

## **Justice, Development, and Geopolitics of the Horn: Insights from the Dialogue Session of the MoJ**

**The Ministry of Justice convened a significant dialogue session from 4 to Sep 6, 2024, titled “Justice, Development, and Geopolitics of the Horn.” The event was aimed at further integrating Eritrean core social values into legal framework while addressing the region’s complex geopolitical dynamics that is vital in promoting peace and sustainable development. The session attracted legal experts, scholars, and practitioners from various countries, fostering a rich exchange of ideas.**

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**Professor Fawaz Gerges**

***What are your thoughts on the significance of the Ministry of Justice’s Dialogue Session?***

This conference is highly significant, as it brings together a diverse group of scholars, experts, and special guests to discuss effective strategies for promoting justice, development, peace, and security in the Horn of Africa. Over the past few days, we have explored various themes, including the geopolitical context, potential reforms, and methods to enhance relations among regional countries. A particular focus has been on the critical role of law and justice in driving development and addressing the core values that underpin societal harmony.

***How do you view the current geopolitical dynamics and their impact on the Horn of Africa?***

We are currently witnessing a transformative moment in the global geopolitical landscape, which includes significant implications for Eritrea and its neighbors. The traditional dominance of the United States is waning, and this shift presents both opportunities and

challenges. The U.S. is exerting considerable pressure on countries in the Global South to align with its strategic interests in its rivalry with other global powers. While this creates a complex environment, I argue that countries in the Horn of Africa should avoid being drawn into these rivalries. Instead, they should engage with all parties and diversify their economic and reform strategies to navigate this intricate landscape effectively.

***What lessons can be drawn from the current state of regional cooperation in the Horn of Africa?***

Unfortunately, there is a noticeable lack of coordination and cooperation among countries in the Horn of Africa, which undermines their collective interests and opens the door for external powers to interfere in their affairs. This situation has stifled their ability to function as independent sovereign states. The critical challenge these nations face is how to escape this geopolitical quagmire, assert their sovereignty, and collaborate effectively to become influential actors on the international stage.

Countries must confront their internal differences and work towards fostering collaboration, building bridges, and promoting economic integration. They should explore ways to incorporate principles of cooperation and dialogue into their national policies. The experiences of other regions facing similar challenges can provide valuable lessons in overcoming these obstacles and advancing regional stability.



**Professor Makane Mbengue**

***How do you assess the Dialogue?***

The Dialogue organized by the Ministry of Justice was instrumental in addressing the broader geopolitical landscape, particularly regarding its historical context. The inaugural session in April focused on identifying the core values that should guide the review process of Eritrea's legal framework for sustainable development. President Isaias Afwerki played a pivotal role in encouraging us to deeply reflect on these values. A legal framework that lacks a solid foundation of values is inherently vulnerable, a challenge that is evident in many African nations. Our discussions emphasized the necessity of identifying these values for greater alignment and integration in the legal consolidation process to ensure long-term sustainability.

***What fundamental values did you identify in the Eritrean context?***

In our discussions, we identified several fundamental values that are essential for the Eritrean legal framework: national sovereignty, the rule of law, human dignity, social justice, and self-reliance. These values are not merely abstract concepts; they are critical to shaping a legal system that is responsive to the realities and aspirations of the Eritrean people. By anchoring the ongoing legal review process on these values, we aim to better articulate a framework that genuinely reflects the social, cultural, and historical context of Eritrea.

***What challenges do you foresee in integrating these values into a modern legal framework?***

The primary challenges we face are capacity building and inclusiveness. Capacity building is essential, as we need to ensure that relevant stakeholders are actively involved in the review process. This engagement means providing information and opportunities for participation at every level.

Inclusiveness is equally important. Ensuring broad participation will be a significant challenge, requiring ongoing dialogue and engagement with all sectors of society.



## **Professor Mohammed Hassan**

***Why is it important to align perspectives among the countries in the region, and how can historical context guide future actions?***

Aligning perspectives is crucial because it allows us to build a foundation based on shared values that are deeply rooted in our historical experiences. Acknowledging our shared past helps us confront and rectify both imported values and misrepresented narratives, which can otherwise divide us.

Understanding historical developments provides a framework for addressing contemporary dynamics. By discussing our history, we can identify the issues that have historically caused conflict and work collaboratively towards a more integrated future. This mutual understanding fosters a sense of unity, which is vital for navigating the complex geopolitical landscape we face.

***What role has Eritrea played in the regional dynamics of the Horn of Africa, and what specific strategies can be implemented to promote cooperation?***

Eritrea has emerged as a pivotal player in the region. This proactive stance reflects a vision for a unified Horn of Africa that resists foreign manipulation. Eritrea's transformation from a victim of geopolitical struggles to a significant regional actor is vital for achieving our shared goals and promoting regional stability.

To promote cooperation, several strategies can be implemented including:

- Enhancing regional organizations can create platforms for dialogue and cooperation, allowing countries to prioritize their collective interests over external agendas.
- Promoting trade and economic partnerships can reduce dependency on external powers. Collaborative projects in infrastructure, energy, and agriculture can unify our economies, fostering shared prosperity.
- Establishing joint security mechanisms can help address common threats, such as terrorism and piracy, while building trust among nations. A collective security framework can enhance regional stability.
- Encouraging cultural exchanges and educational initiatives can strengthen ties among our peoples, promoting mutual understanding and solidarity. This can help counteract divisive narratives and foster a sense of shared destiny.

- Developing a regional diplomatic strategy that emphasizes dialogue and negotiation can help mitigate tensions and foster peaceful resolutions to conflicts. By prioritizing our regional interests, we can present a united front against external pressures.

For all these to implement a clear strategy and policy framework is crucial and that's why we are here.

***What is the ultimate goal of these initiatives?***

The ultimate goal is to nurture a unified vision for the Horn of Africa, recognizing our shared history and values. By building a foundation for lasting peace, security, and development, we can transform our region into a cohesive entity that prioritizes the well-being of its people. This commitment to regional unity will ensure a brighter future for all, enabling us to face challenges collectively and effectively.

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Sep 25/ 2024