

**SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF MINISTRY OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENT AT THE OPENING OF THE NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON THE WATER CONVENTION, 15 FEBRUARY 2022**

Ms. Elsie Attafuah, UNDP Uganda Resident Representative,

Ms. Susan Ngongi Namondo, UN Resident Coordinator Uganda,

H.E. Ambassador Attilio Pacifici, Ambassador of the European Union to Uganda,

Mr. Harry Liiv, Chair of the Bureau of the Water Convention,

Ms. Sonja Koeppel, Secretary of the Water Convention,

Representatives of the various organizations and stakeholders within and outside Uganda,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to take this opportunity to welcome you all for the national workshop related to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, and Uganda's accession process.

I wish to thank the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe for working with my ministry to organize this workshop.

This is an important workshop where issues of transboundary water cooperation will be discussed, and justification as to why Uganda should accede to the Water Convention will be presented leading to a road map for accession.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you may be aware almost the whole of Uganda lies within the Nile River basin and its water resources are transboundary and shared with other countries. Uganda is both an upstream and a downstream country in the Nile Basin and as such transboundary water cooperation for us is not an option but a must.

Accordingly, Uganda has since 1960s acted as a moderator of downstream-upstream dialogue and played a key role in the finalization and signing of the Nile Basin Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) and has been engaging other countries in the basin to resolve the disagreements over the Cooperative Framework Agreement.

Uganda finalized the ratification of the CFA and this confirmed the country's commitment to transboundary cooperation and harmonious co-existence in its over 50 year long history of participating in transboundary water discussions. Its hosting of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) for the past 20 years and the hosting of the first ever Nile Basin Heads of State Summit in June 2017 in Entebbe is further testimony to the priority given to transboundary water cooperation.

While transboundary water cooperation in the Nile River basin currently happens on a good faith basis, a legally binding framework would provide opportunities to strengthen this cooperation and move it further forward.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you may be aware the provisions of the Nile Basin Cooperative Framework Agreement are largely drawn from the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes in Europe (**UNECE Water Convention**) and the 1997 UN Convention on the Law of the Non-

## Navigational uses of International Watercourses (**UN Watercourses Convention**).

With Uganda ratifying the CFA the country is considering acceding to the two Conventions. Despite Uganda not being a party to the Water Convention it has been actively involved in activities under the Convention such as:

- (i) Implementing Sustainable Development Goal 6 (on water and sanitation) specifically dealing with transboundary water cooperation
- (ii) Implementing a project on strengthening transboundary water cooperation between Kenya and Uganda and identifying transboundary investment projects between the two countries for funding.
- (iii) Participating in a number of meetings and workshops organized by UNECE in Geneva and elsewhere in Europe.
- (iv) Co-organizing international water law and governance training course at the Water Resources Institute in Uganda in 2018 and 2019.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you have already been informed, in 2019, a briefing workshop about the two Conventions was held and facilitated by UNECE. The workshop highlighted the benefits the country would draw in being party, the obligations of being a member as well as the accession procedures. The briefing was very useful to the country but follow up actions were affected by Covid -19 pandemic.

I wish to thank the UNECE for accepting our request to facilitate this national workshop to reactivate the discussions started in 2019 but this time involving many more stakeholders in the country.

I do hope that by the end of this workshop, all of you present here will be fully aware of the two conventions, the benefits and obligations of Uganda being a party, and agree on the road map for the accession process.

With these remarks I wish you fruitful deliberation as I formally declare this workshop formally open.

I thank you all for god and my country.