

**AFRICA WATERS FOR PEACE;  
NILE FOR PEACE CIVIL SOCIETY INITIATIVE**

“We collectively aim to prevent disagreements in the Nile Basin Region and the wider Continent by encouraging fair use of the waters for the benefit of and comprehensive and sustainable development for all citizens and peoples of Africa”

AFRICA  
WATERS FOR  
PEACE; NILE  
FOR PEACE  
CIVIL SOCIETY  
INITIATIVE:  
DECLARATION  
ON THE USE OF  
THE NILE  
WATER BY NILE  
BASIN  
COUNTRIES  
AND  
EXPLOITATION  
OF WATER  
RESOURCES IN  
AFRICA

KAMPALA,  
APRIL 10,  
2021

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## 1. Preamble

We the civil society organizations and experts listed below;

Including, in alphabetical order:

- i. Actions for Change (Tanzania);
- ii. African Council of Religious Leaders - Religions for Peace (Regional, Africa);
- iii. Africa Platform (Regional, Africa);
- iv. Atrocities Watch-Africa (Regional, Africa);
- v. Cairo University (Egypt);
- vi. Centre National d'Appui au Développement et à la Participation Populaire en Sigle (CENADEP) (Democratic Republic of the Congo);
- vii. CIDH Africa (Morocco);
- viii. Civil Society Reference Group (Kenya);
- ix. Environmental Initiative for Sustainable Development Organization (Sudan);
- x. Kituo Cha Katiba (Uganda);
- xi. MAAT for Peace and Development (Egypt);
- xii. Medica Mondiale (Burundi);
- xiii. Uganda National NGO Forum (Uganda);
- xiv. Youth Advocacy and Development Network (Uganda); and;
- xv. Independent Researchers and Experts:
  - a. Hafeez Wani (South Sudan);
  - b. Hagar Monsif (Egypt);
  - c. Muawia hamid I Shaddad (Sudan);

Based and operating in the different countries of the Eastern, Northern, the Horn, the Great Lakes Regions and the larger African Continent;

Prompted to come together to discuss the role that the Civil Society, the Academia and Practitioners can play in the sustainable use and development of the Nile River and its waters as a source of cooperation rather than a source of conflict;

Having convened in Kampala, Uganda from April 6 to 10, 2021 to deliberate on the ongoing dispute concerning the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and other projects along the Nile River;

Collectively aiming to prevent disagreements in the Nile Basin region and the wider Continent by encouraging fair use of the waters for the benefit and comprehensive and sustainable development for all citizens;

Appreciating that there is a significant importance of protecting and assisting all African countries to resolve and avoid conflicts over the Nile and other water-related resources;

Cognizant of the centrality and invaluable purpose of water to life, and how water can be an engine of growth and sustainable development;

Unwavering in our collective belief that international rivers and other water bodies can be a source of peace and sustainable development as much as they can also be a source of conflict;

Convinced that the Nile River can be used as a demonstration of how neighbouring countries in the East, Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region can work for regional political, economic and social integration (as stipulated in the original vision of Organization of African Unity OAU/African Union (AU), based on the Nairobi Vision, Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063: the Africa We Want;

Acknowledging the progress made so far in the ongoing consultations and negotiations regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam;

Recognizing that there is still much more information to access especially in regard to the technicalities of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and its benefits and potential impacts, and, therefore, setting our vision with the humble posture of learning more about the project;

Further recognizing the urgency of the matter and the need for immediate action as the peace and security of the region is at stake; and further cognizant of the fact that the Nile can set a successful example for turning potential conflict into cooperation.

## **2. Introduction**

Throughout the ages, the international Nile River has constituted a means of cooperation between the Nile Basin countries, enriching and sustaining civilization.

However, recent disputes triggered by the construction, safeness and filling of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (formerly known as the Millennium Dam) in the upstream country seem to be poisoning this situation and adversely affecting the relations between the upstream and downstream countries.

Negotiations over the future of the Nile Basin after the construction of the Renaissance Dam appear to be taking different twists and turns, leading to differences in opinion and visions among the concerned parties.

The unfolding situation calls for the adoption of a systematic visioning that brings everyone back to the negotiating table and accommodates diverse views on the well-being of all users, so that the Nile becomes a basis for the stability and sustainable development of all citizens and the countries concerned.

### **3. Context of the Nile and the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam**

Africa has the largest number of surface water bodies crossing or forming international boundaries in the world. The ten largest water surfaces in Africa span 34 countries and have a total drainage area of 350,000 km<sup>2</sup>.

The Nile and Zambezi basins stand out, given their low runoff efficiency (water from rainfall, groundwater and related sources to the river system) and their high dryness index. Both indicate a greater sensitivity to climate change.

For the Nile, General Circulation Modeling scenarios by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) indicate a possible future reduction in the Nile flow that ranges from 30 to 70%<sup>1</sup>. Any flow reductions above 20% would have major socio-economic impacts. Climate change impacts are not limited to river basins, however. They also extend to African lakes, in particular, Lake Victoria, regarded as the source of the White Nile. Dwindling water levels in the Nile also harbor the potential to create conflicts between riparian countries as illustrated by the conflict over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam;

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, on River Nile near the Sudan border will create a reservoir that will hold around 70 billion cubic meters

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/03/ar4\\_wg2\\_full\\_report.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/03/ar4_wg2_full_report.pdf)

of water – equivalent to the entire annual flow of the Blue Nile at the Sudan border. The project is currently the biggest dam project in Africa and has a projected electricity capacity of 6,000MW, and will no doubt have long-lasting impacts on the Continent’s longest river;

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam is nearly complete and Ethiopia has indicated that it will move forward with Plans to fill it from the June, 2021 which marks the start of the long rainy seasons;

Other Nile Basin countries are pushing for the filling to be spread over several years, with the filling being done only during the long rainy seasons. If Egypt’s position were adopted, this would mean that the filling of the Dam will take between 7-15 years. Ethiopia finds this uneconomical and would like to fill the Dam at once over a period of 4-7 years;

Ethiopia, Egypt and The Sudan agreed to the formation of an international Panel of Experts, with members from Egypt and Sudan, to review the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam’s social and environmental impacts on downstream nations. The 10-member panel submitted its report to the governments in June 2013.

#### **4. Current situation**

A number of negotiation meetings have been held between the three core Nile Riparian Countries - Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan since 2011 and are still ongoing in 2021 with no concrete agreements reached yet as parties continue to disagree on pertinent legal and political concerns, the filling and storage mechanisms, dam administration, use of the water and sustainable development in the Upper Nile countries, and on information sharing.

According to the current situation, the three parties are still seeking to complete negotiations on technical matters, as well as mechanisms for dispute settlement and risk sharing.

The negotiations also seek to determine the gains and losses resulting from the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.

The unfolding situation presents a likely scenario of further disagreements between the three countries.

## 5. The Urgency of the matter

The concerned civil society organizations recognize the need to harness common consensus among the peoples and between the governments of Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan. This should go a long way in enhancing the ability of their leaders to negotiate and adopt agreements that reflect the interests of citizens, especially with regard to sustainable economic development and poverty alleviation.

For example, the citizens of Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan are more likely to understand and appreciate the challenges they face, especially with regard to water security, climate change, food production, and poverty alleviation if they interacted regularly with each other and engaged in participatory and inclusive approaches to resolving their disputes.

Citizens and governments must, therefore, be part of all the process of resolving water-related disputes that now threaten the peace and security in the Nile Basin.

Countries should be careful not to revert to the rhetoric of the ongoing disagreement as a means to secure their claimed rights.

Persisting on one's view without being flexible towards concession does not enhance negotiation.

Consultation has to be the first and last strategy to settle disagreements. Water conflicts will definitely lead to the destabilization of the region and suffering of the citizens not only of the three countries but the whole of the African Continent and, at the end, it will not benefit any one member of the Nile Basin countries;

Failure of official negotiations held in April 2021 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has been announced;

Ethiopia still wants to fill the Dam by mid of June 2021 as it initially planned, Egypt and Sudan have rejected this decision. Possible escalation of the disagreement has been indirectly stated by high level officials involved in the failed negotiations;

We, therefore, would like to put forward a set of principles that should guide continuation of the negotiations and all the parties concerned,

including the media and all other stakeholders that they may use in any upcoming engagements as they try to resolve the matter peacefully for the benefit of all citizens and peoples of the region:

## 6. Principles

### A. Interconnectedness and unity

- i. Recognition and appreciation of the historical fact that the Nile riparian countries - Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan, Burundi, Eritrea, Kenya, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda have a shared civilization, trade, language, religion, culture;
- ii. There are many successful instances of collaboration that citizens, negotiators and governments can learn from;
- iii. The connections created through the Nile River should be sustained in a positive tone and manner;
- iv. The Nile can and should inspire African Unity for the '**Africa we Want**';
- v. Every project that is built around a river should bring benefit to all and avoid harm to any other party.

### B. Justice and Equity

- i. Sharing the benefits and any harm that projects on Nile River may generate;
- ii. Farmers and fishermen whose livelihoods are dependent on the Nile River and its sources should not adversely suffer;
- iii. All Nile riparian countries should be treated as one body, where all parts are like parts of the human body, giving and receiving – there has to be a fair relationship among the parts in order to create a healthy whole. So all countries should come up with proposals of what they are ready to give and expect to receive;
- iv. Respect, equitable and just benefit of the water: every project built around the Nile River should bring benefit to all and avoid significant and avoidable harm to other parties.

## C. Information, Communication, Knowledge and Education

- i. Citizens and their civil society formations should be at the centre and sufficiently informed and updated on all developments initiatives within the Nile basin because it affects their lives;
- ii. Educating and raising awareness of the people about limitation and conservation of water should be mainstreamed and integrated in all projects on and around the Nile Basin;
- iii. There needs to be transparency in communication to the people;  
The opportunities and threats of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam need to be explained to citizens in all the Nile basin countries to engender public trust in their governments, feel empowered, and contribute positively towards ongoing dialogue and negotiations around the project;
- iv. Local and indigenous communities should be consulted on how the dam and any other project affect the natural flow of the Nile water as their life, language and culture are centered around the water. They must be engaged and their cooperation harnessed at all times;
- v. Independent and institutional researches should be encouraged and facilitated to create new knowledge on the Nile Basin and the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam Project;
- vi. CSOs, the Media and different stakeholders should disseminate diverse views on the issue, and avoid actions and words that may escalate the current situation;
- vii. There should be transparency in the dissemination and sharing of regular information.

## D. Sovereignty, rights and global obligations

- i. There was a time when countries lived independently, but currently, technology has rendered the world to become a global village. Any positive or negative undertaking affects the whole region;

- ii. Countries have the right to set up development projects for their people. However, they should put into consideration the interests of and the impact this may have on other countries;
- iii. Any development in one part of a river should not affect the other but instead should also be of benefit;
- iv. Understanding and protecting the natural and historical use of the Nile water and the larger ecosystem should underpin all projects undertaken in the Nile Basin;
- v. At all times, focus should be on common points of view rather than on conflicting points in order to reach a middle ground, appreciating the need to fill the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam gradually and on the basis of consensus among the three core countries taking into account its effects on climate change ,floods and drought variabilities.

## **E. The role of Women and the Youth**

- i. The UN Security Resolution 1325 on Gender, Women, Youth, Peace and Security underscores the importance of including women and youth in peace processes. No efforts should be spared in mainstreaming women and the youth in all efforts to resolve the current and future disputes;
- ii. The involvement of women in negotiation should not only be encouraged but also promoted and facilitated, not only because they generally are against war but also because they can use their natural wisdom in securing successful negotiations and resolutions.

## **F. Avoid disputes, conflicts and disagreements at all costs and focus on dialogue and negotiations**

- i. Whenever consultations and negotiations stall, efforts should be made to bring more mediators into the negotiation process;
- ii. All parties should endeavour to use scientific research as a springboard for evidence based-consultations and decision-making;
- iii. Parties should observe the principles of good faith in international relations;

- iv. Parties should consider consulting over every issue even when it concerns an individual country;
- v. Ethiopia should consider delaying the 2nd filling of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam to avoid escalating the conflict. However, if Ethiopia were to suffer a loss due to any delay, the international community should come to its rescue, with Egypt and Sudan doing everything they possibly can to facilitate such a process in the spirit of mutual cooperation of assistance;
- vi. For any loss, Egypt should help in the implementation of sustainable development projects in Ethiopia and increase trade cooperation;
- vii. All efforts should be undertaken to build consensus before the 2nd round of filling of the dam is done.

### **G. The Nile is for all; Cooperation on Water Resources Management is inevitable**

Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) is the process of planning, developing, and managing water resources, in terms of both water quantity and quality, across all water uses. It includes the institutions, infrastructure, incentives, and information systems that support and guide water management<sup>2</sup>.

In view of the above, the Civil Society calls for:

- i. Cooperation in working on decreasing water pollution in the Nile Basin;
- ii. Cooperation in achieving African Union's Agenda 2063 and Sustainable Development Goal Agenda 2030 in all the Nile Basin countries;
- iii. Cooperation in research and dissemination of studies and events to share success stories and experiences;
- iv. Continuation of the work of the Nile Basin Initiative.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/waterresourcesmanagement>

## 7. Africa Waters for Peace; Nile for Peace Civil Society Initiative Position within the Framework of the above listed Principles

- i. That there be established a Water Master Plan for the effective and collaborative sustainable development and utilization of all water resources in the Nile Basin countries. Each country, therefore, should endeavour to develop a plan individually and collectively based on the agreed master plan;
- ii. There be established mechanisms for transparency and accountability for all projects on the Nile River, including the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam;
- iii. That there be greater consideration for smaller projects (dams) that have the potential for high efficiency than big dams that have low efficiency and negative impacts on other countries;
- iv. That strategies be put in place to avoid risks and disagreements and effects of variability of climate change;
- v. That all steps be taken to prompt consensus: Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan should appreciate the importance of having a binding legal agreement that works on the sharing of the regional benefits of water resources in a fair and equitable manner, and in a way that guarantees the right of all to benefit from the water resources;
- vi. That urgent processes be initiated aimed at working with citizens and securing universal participation to help improve the relationship between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan. This will go a long way in enhancing the ability of their leaders to negotiate and adopt agreements that reflect their interests, especially with regard to sustainable economic development and poverty alleviation.

We believe in 'One Nile; One Family'!