

Speech Delivered by Mr. Tesfai Ghebreselassie
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Honourable Chairperson,
Honourable Ministers,
Country Delegates,
Delegates of Regional and International Organizations,
Ladies and Gentlemen;

On behalf of the Eritrean delegation and on my behalf, first of all I would like to thank the people and Government of the FRG for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to my delegation. Special congratulatory words and appreciation also go to the organizers for successfully putting up this all together and hosting the Founding Conference of the International Renewable Energy Agency and availing these wonderful facilities and working condition.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Energy poverty constitutes one of the fundamental challenges that my country Eritrea, like many developing countries, is facing in its struggle for economic development and betterment of life its citizens.

As it stands of today our energy system is mainly characterized by:

- massive dependence on unmanaged biomass resource, particularly wood fuel, the off take rate of which is far exceeded by its replenishment rate;
- lack of access by more than three quarters of the population to modern energy, including electricity;
- total reliance on imported oil as the only source of modern energy services;
- inefficient power generation and distribution system; and
- inefficient pattern and mode of energy consumption.

The current pattern and rate of biomass consumption, which makes up 80% of the total national energy consumption, is mostly used to cover domestic needs in our country. Despite our desire to shift to other sustainable and environment friendly sources of supply, our reliance on bio-mass fuel has not declined much and its consumption still continues to rise in absolute terms. This has already resulted very bad environmental, economic and health consequences. It does not need much of an intelligent guess work to predict that our combat against poverty is bound to be frustrated and more appalling results are to follow unless and until we will be able to take concrete mitigation measures sooner than later.

My government fully understands the need for a new approach and plausible plans in tackling the energy crisis. In terms of political will and commitment, the government is resolute to develop a rational mix of sources of energy supply and sustainable alternatives. Nonetheless diversifying and maintaining a sane mix of the sources of supply to the extent as required by the urgency and gravity of the problem as well as the available opportunity to develop the potential of renewable energy resources, has not been easy.

The meteorological data on wind and solar radiation that we have been collecting from different parts of our country suggest, beyond any doubt, the existence of immense potential for developing solar and wind energy application.

As my country lies within the Great East African Rift Valley System, the potential for developing geothermal energy is also promising. Several sites have already been identified for detailed investigation.

Unfortunately introduction and wide application of renewable energy technology has been practically impossible or painstakingly slow. The barriers are many; the most serious ones being lack of economic resources and extra adaptation cost influencing and limiting our choices, technological capacity and know-how.

So far only a little more than 2000 solar energy systems, with an aggregate capacity of ~ 1.5MW, have been installed in the whole country. They are used for powering isolated medical centers, clinics, residential houses, adult literacy night classes, refrigeration of medicaments, communication relay stations, pumping of potable water for rural communities etc. Besides this, application of solar water heating systems is promoted and its use is on the rise particularly among the middle income class. In the rural communities we have initiated a project to provide solar home lights to households that engage themselves in adapting the more efficient "mogogo", a traditional stoves" developed in our Energy Research and Training Centre and tree planting.

In the southern part of the country, where wind speed is very ideal, demonstrative pilot project wind energy with turbines of an aggregate electricity generation capacity of 800 kW has been successfully commissioned.

My government shares the belief that renewable energy technology is the technology of the future. My country, with ideal meteorological conditions, is favourably placed to benefit from the existing and much anticipated technological refinement and breakthrough achievements in renewable energy, provided it manages to keep itself abreast with the developments.

In this regard my country sees the relevance and timeliness of the establishment of the International Renewable Energy Agency to undertake the proposed tasks. I believe every country has a lot to gain by exerting effort and giving full support to the establishment and functioning of IREA.

On this occasion I am honoured to express my country's full support to IREA's establishment and desire to be its active member.

Thank you!