



EWAC Emergency Response Message on the GERD Negotiation Impasse

June 21, 2020

In a Nutshell: *The Nile is the only major world river that is not governed by a comprehensive treaty with all riparian countries as signatories. Such a treaty must address equitable water allocation, holistic basin management, and appropriate consultations on major water projects. In the absence of such a treaty, Egypt and Sudan have monopolized Nile water resources and continue to resist the call by the upper riparian countries for an amicable settlement. We urge Egypt and Sudan to negotiate such a treaty in good faith. Regarding the technical matters with Ethiopia's GERD, we urge Ethiopia to proceed with the filling of the dam in a prudent way and continue to insist on utilizing its sovereign waters as it sees fit.*

The ongoing tripartite negotiation between Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt has been lingering for quite a while after picking up some momentum with advances in the construction of the GERD. All past attempts to reach a negotiated solution and a balanced deal on the use of the Nile waters and the filling and operation of the GERD have been stalled by Egypt which is claiming almost all the water of the Nile citing the defunct colonial agreements to which Ethiopia, the source of 86% of the Nile waters, was not a signatory. The attempt by Egypt to involve others like the UN Security Council, the USA, and the World Bank in the resolution of the outstanding issues has further compounded the problem. Egypt, unable to secure its interests through honest and direct negotiations, is now beating the drums of sabotage and war, which will never lead to a lasting resolution to any of the problems.



A better and sustainable way to success and resolution of complex problems is open and honest negotiations based on international water covenants and practices. Undue politicization and war mongering will only eliminate the good will and trust which are very much needed in such complicated negotiations. The relentless misinformation, obstruction and delaying of meaningful negotiations will not grant Egypt the ability to maintain an untenable status quo. Instead Egypt's intransigence and lack of foresight will irreversibly damage the chances of amicable resolution of critical issues. Time is of the essence here.

Egypt's latest gimmick to sabotage the nearly complete dam-related negotiation is introduce two new conditions to the technical agreements on GERD filling: that Ethiopia recognize the de facto water allocation to Egypt and Sudan even though the status quo does not grant any water to it; and that Ethiopia guarantee to release water from GERD in times of drought to compensate for the reduction of water inflow into the two lower riparian countries. Drought is not a new phenomenon in the region. The latest documented droughts, which recurrently affect Ethiopia more than any other country in the region, occurred in 1973-1974, 1984-1985 and 2003. This was manifested by the catastrophic famines and attendant loss in human life, livestock, and livelihoods. On the contrary, Egypt and Sudan passed the droughts unscathed because of the huge volumes of water stored in their various dams. The suffering of the people of Ethiopia during these periodic drought seasons is further aggravated by the ongoing and relentless destruction of the Nile basin eco system through deforestation, soil erosion and environmental degradation. The crisis assumes vicious proportions because of Egypt's belligerent attitudes towards Ethiopia's legitimate use of its waters and its sabotage of Ethiopia's efforts to develop the basin through well studied projects by obstructing international financing. The stalled Chemoga project is a case in point. It is now time for Egypt to take responsibility for its sustained obstruction and destabilization of the region for any meaningful negotiation to advance.

Ethiopia will not be coerced into an agreement in the absence of a comprehensive water sharing and basin management agreement. The current saber rattling by Egypt and the rush to get an 'agreement' signed without a thorough and comprehensive technical and legal understanding between the negotiating parties and with the involvement and coercion of partisan third parties have become a major setback on the progress of the negotiation. Such a desirable and mutually beneficial agreement was repeatedly dithered by the self-serving attitudes of Egypt. Every beneficiary of the Nile must be held accountable for the proper and equitable utilization of the Nile waters. In the absence of a reasonable, fairly negotiated and binding treaty, Ethiopia reserves the right to use its territorial waters for the development of its population and the eradication of poverty. Everyone seeking a share of the waters is most welcome for negotiations. The GERD is a power generating scheme and not a water consuming project and generating the very much



needed electricity is its over-arching goal. It is widely recognized that utilizing the natural resources of a country is an issue of national sovereignty to be vigorously defended at all cost.

The lack of electricity in Ethiopian highlands is causing environmental degradation at the sources of the Nile river, rapidly depleting the water sources, forests and ecosystems therefore, is a security issue of global concern. Meeting the needs of the growing population has resulted in deforestation and land tilling even in areas with slopes above 30%. This in turn led to soil erosion, ecological damage and dramatically reduced productivity. Well studied hydroelectric development initiatives in the area like the Chemoga Project were not implemented because of Egypt's unrelenting campaign to disrupt international financing which Ethiopia needed several years ago. Egypt's obstructionism and intransigence contributed to the subsequent environmental degradation, deforestation, soil erosion, and abject poverty. Thus, Egypt must be held accountable and begin to compensate for the damages it willfully caused. Any meaningful negotiation needs to be based on Egypt acknowledging its previous actions and giving its assurance not to engage in any disruptive activity hereafter.

Despite Ethiopia's goodwill to cooperate on joint multiple projects (JMP₁) in the eastern Nile in many occasions (e.g. JMP scoping and 1st phase investment study completed) even in the absence of any comprehensive treaty and agreement, Egypt's response over the years has been rejection, arrogant and deceitful. After its invading armies were decisively crushed by Ethiopian forces in Gundet (1875) and Guraa (1876), Egypt changed its tactics to economic sabotage and political destabilization. Egypt had a hand in almost every major conflict Ethiopia has gone through over the last fifty or so years, including the 1993 secession of Eritrea (which was part of the grand project Arabization of the Red Sea), the naked 1977 invasion by Ziad Barre of Somalia, the cross-border conflicts with the Sudan and South Sudan, and the inciting of religious and ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia. Throughout the years many of the opposition to the Ethiopian government was organized, trained, and financed by Egypt. Currently, Egypt is engaged in proxy wars using disgruntled forces in Ethiopia. All this is to maintain the status quo of inequity and injustice in water usage. This state-of-affairs is no longer sustainable. All subsequent negotiations will have to be held when Egypt takes responsibility for its actions, recognizes the damage it caused and declares that it will not engage in such destabilizing activities anymore.

The GERD, like many before it, is a project that was sabotaged and delayed by the obstructive campaigns of Egypt. The World Bank, IMF, ADB and bilateral development partners all were coerced out of supporting it. The people of Ethiopia finally took the matter into their own hands and contributed every penny to build it. The construction will soon be completed and will be a sign of resilience and self-reliance for all



the world to see. As such it is a project of national pride. Every Ethiopian has a stake in it and will defend it to the last drop of blood. When completed and generating electricity, it will be part of **Agenda 2063 of the African Union** in the energy sector. Electrification of the region is a major booster of economic development and poverty alleviation. The GERD, located on higher ground, will have much lower evaporative loss than the dams in Egypt or Sudan. It functions best and serves the region when it generates electricity. It thus has to be filled rapidly and maintained at high level. All the water it holds is going to Sudan and thence to Egypt after hitting the turbines and generating electricity. Downstream countries will get regulated and constant flow of water. Thus, water volume reduction is a non-existent, paranoid and fabricated issue by Egypt to impede the development of Ethiopia's power generation efforts.

Water is increasingly becoming a scarce resource and a source of destabilizing conflict. Conservation and avoidance of misuse needs to be included in the agenda of water negotiations for an enduring resolution of conflicts. Egypt and the Sudan must end the wasteful utilization of Nile waters and transition to sustainability with full knowledge that their water shares will be diminished by any equitable agreements involving all the countries of the Nile Basin. The existing dams in Sudan and Egypt are located in lowlands and have a major water loss through evaporation. (11billion cubic meters from Aswan Dam). Egypt is engaged in water-guzzling agriculture and is currently spending over \$100 billion on the Toshka and El Salaam water diversion projects outside the Nile Basin.

Egypt can, and must, use its enormous reservoir of water in the Aswan High Dam to mitigate drought and can tap its enormous underground water (equivalent to over 300 times its current annual water use) rather than engage in a shamefully selfish grab of Ethiopia's sovereign water resources. It is also in the strategic interest of downstream countries, particularly Egypt, to join hands with Ethiopia and other riparian countries in the spirit of solidarity and cooperation to preserve an endangered Nile basin eco-system, which sustains the entire region, and reach an agreement that is fair for all and guarantees an equitable share of such a wondrous natural resource.

The Nile is a national security and sovereignty issue of the highest magnitude for Ethiopia. It is also a security issue for the region and Africa as a whole. Abject poverty, environmental degradation, food insecurity, population explosion, pandemics and uncontrolled migration are threats to global security. The international community and development partners need to be mindful of these and engage in creating understanding and mitigating conflict in an informed, fair and non-partisan manner for peaceful coexistence. While underscoring the far-reaching implications of any potential crises in the region, we want to emphasize our full confidence in the inner capacity of the peoples and leaders of the region to strive towards a more fair, sustainable and equitable regional



framework for the use of the Nile. A zero-sum game politics belongs to the dustbin of history.

A win-win, mutually beneficial relationship is the way forward. **The Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) provides a basis for basin wide and project level legal regime for sustainable utilization of the water of the Nile. Nile can't continue as the one of the world's remaining river without a comprehensive treaty and we urge Egypt and the remaining riparian countries to sign and ratify the CFA.** In the meantime, we wish to see the technical agreements on GERD be concluded and the negotiations on the bigger issues of equitable water use and basin rehabilitation soon after.

Secretariat of Ethiopian Waters Advisory Council (EWAC)

June 21, 2020, Washington DC,

