



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

SPEECH BY THE GUEST OF HONOUR,

HER EXCELLENCY, JESSICA ROSE EPEL ALUPO

THE VIC PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

AT THE

OPENING OF THE SEVENTH NILE BASIN DEVELOPMENT FORUM

16th October 2023,

COMMON WEALTH RESORT, MUNYONYO, KAMPALA, UGANDA

The Chairperson of the Nile Council of Ministers (NILECOM) and Minister of Water and Environment, Hon. Sam Cheptoris

Your Excellences, Honorable Ministers and Members of the Nile Council of Ministers

Hon. Ministers Present

The Chairperson and Hon. Members of the Natural Resource Committee of Parliament

The Tanzanian High Commissioner to Uganda, also the Dean of Ambassadors representing the African States in Uganda,

All Ambassadors and High Commissioners present

Technical Advisory Committee Members of the Nile Basin Governance

The Executive Director of Nile Basin Initiative,

Representatives of Development Partners,

Senior Government Officials

The Nile Basin Initiative Staff from Entebbe, Kigali and Addis Ababa

Non-State Actors

The Media

Invited Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great honor and pleasure to preside over the 7th Nile Basin Development Forum being held here in Uganda. I wish to welcome you all to Uganda, the ‘Pearl of Africa’ and specifically to the Seventh Nile Basin Development Forum. I have been informed that delegates have come from across the Basin and beyond and hope that you will have fruitful deliberations.

It is indeed a great honor for Uganda to host this event in partnership with the Nile Basin Initiative.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we all know, water is the ultimate source of life and one of the key strategic drivers of development. Water is fundamental to the prosperity of mankind and his environment. It drives multiple social and economic sectors, spanning from domestic water supply and sanitation, agriculture, energy generation, biodiversity and nature conservation, mineral development, oil and gas, industrial processes, tourism to navigation and many more.

As we convene at the shores of Lake Victoria, we are reminded of the remarkable importance of the Nile River as the major source of water for the Eleven (11) countries in the Basin namely Burundi, D.R. Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. The Nile, stretching a distance of 6,695 kilometers, stands as the longest river in the world. The Nile Basin covers approximately 10% of the entire Africa Continent. The Nile Basin is home to a vibrant

population of 227 million individuals, representing nearly a quarter of the total population of Africa. Projections indicate that this population will exceed 1 billion people by the year 2050.

The Scientists confirm that although the Nile River is the longest in the World, it discharges an average annual flow of 2,800 cubic meters per second only. To better understand the extent of water scarcity in the Nile Basin, it is helpful to compare the Nile River with some major rivers of the World. The Amazon River in South America which transcend 6,400 km (245km shorter than the Nile) drains over 6 million square kilometers of surface area, discharges on average 309,000 cubic meters per second of water into the Atlantic Ocean. The Congo River in the Democratic Republic of Congo which is 4,370 kilometers long, ranks second in the World by volume of water it discharges into the Atlantic Ocean at an average rate of 41, 200 cubic meters. River Zambezi is 2,574 kilometers long (almost 1/3 the length of the Nile River) on average discharges 4,134 cubic meters per second of water into the Indian Ocean.

The above comparisons demonstrate that the Nile Basin Region is a water scare region. Increasing population growth, rampant environmental degradation, land use changes, rapid urbanization and industrialization, uneven distribution of water resources, loss of biodiversity and impacts of climate change being witnessed, remind us all of the significance of our collective efforts to ensure the responsible use and sustainable management of the Nile's life-giving waters. Further to the above, the Nile Basin Countries must confront the harsh realities that pre-date the colonial era and have to a great extent influenced transboundary cooperation on the Nile.

Ladies and gentlemen,

You may wish to note that after gaining independence, the Nile Basin countries sought

to cooperate for sustainable development and management of the shared Nile waters. The first cooperative arrangement began on the technical front in 1967 with the Hydro-meteorological (Hydromet) Survey of the Equatorial Lakes in response to the flood disasters of 1961 to 1964. ‘The Undugu group’ replaced Hydromet Survey with broader objective of achieving a Regional cooperation in the areas of Environment, infrastructure, trade and culture in 1983. In 1993, the riparian states formed the Technical Cooperation on the Nile (TECCONILE) that developed the Nile River Basin Action Plan which formed the foundation of the current Nile Cooperative arrangements, the Nile Basin Initiative.

The Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) was founded in 1999, by the ten (10) Basin States, as a ‘Transitional Institutional Mechanism for cooperation in the Nile Basin pending conclusion of the Cooperative Framework Agreement. You may all know that, one of the core functions of NBI is to facilitate Basin cooperation through provision of an only inclusive and neutral platform for Member States to discuss with trust and confidence, how to collectively take care of, and jointly use the shared Nile Basin water resources. This is intended to maximize win-win benefits for current and future generations while minimizing risks and costs.

Under the Shared Vision: ***‘to achieve sustainable socio-economic development through the equitable utilization of, and benefit from, the common Nile Basin water resources’*** the Nile Basin Initiative provides a platform for ensuring sustainable management and development of the shared Nile Basin water resources for win-win benefits. The NBI Secretariat is hosted in Entebbe and in Uganda the Nile Basin Initiative was accorded a Legal status through the Nile Basin Initiative Act, 2002.

Through cooperation by the Nile Basin States, a lot of opportunities can be exploited to transform our region from its current state characterized by poverty to one with high income economies.

But what are these opportunities in the Nile Basin?

First and foremost, there is a huge and still untapped potential for hydropower generation and power trade, food production, Navigation and intra-basin trade in Agriculture. I am informed that in the Nile Basin, 5.4 million hectares are currently under irrigation out of the potential 49.8 million hectares. I am also aware that the hydropower potential in the Nile Basin exceeds 20 Gigawatts. The existing infrastructure generates only about 26 % of potential capacity. The Nile Basin remains the only region on the African continent without a functional regional power grid. Therefore, there is urgent need to examine the opportunities of optimizing water usage for hydropower generation, address food security through irrigation and livestock watering, foster renewable energy self-reliance for industrialization, services while advancing the holistic development and management of the whole Nile Basin region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is also the opportunity for **regional integration, peace and stability**. The waters of the Nile have long acted as a unifying factor, and an issue for collaboration not only to address challenges within the Nile Basin but also those that stretches beyond national borders. With the prevailing continental and regional frameworks such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), we stand at a good point to leverage navigation, tourism development, agricultural trade, and power integration as powerful catalysts for bringing our nations closer together. Through joint efforts in harnessing the Nile's potential, we can create interconnected pathways that drive sustainable development, uniting our aspirations for a prosperous and united future in this Basin.

We have already begun to witness benefits of cooperation through collaborative water resources investment project planning and implementation. Am informed that at least 130 investment projects worth more that USD 6.5 billion are at different stages of preparation within the Basin. The USD 130 million Rusumo hydropower plant on river

Kagera is Flagship Project and is substantially completed. This Joint Project owned by the United Republic of Tanzania, Burundi and Rwanda will generate about 80 Mega Watts to be shared equality by the three countries.

In the case of Uganda, projects worth USD 864 million with direct benefits to Uganda have been identified and are at various stages of preparation. They include among others; Olwiyo-Juba South Sudan Power Transmission Interconnection, 400 kiloVolts of 320 kilometers (Uganda-South Sudan) transmission line, the Nkenda - Beni – Butembo - Bunia transmission line, 220 KiloVolts of 396 kilometers (Uganda - D.R. Congo), the 5,000 hectares Amagoro Irrigation Scheme in Busia, and 4,500 hectares Angololo Multipurpose Water Resources Development Project between Kenya and Uganda (Namisindwa, Manafwa and Tororo districts), and Kabuyanda Multipurpose Water Project, in Isingiro District.

The *Nyimur/Limur Multi-Purpose Water Resources Development Project* in the River Aswa sub-basin shared by Uganda and South Sudan was identified and is being prepared under NBI. The investments will comprise a water storage dam, and 5,105 hectares of land for irrigation of which 3,105 hectares is in Lamwo District in Uganda and in 2000 hectares in Magwi County, Eastern Equatorial in South Sudan. The project is designed to benefit 12,000 people in Uganda when completed.

As we strive to harness the basin's vast potential on water resources, energy generation, agriculture, and infrastructure, effective financing mechanisms including innovative financing are important to facilitate the realization of these projects that can uplift livelihoods, enhance economic growth and protect the environment for generations.

I wish therefore to thank the Nile Basin Initiative for facilitating cooperation on the Nile Basin water resources which has enabled the above achievements to be realized.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you may be aware, in 1997 the Nile Basin countries embarked on negotiating the Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) to establish the legal and institutional arrangements for management of the Nile Basin water resources. This was completed in 2010 and since then six (6) countries have signed the CFA, namely, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda and four (4) have ratified it namely Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. Two (2) more countries are required before the CFA can come into force.

Let me take this opportunity to call upon those member States that have not yet ratified the Nile River Basin Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) to do so that we can strengthen the legal and institutional framework for Nile River Cooperation and address shared challenges and opportunities within the basin for equitable water use, sustainable development and regional cooperation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have been informed that the Nile Basin Development Forum is a platform that was established to enable Nile basin States to dialogue on shared challenges and opportunities for equitable water use, sustainable development and regional cooperation. This 7th Nile Basin Development Forum is being held under the Theme: ***"Deepening Nile Cooperation: Accelerating the Achievement of SDGs in a Changing Climate,"***. This Theme resonates deeply with the common challenges and opportunities that lay before us which require common solutions and cooperation is key. This is indeed an important meeting that underscores our shared commitment to advance regional cooperation, sustainable development and enhance climate resilience in this Basin.

As you embark on the dialogues in this Forum, I request you to look at strategic issues in the Basin and not overlook the broader context of climate change and its impact on

our region. Recent extreme events like the floods of 2020 and 2021 have reminded us of the vulnerability of our surroundings, urging us to unite in addressing the challenges posed by floods, droughts, and environmental instability. Such climate related risks require collective response, transcending borders and political divisions, for the well-being of our people and the health of our planet. Opportunity that information, communication and technology brings should be well utilized for early warning, information sharing and communication. There is need to strengthen resilience while mitigating activities that bring global warming.

We should learn lessons from several challenges that have arisen along the journey to legally binding Nile Cooperation. The tensions over the utilization of Nile waters have underscored the need for continued diplomacy and dialogue with the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam serving as a key reminder of the complexities we must navigate. As challenges emerge, so do opportunities for collaboration: We now have within the Basin, Regional Economic Commissions such as IGAD, the East African Community, and the Continental fora like the African Union, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Africa Ministerial Council On Water (AMCOW), Africa Ministerial Council On Environment (AMCEN), African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), ANBO, among others to work with.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Nile Basin Development Forum has been instrumental as a platform for dialogue in shaping collective understanding of the Nile's potential and challenges. As we gather here in Kampala, Uganda, from the 16th to 18th of October 2023, we welcome representatives from all the eleven Nile Basin countries to deliberate on these issues that I have elaborated. You should explore solutions, share insights, and reaffirm our commitment to Nile cooperation as the cornerstone of sustainable development in the Basin region.

The unique position of Uganda, as a downstream country in the Nile Basin with respect to Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Kenya and D. R. Congo, and an upstream country with respect to South Sudan, Sudan and Egypt places on Uganda a special responsibility to champion the cause of Nile Basin cooperation. In this respect, I reaffirm Uganda's commitment to champion the cooperative agenda on the Nile. We stand ready to host the Nile River Basin Commission when the Cooperative Framework Agreement on the Nile is finally ratified by 6 countries as others prepare to accede.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In Conclusion, I wish to request you to note that our journey towards sustainable development and management of the Nile waters should be guided by the spirit of cooperation, mutual respect, and shared prosperity. As you embark on this 7th Nile Basin Development Forum, I request that the exchanges over the next few days should shape not only the understanding but also the destiny of our shared waters. Together, our countries should lay the foundation through strong basin governance, investments and knowledge and information sharing for a brighter future for all the nations that call the Nile Basin their home.

It is now my duty and singular honor to declare the Seventh Nile Basin Development Forum officially open.

For God and My Country