

**Statement by Minister Tesfai Ghebreselassie  
at African Ministerial Conference on Environment**



**Statement by Mr. Tesfai Ghebreselassie Sebhatu  
Minister of Land, Water and Environment at  
The 10<sup>th</sup> Session of African Ministerial Conference  
on Environment (AMCEN)**

*“Raising Africa’s Ambition to Reduce Land Degradation, Desertification and Drought”*

5-6 September 2024 Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire

Honorable Chairperson,

Excellences,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, on behalf of the government of the State of Eritrea and my delegation, I would like to join the previous speakers to thank the Government and people of Côte d’Ivoire for the warm hospitality accorded to my delegation as well as for the excellent arrangements made for the 10<sup>th</sup> Special Session of AMCEN.

Mr. Chairperson,

Many reliable sources, including FAO's assessment reports, reveal that present human demand for food, clean and safe water, grazing, fire wood and the like has increased well beyond the limits that nature can provide without any assistance. With rapid human population growth and unprecedented trend of change that we are witnessing in the global climate system, it is a forgone conclusion that the future demand for these basic resources will even be greater and the stress to be caused on nature unbearable.

We know well that the potential of food production for human consumption is fundamentally defined by soil and climatic conditions, availability of water, as well as by the level of applied inputs and management. Lack of proper land management and its over exploitation is cause to serious problems of land degradation and decline of yields, with appalling impacts on the livelihoods of farming communities.

In my country, Eritrea, the productivity of not less than 36% of the land is declining due to degradation. Its direct drivers mainly include, among others, unsustainable agricultural practices, overgrazing and over browsing, overexploitation of forests and wooded lands for fuel and construction and land use for urbanization and settlement.

On top of these, global warming and climate change-induced recurrent drought and encroachment of desertification are ever worsening in Eritrea, as in many Sub Saharan countries of Africa.

Mr. Chairperson,

To reverse the impacts of land degradation, drought and desertification, Eritrea has embarked on generational programmes of biodiversity and ecosystem restoration.

In the last 33 years, rural communities, students, workers' unions, units of the national defence force have been mobilized in degraded landscape restoration, soil and water conservation and afforestation activities, following agro-ecological approach.

Thanks to these community based pragmatic undertakings, more than 60,000 hectares of degraded hillsides have been terraced and afforested; about 400,000 hectares of land protected to enhance natural regeneration and 240,000 degraded farmlands treated through physical conservation measures and augmented with agronomic practices. More than 800 big, medium and small sized dams and ponds have also been constructed to develop drought resilience.

The results are encouraging. Nonetheless, we believe a lot remains to be done and achieved. In this regard, we intend to make participation in environmental undertakings mandatory to every citizen.

Honourable chairperson!

As land degradation, drought, desertification and their impacts are challenges that cannot be reversed through fragmented effort, our African countries have more to gain first and foremost in adopting holistic approaches to coordinate and integrate their national policies and actions towards achieving the commonly shared objectives of ecosystem restoration, drought resilience and arresting desertification.

Noting this fact, my delegation calls this 10<sup>th</sup> Special Session of AMCEN to come up with policy recommendations that will impart it great relevance to the expectation of our peoples. It is also paramount for AMCEN to come up with policy recommendations and guidelines for a common African stand in the upcoming environmental COPs.

Mr. Chairperson,

The greatest contribution we Africans can do to the global effort of protecting the health of our planet Earth is to jointly fight desertification, drought and land degradation by mobilizing internal resources. However, it ought to be emphasized that African states, and other developing and least developed countries are entitled to urge the developed country parties to shoulder due moral responsibility to upscale their national ambition target of reducing GHG emission as per the recommendations of science as well as to fulfil their overdue

promises of availing financial and technological support to those most impacted by climate change.

Finally, I would like to underscore the importance of developing Africa-wide environment monitoring system and sharing experience among our African countries in the fight to secure safe environment for their peoples.

I thank you for your attention.

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