 or 40 years of socio-economic, political, security chaos. The vacuum this has created has necessitated change. The uprising in the 25th of January has its root way back. Because of this Egypt hasn't been able to play a constructive role in the Middle East, on the issue of Arab and Israel, the Red Sea, the Nile, and the Arab Gulf. The intervention of dominant forces has brought up chaos in the region. Change was expected in Egypt but it hasn't come about in a manner that is expected. What is called the Arab Spring is meaningless. If the region is to gain peace and stability Egypt has to assume its due role in the region before anything else. The situation in the past two is the result of the weakness of political organization. After the end of cold war nationalists political organizations ceased to exist. Even the National Arab Movement exists only in name and there were no other powers that can effectively lead the change and lead the uprising, and that is the reason that led the country to the current situation. In Tunisia with the grave situation the people was in, the uprising started with a mere incident of a person setting himself on fire as he could find a employment. In such disorganized situation there was an attempt by self-interested so called influential people to hijack the uprising. But the uprising was the people's. In Egypt there was no organized power that opposed the Mubarek regime with strategy and organized the people. The Muslim Brotherhood only then used the situation to organize itself. It was not a power that can fill the vacuum readily and hence it tried to exploit the situation and make a hasty organization, and then came the Morsi regime. We don't concern ourselves if the Morsi regime continues or who comes to power. What we want is for Egypt to resume its place so that it can play its due role in the region. And the cumulated problems have to be resolved. When we sent message to the Egyptians about the human trek in April, we have notified that we consider the situation as a transitional stage. What we want is for Egypt to

pass this situation in the right way whether it is with the Muslim Brotherhood or with any other organization. How they will do this is up to them as it is their internal matter. Based on this policy we started an effective dialogue with the Morsi regime better than the previous regime. It is not wrong in our part to notify that no matter what their ideology is what we want to see is for Egypt to have a peaceful transition. The problem however is that the Muslim Brotherhood doesn't represent the majority of the Egyptian people. Be this as it may, since it had better organization than any others we chose to engage with it immediately without no delay. And this was going on well. However problem and tension arises when they tried to make change in their attempt to consolidate their power. The fact that Morsi defeated Shafiq who was implicated in corruption with the previous regime, doesn't allow him to claim the peoples choice. But it had helped Morsi to come to power. We accepted Morsi's regime but it couldn't lead and manage the transition stage well and only preoccupied itself in the consolidation of power. And this is what led to the June 30 revolt. Whatever the case may be we would like to see Egypt assuming its role in the region and to do this the transition period must come to an end soon. Our relation with Morsi or with the current regime is based on our policy of engagement and this is our basic principle of our foreign policy. We don't want to see a situation where our region becomes unstable due to the vacuum the absence of Egypt creates and the yearning of different power with the aim of dominating the region by being proxies. If the balance is to come Egypt has to make the transition and play its role. It's not a matter of supporting the Muslim Brotherhood or others.

Mr. President, what is the Eritrean Government stand on the Millennium Dam of Ethiopia?

This is a big topic and I have given the government's stand before. The Nile Riparian has been there for centuries and there has been many treaties concerning it during the colonial times and after. But the current problem surrounding the river Nile, did it arise from domestic players or is it the result of foreign intervention? What is the interest of the people and the countries? And how is it going to be solved? What we have seen so far is the tendency to use the river as a weapon and muscle flexing than using it for the development and stability of the people. We have to come out of this mind set first. If there is a point of contention or dispute it should be settled the right way. I remember during the dergue regime when it was said that Arabs supports Eritrea, Mengistu replied by saying "Arabs may have oil but we have the Nile". This is muscle flexing and in no way related to the utilization of resources for the development of people. We don't have any interest taking part in this muscle flexing. We have nine members and may be more with the splitting of the Sudans. When we were asked to confirm our membership, we declined as we wanted to observe the situation. The main recipients here are Sudan and Egypt. The source countries are many but 80% of the water comes from Ethiopia. The millennium dam is no different than the attitudes we have mentioned earlier. But there are many factors we have to study if we are going to talk about the issue. While we maintain our policy, baseless talks like claiming the destruction of dams would inundate the sudan should give in to more serious talks of basic principles.

The Nile hasn't benefited Ethiopia, the Sudan, Egypt or any other feeding countries. The reason may be because of colonialism, lack of infrastructure, or the problem with government policies. They may have partially utilized it, but this is people's resource and hence it should be used to change their life for the better. It is not the matter of previous treaties or some other lame excuses.

Any agreement or treaty should take in to account and balance a way how the future generations would benefit. It should take in to account the stability of the region. Otherwise the way it is handled now would only lead to undesirable effect. We are discussing with all the concerned parties to avoid such a fate.

The statement that claimed 5000 Mega Watt of electricity and that it could be sold to Sudan and Egypt was misinformation. 5000 Mega Watt isn't even enough to Ethiopia with its population of 80 million. Israel with the population of only 7 million produces 11000 mega. So in light of this the 5000 mega isn't that big if the country aspires to develop. It was also claimed that once the dam is completed it would be used for different economic sectors the proper infrastructures has been installed. So if one evaluates it from this perspective it is not tangible at the moment and the issue hasn't been dealt with properly. The water should contribute to the development of the Ethiopian people within and in line with regional cooperation.

What is currently said about the millennium dam is unrealistic and it hasn't considered the future. Political consumption or trying to appear as if you did something big for the people of Ethiopia or as if you can dominate the region, all this is meaningless. Our stand in this issue is for Ethiopian along with other powers in the region to contribute for the stability of the region. But before anything else the river Nile and other contributing or feeding river should first and foremost benefit the people of Ethiopia. Just because we have a border conflict we don't have ill-wish for the people of Ethiopia. Since it is the issue of future generations it has to be guaranteed.

The anxiety and reservation of Egypt is understandable as it is at the end of the chain. Egypt hasn't been able to benefit from the previous treaties. Egypt is one of the biggest importers of wheat and this has been financed by the US. So one of the biggest weakness of Egypt was its inability to properly use the Nile. The problem however could not be solved through war of words or tension and other alternative has to be found. Our policy on the matter has always been clear; we don't want to immerse in this storm or in this division of camps. We don't have any reason to and we are sticking to our principles and policies. All this fanfare about the millennium dam is meaningless.

Your Excellency! Since secession there has been continuous discord and at times military tension between the North and the South Sudan. What is Eritrea's stance as regards resolving conflicts and other sort of challenges between these two nations?

I will try to see the two sides of the issue. Since I do not see the importance of discussing the views we continually share with respective parties, I will not talk over about it. Generally, our all-time policies have been in line with the experiences of the past twenty years which I have already mentioned. We have carefully followed not only events of the aftermath of the cold war era, but also the phase by phase developments seen in the Sudan after the Enkaz regime assumed power in 1989. South Sudan's problem emerged in the post-independence period as of 1956. The issue of increasing marginalization and violation of rights as well as other problems started to escalate during the first and *second Agnea Agnea* movements and before such revolutionary movements developed to armed struggle when Sudan was under Nimeiry's leadership. Thus, since the first half of the 1990s, we have been pursuing a policy that tries to see the issue in the context of Horn Africa's regional stability. This was among

the problems that need to be immediately resolved. We have heard about the ideas of conflict prevention and conflict resolution for a number of times and such problem also exist in other regions. We have to eliminate these problems if a stable and viable environment that empowers integration and mutual cooperation in this particular region.

I cannot say the drafting of the proposal was ours alone. There are two basic points in this issue. It is above all an internal affair of the Sudanese alone. The right to self-determination is a right that belongs to all humans but it needs to be resolved within the context of unity. Thus, the right to self-determination could be solved through complementarity. The unity should further ensure the right to self-determination. It doesn't, however, mean self-determination could be achieved through secession or separation for it lacks any political or historical cause that could push the issue towards that end. The second part was on matters that concern the exclusiveness of Government from religion and religion from government. Besides other latent problems, the imposing of Sharia law throughout Sudan was what escalated the tension which already started in 1983. But, why did this happen? Religion does not entail individual possession. Any organization or political movement doesn't have a right to establish any religion based political system and the cultural as well as societal diversity of Sudan does not allow for such thing to happen. So, it was said that the problem should be solved on the basis of fundamental principles. There were then two revolutionary movements in the South Sudan that were led by Marshal and John Garang. SPLM's stance was in line with the proposal submitted there off which favors the ascertainment of legitimate rights within a unified Sudan. The revolutionary movement that was led by Marshal was the weakest and it was calling for secession as the only solution to the problem. This is in fact their internal matter. It was said then let there be a solution in which all parties agree on. However, the government of Sudan rejected it and consequently war broke out. Our policy and efforts were centered on the understanding that unity and solidarity of the Sudan is an essential factor to integration and complimentary of this region.

Despite a number of controversial topics, the Naivasha Agreement was signed in 2005. There was also another initiative by EGAD in which so called friends of IGAD were also involved. I could say the issue was pirated. The subtle mechanism of controlling regional and sub-regional organization gradually starts to develop. When the peace process began, the matter was within IGAD only, but gradually so-called "friends" of IGAD came into the picture and then the so-called partners of IGAD followed, and ultimately the matter went outside the control of IGAD and IGAD did not play an effective role towards resolving the problem within Sudan. The agreement says 'distribution of power and resources'. What does this mean? Two political parties cannot share resources of a nation. All national resources are of the people and of future generations. Its management is however the responsibility of the system that would be established. This sharing of power was also included in the conclusive Naivasha Agreement. We had reservations on the Naivasha Agreement then. We can understand from all these points that the so called comprehensive agreement was based on a shaky ground.

Internalization of the matter was also another trend that was to be prevented for it gave external forces a chance to manipulate the issue as per their wishes and whims. Unfortunately it was not prevented and thus everything was under their control and all cases had fallen in their hands. All parties were supposed to take part in the process, before the Naivasha Agreement was signed in 2005. SPLM should not be alone. It should be a comprehensive agreement in which all parties in the Western, Eastern and Southern Sudan take part so as to avoid any sort of challenge that may occur in the future. If the agreement is confined between

two parties alone, it may become a cause for the prevalence of the problem. We expressed our reservations thereon right away.

When need be, we never stopped from expressing the reservation we had about the Naivasha Agreement. An agreement was reached despite gaps and incomprehensiveness. The better solution to the problem was Sudan's unity. However, it didn't happen due to misguided management and subsequently secession of the South Sudan came into being. We never thought the secession of South Sudan would happen. But, we had to accept it as an accomplished fact. Despite all our reservations, our choice was above everything else to honor people's choice. History may give an answer whether the people get a chance to have their own say or they were other factors that affected their choice. Anyhow, South Sudan was separated and became an independent nation. Whether we need it or not, it is now an accomplished fact. Above any other relationship, the ties between the two nations need to be firm for it benefits the people of these two countries and for it serves towards the realization of sub-regional stability, integration, and complementarity. However, external interventions and legacies of the incomplete agreement have been complicating matters. Since the very announcement of South Sudan's independence, we have been exerting continuous efforts to smooth out matters. As people's benefit is to be ranked above everything, no matter of what happened the ties among them need to be reinforced. Instead of internationalizing the issue, agreements need to be reached in petroleum export, infrastructure, trade and investment and strengthening ties which could pave a way towards regional normalization. Regional stability is essential not only for Eritrea but for mutual benefit among peoples of the region as well. At this time, it is hard to say IGAD or the Security Council are playing roles. The parties who have been complicating matters are already known.

Reports that say South Sudan's petroleum lines would reach to Kenya, it will pass through Djibouti and economic ties of South Sudan would find routes through Ethiopia to Mombasa among others could only deteriorate the relationship. This is associated with what they call it strategy of national security which they have been pursuing for the last twenty years. They also work to ensure the sustainability of the crisis and manage it to serve their vested agenda in the region.

Your Excellency! Since secession there has been continuous discord and at times military tension between the North and the South Sudan. What is Eritrea's stance as regards resolving conflicts and other sort of challenges between these two nations?

I will try to see the two sides of the issue. Since I do not see the importance of discussing the views we continually share with respective parties, I will not talk over about it. Generally, our all-time policies have been in line with the experiences of the past twenty years which I have already mentioned. We have carefully followed not only events of the aftermath of the cold war era, but also the phase by phase developments seen in the Sudan after the Enkay regime assumed power in 1989. South Sudan's problem emerged in the post-independence period as of 1956. The issue of increasing marginalization and violation of rights as well as other problems started to escalate during the first and *second Agnea Agnea* movements and before such revolutionary movements developed to armed struggle when Sudan was under Nimeiry's leadership. Thus, since the first half of the 1990s, we have been pursuing a policy that tries to see the issue in the context of Horn Africa's regional stability. This was among the problems that need to be immediately resolved. We have heard about the ideas of conflict

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Reports that say South Sudan's petroleum lines would reach to Kenya, it will pass through Djibouti and economic ties of South Sudan would find routes through Ethiopia to Mombasa among others could only deteriorate the relationship. This is associated with what they call it strategy of national security which they have been pursuing for the last twenty years. They also work to ensure the sustainability of the crisis and manage it to serve their vested agenda in the region.

Mr. President, South Sudan's independence was a spontaneous outcome. The South Sudanese fought for equality and respect of their rights but not for independence. What is your analysis on the issue of North and South Sudan? Will they continue as two nations or do you think there is a possibility of them being united and a realization of a united Sudan?

Wish alone is worth noting. But, if you ask me what my preference would be? I would say it is better if it returns to what I was thinking before. Different issues such as geographic, economic, historic and interest related facts are due causes for the unity of the two nations or else there would be challenges and dire consequences. The Sudanese themselves have been expressing in different occasions their views as regards federation and confederation. There are also parties who think of a complete unity so as to move on towards a better situation. It is not about the idea being right or wrong, it is rather about whether is practical or not? Whether we like it or not, we would accept any option that prevents escalation of the crisis. If it represents and ensures the interests of the people of the two nations it does not matter whether it is unity or federation. Regardless of its outcome, there is no reason that could hinder our engagement in the process. There should be a viable infrastructure if the two nations are to

mutually make use of their resources and particularly that of petroleum. If economic policies and programs that could reinforce the ties between the two nations are charted out, their relationship would be further reinforced. If they work together in programs that require joint investments ventures, cooperation partnership would be further enhanced. What is more is that they cannot be separated in the societal aspect of the relationship. There would be a better relationship provided that they solved their respective internal problems. The sum of all these would lead to a far better situation. The primary error was, however, trying to address by just jumping to the bigger issues while the fundamental matters still remain unresolved. This leads to unnecessary complication. External Interventions and philosophies of think tanks would worsen the problem. If there is a genuine initiative, it would be easy to reach unity. We are always cautious while dealing with bigger topics. Expressing good will or accepting unity for the sake of comforting others would not bring a lasting solution. The only solution to the problem is mapping out a route that takes step by step towards ensuring closer ties between the two parties.

Eritrea didn't give recognition to the three provisional governments as legitimate representatives of the people of Somalia. But, it has been disseminated by different media outlets that Eritrea gave recognition to the newly established government. What could be the reason? Besides, peace keeping forces have been flocking to Somalia such as from Sierra Leone regardless of the said demise of Al-Shabaab. What is your reading on this development?

Giving recognition is not an option in its legal aspect. It does not matter whether the leadership of Abdel Kasim Salad, Abdulahi Yusuf or of Sheik Sheriff assume power. It is not at all about people assuming power. What we focused on is on its content. In reality, there is no nation called Somalia. The stance we opted since the very beginning was all about the presence of Somalia which we all know represented through its flag in the African union and in the United Nations. Somalia is not at all in this picture. Hence, it is not an option to give recognition to any power that comes and goes in such circumstance as legitimate representative of the entire Somalia. So, we should see what giving recognition means in this picture. The question is not about this or that is better or not. We have to deal with those in Hargeisa, in Mogadishu, in Puntland, and with those outside of these areas. But, on what legal or political basis can we say this or that is a legitimate representative of the people of Somalia? Leaving aside the issue of recognition, there is no reason why we do not work with any party in any part of Somalia and encourage the reconstitution of the dismantled Somalia. Above all, it is to be noted that the matter is of the Somalis. If we are to think of working in this region as friends' and partners, there is no reason why we do not support any party or any individual that works for the reconstitution of the Somalia nation. However, the problem is not confined to the realities in Somalia. As global and neighborhood interventions have been complicating the matter, such scenarios need to be tackled. The reason why we condemned the invasion of 2006 in Mogadishu was due to the violation committed against this fundamental principle. What has been practically seen in the last seven years is all about what I have said complicating matters. The cause for the complication of the matter is intervention of neighboring countries. Regardless of them having their national security issue or not, there is no reason that could push them to make interventions in Somalia.

Among the issues that have been the cause of discord in Somalia is the presence Al-Shabaab and Al-Shabaab like terrorist powers. Any power could assume power in circumstances where

there is no government and governmental institutions, where there is no stability and functional system and where everything is in vacuum. That is why the situation in Somalia has become difficult to deal with. It is impractical to destroy Al-Shabaab or any terrorist power based in Somalia using drones. This is only wastage of time, misguidance and complication of matters. Any power from Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Kenya and from any country that thinks of stabilizing the situation is just wasting time. If there exist differences among the people of Somalia from different corners of the country, they should solve such a difference and establish their own government and thus put an end to the crisis. Ignoring this reality, it is an unthinkable to ensure stability through the use of power and through employing substitute mechanism and thus making huge expenditure from neighboring countries or from other continent towards that end. It is hard to guess the size of different forces that have been dispatched in the coastal areas of Somalia under the pretext of preventing piracy activities. However, the people of Somalia alone are capable of solving all these problems. Any party with good will has to support Somalis initiative. If any party tries to become a substitute saying "I will solve the economic problem of Somalia, prevent terrorist activities, and terminate piracy" it cannot at all bring any solution. This is however, what has been repeatedly seen in reality. Apart from complicating the matter, what has helped the intervention of neighboring countries? Now after three successive provisional governments, we do not have a problem to establish constructive engagement since the new government, contrary to its precedes, has at least expressed its will to solve the situations in different parts of the country through constant internal negotiations, and as it also takes initiatives to solve societal problems such as hunger, migration and displacement. This interaction does not mean giving recognition. Since we have made an interaction with the new government, it does not mean we have recognized it as representative of the people of Somalia. We never cut the line of sharing views even when Sheik Sheriff started to speak against us after he left this country. Similarly, we continued our engagement of sharing views with the new regime. We ultimately cannot take these engagements as a substitute to the basic interactions. This is not a choice to any given nation. The Somalis have shown weakness in fighting tribalism. The people of Somalia used to and still possesses different strong qualities which could make them united people. This people belongs to one religion and to one ethnic group, it speaks the same language and there are other factors which could make them different than any other people and particularly from that of the people of Africa. Despite putting an end to some tribal outlooks which were about to divide them in the 1960s, such attitude, as we see it now, has been reoccurring due to lack of serious tackling mechanism. If we see the political foundation of the war lords, it is mainly based on tribalism. All cheating and corruption occurrences that has been seen are under clan and tribal disguise. This issue needs to be resolved. What intensifies the geographical divisions is also the tribe based politics. It is this internal tribal problem which takes Somalia towards such crisis. What has opened a gate to external intervention is also this very tribal problem. Hence, there should be one system and one government which governs the entire Somalia. Our engagement policy supports and encourages this unity of the Somalis.

If a ground for complementarities and integration is to be created in this sub-region or in the horn of Africa, the issue in Somalia is among the major problems that should be resolved appropriately. If we also see the other side of the issue which continued for decades, it is an accumulated blessing in disguise. It opens a way to manage the crisis and there by obtain any profit from here and there. Making use of those who can act as collaborators with in this crisis is also another issue that prolongs the matter until the aspired time limit. Global and regional institutions like the UN, the African union, and the EGAD have become accomplices of the strategy which stands for a sustained crisis within the region. What these institutions do is just

misguiding and prolonging the issue and it should not seem as if they are resolving the crisis. Therefore, the stance we have on the issue of the people of Somalia does not stem from mere wish or emotional attachment but is rather our moral responsibility. Since this issue is clear to anybody who understands the internal situation and thus reads the issue with in Somalia objectively, there is no reason that makes us argue about the issue of recognition. Hence, we have to support any single step that takes towards a lasting solution and such engagement does not mean giving recognition.

Mr. President, we are now in the last part of our interview. Allow us to pose a universal question pertaining to the culture of nation building. We have seen in these 20 years that nation building takes up a lot of effort, sacrifice and dedication. And with limitations in resources and addition of hostilities, it obviously gets even more difficult. What culture and values and do you think a society should possess so as to be able to confront such a situation and attain its visions and objectives? And to strengthen these values and cultures, what should be done in terms of political and ideological works?

Nation building, not only as a concept but also as an objective, is a challenge that concerns not only us (Eritreans) but all nations as well. If we take Sudan for example, it gained its independence 40 years before we did; but if we look at the situation in the North and South today, did the people succeed in building a nation? Nation building is the biggest challenge of the less developed or third world countries in Africa.

Our exceptionality and advantage is our liberation struggle. Taking into account the situations between the 1950s and 80s, we can say we have gone beyond the processes necessary for laying the foundations for domestic adjustments. We have laid strong grounds for nation building. Eritreans, particularly after independence, were able to lay a good foundation without any dissimilarities and external interferences. And this is one of the factors of nation building and something that you cannot find in other peoples.

In Sudan for instance, we talk and exchange experiences with both the North and the South and this is where the first challenge lies. The problems in Darfur in the North, in Kordofan, evalenuva... are countless. The worse thing is that, tribalism, which was never seen before in Sudan, has led to civil war. Such fragmentations don't help the process of nation building. The people of Sudan were a civilized people, in politics and other arenas as well, and should have never been put into such a quagmire; regardless of whether they got there by themselves or pushed by external factors. But if Sudan is to be stabilized, these problems must first be dealt with.

In our case, the tribal divisions and segregations that existed in the 1960s were surpassed and it wasn't was an easy task to wage a struggle that brought all Eritreans together and aiming for

one vision. During such a process, on top of the existing challenges, we also endured a civil war. History tells us that the British came with intentions of dividing Eritreans along religious lines. This also went by and taught us a lesson. All this was a big step towards nation building.

The structure, mode of functioning, and ideology that the Eritrean struggle for liberation had at its outset would not have even brought independence. But we paid sacrifices, learned our lesson and overcome it. The harmony and sensitization of the people that we harnessed thereafter led us to defeat the strongest army in Africa then. These principles that we have cultivated back then are what guide us today. Dividing up people for individual benefits is not part of our principles or culture. These principles are an asset.

So how do you strengthen this foundation? And how do you erect a strong building on top? This was our challenge in these 20 years. Numerous attempts were made to fragment this foundation. The different external ploys being carried out now after 20 years are also aimed at disintegrating the foundations we have laid and the developing processes we have started on economic, political, social and security arenas. Most of the time, politics that is based on treaties and alliances of tribes, clans, regions or religions is the reason for the failure in nation building processes. Only when a political system that relies on the nationality or the nation itself is functional can you say that there is a healthy nation building process.

If an official gets corrupted, embezzles money, opens different offshore bank accounts and does other illegal activities, his only shield is his clan or tribal affiliation. We can take a look at different countries whose foundations have been fragmented for such reasons. The Democratic Republic of Congo, Congo Brazzaville, Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda, and even our neighboring countries... The disintegrative way of running things caused instability and violation of rights of the people in these countries. This in turn aggravates corruption. Power becomes for the sake of money and money for the sake of power.

Why most countries are in conflicts despite their ample resources is because this fragmental foundation, patched up by corruption, cannot be undone. And when the problems arise, the nation stops halfway in its rebuilding process.

Those who are working on setting peoples apart are those very quarters that appear to care for "human rights." Their main objective is to disintegrate the foundation of unity. But our reserved resource from the liberation struggle has acted as immunity against such perpetrations. The Eritrean people are very strong and have overcome all these problems with bravery and patience. It's true that in such a situation, there are a handful of individuals who chose to become instruments. The ploys being staged using these individuals aim to disrupt

the nation building process, to at least delay it and make it lag behind if not completely bring it to a standstill.

You need to consider all these challenges and understand them in detail. We should not be relaxed just because we have overcome our challenges; instead I say we must always be able to take active initiatives.

Other than as a concept or philosophy, how can you define nation building in tangible terms? Since ensuring the real nation building process is something that we have been working on day and night, it can be discussed in detail in a different occasion.

The topic on restructuring and reorganization that you raised yesterday for example looks like a simple 'formula.' Awareness, organization and armament also look like simple concepts. Awareness is not an easy matter. It doesn't concern one or two experts but the population as a whole. And it is not something that stays in one level, it has to be dynamic. If there is planning, you need to be organized. You gear your rifle, bullet, dozer, and shovel towards one goal and get organized and work to achieve that goal.

What is our current situation? Where are we headed? What are our biggest challenges? And how do we overcome them? There needs to be proper training and campaigning as to how we need to gather our resources, however big or small, and ensure their efficiency beyond the challenges.

In the end Mr. President, is there any message you wish to convey to the Eritrean people at home and abroad as well as the Eritrean Defense Forces, who altogether never gave up their resistance towards all hostilities? What would you like to say regarding what should we do and expect as well as our national compensation and hopes for the future?

When you look at the fortitude of the Eritrean people across different stages and compare it with that of other peoples, you can easily see how deeply rooted it is. Foreign observers assimilate Eritrean nationalism with "idolization", which doesn't exist among other peoples. Had it not been for our people's resistance, the problems in the last 15 years wouldn't have been overcome. How did we get to where we are after the illegitimate sanctions of 2009? Who stood firm amid all kinds of ploys? One can probably attribute all that to the leadership, government, the ministries and administrations... but in reality it was the staunch resistance of the people. Even now, since the attempts from enemies will not stop, one can call for the

continued resistance of the people. This call is not because we are unsure of our people but is merely a reminder for the people to always remain vigilant, and that it should work even harder in 2014.

We have already seen how disastrous the regional and global dominations have turned to be. The adventurous policies that set to “control the world and declare supremacy in money, arms, technology and other influences” ended up leaving the US with a debt of 17 trillion dollars.

The people and the different government bodies should take into consideration the challenges put in our region as a consequence of these crises and act upon it. And since there are numerous idle talks spreading around, meetings, discussions and interviews should be held so as to increase the awareness of the people. You shouldn't exaggerate the small livelihood problems and blow them out of proportion; but before disregarding them, you need to bring them up in open forums for discussion. Concerned authorities should hold interviews. Even the smallest speculations should not be overlooked but instead analyzed to find out the responsible parties and the objective behind them. Everyone should have equal knowledge on the most important issues.

We have heard about the national reserve army. One needs to understand that everyone working under the government is paying huge sacrifices, including the shortages in housing and other basic needs. And this needs recognition. All the youth deployed in the army, line ministries and administrations, construction works, development endeavors or working in different areas of the country in the name of national service deserve not only gratitude but more.

In the end, apart from the usual message to the people, I think it is right to call on all those who are working tirelessly, leaving their individual needs behind, to keep shouldering the responsibility no matter how difficult it may get if we are going to work properly and surmount the different stages we have been addressing these three days.