

# **National workshop related to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International lakes: Uganda's accession process**

**February 15th, 2022**

**Remarks of the EU Delegation to Uganda's Head of Cooperation**

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**Hon. Minister for Water and Environment,  
Mr Permanent Secretary,  
Government officials in your respective capacities,  
Ms Resident Representative of UNDP,  
Mr Chair of the Bureau of the UNECE Water Convention,  
Ms Secretary of the UNECE Water Convention,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
All protocols observed.**

In a global context affected by climate change and shifting seasonal water patterns, ensuring effective cooperation between countries in the management of cross-border water resources is critical. This is especially true in the Nile River basin. Out of more than 500 million people currently living in all 11 riparian countries, some 250-300 million people are thought to depend on the Nile. This figure is projected to double in just one generation, with this important consequence that, in just 30 years, the total storage capacity of the Nile River basin's dams might double to 400 billion cubic metres, with irrigation increasing by some 3 million hectares. Over the same period, needless to say, the total quantity of water available in the basin will remain roughly unchanged – assuming that it won't decrease as a consequence of climate change.

The November 2018 EU Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions on Water Diplomacy reaffirmed the EU's commitment to addressing

water challenges around the world. Accordingly, a broad portfolio of activities focusing on transboundary water management has been developed over the years, with priority given to regional and integrated actions. One such action is the ongoing Programme for Transboundary Management in the Nile River Basin, which is jointly funded by the EU and Germany and has been implemented by GIZ. (A continuation of the programme is currently under consideration.)

The European Commission's directorate-general for International Partnerships (INTPA) also supports the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Water Convention.

Accordingly, some 4 years ago now, the EU Delegation to Uganda's Head of Cooperation delivered a demarche to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) to promote the country's accession to the Water Convention. The demarche stemmed from a conviction that the Convention – which was initially limited to the UNECE region but has since been opened up for accession to all United Nations Member States – is a uniquely powerful tool to promote the sustainable and equitable management of shared water resources, the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – especially but not limited to SDG 6.5.2 on transboundary water cooperation – and the promotion of peace and regional integration. Five African countries have joined it already and many others are in various stages of the process of accession.

Uganda has a record of being a strong supporter of transboundary water cooperation in the Nile River basin. The country has ratified the Nile Basin Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) and hosts the secretariat of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI). In 2017, in a bid to help bridge the differences between upper and lower riparians over the CFA, President MUSEVENI convened a one-of-its-kind Heads of State and Government Summit in Entebbe. Uganda is also a party to the Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC). It, therefore, seems only natural that Uganda would consider acceding to the UNECE Water Convention – thus becoming the first Nile riparian country to accede any of the international conventions on transboundary water.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I believe that for Uganda to join the UNECE Water Convention would come with many benefits. Apart from providing international principles, standards and practises necessary for the sound management of international watercourses, it would send an unmistakable signal to international water actors that Uganda is keen on cooperation, thus ultimately helping unlock and share the many benefits accruing from water.

It is my wish that today's and tomorrow's national workshop will help bring all of us to a common level of perspective on the cooperation framework of the Water Convention, the advantages and implications for a State to become a party thereto, and the way forward.

Rest assured that, on the road ahead, you will have a friend in the European Union.