



Press Statement by the Host Member of Nile Council of Ministers (Nile-COM) and Minister of Environment for Rwanda, Dr Vincent Biruta

NBI 20th anniversary & Regional Nile Day 2019

Park Inn Radisson – Kigali, Rwanda

February 20, 2019

Good morning ladies and gentlemen,

I welcome you all to this very special briefing and I take this opportunity to thank you for honouring my invitation.

On February 22, 2019, the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) will celebrate Nile Day as well as mark 20 years since it was established. The NBI is a partnership of 10 Member States including Burundi, DR Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda and provides a platform for discussion of both challenges and opportunities towards better managing and developing the shared Nile Basin water resources.

This anniversary is a major milestone and as such offers an opportunity for both reflection on the successes and challenges of the last 20 years of Nile cooperation as well as consolidation of Member States' commitment to the Basin cooperation agenda, as laid out in NBI's 10-Year Strategy. The Nile Council of Ministers (Nile-COM), in its 26th annual meeting held in August 2018 in Bujumbura, Burundi agreed to declare 2019 as **'The Year of the Nile Basin'**.

Throughout the year, NBI and Member States will play host to major events and the objectives are:

- To enhance awareness of NBI's achievements and challenges during the past two decades and to use the values and strengths underlying that success to generate buy-in for the Basin cooperation agenda, as spearheaded by NBI in the next decade (2017 – 2027).
- To generate increased momentum for both the technical and political cooperation tracks in the Basin.
- To stimulate concrete and innovative action towards water cooperation.

- To attract support and collaboration of strategic partners in managing the shared Nile Basin water resources for the betterment of lives and livelihoods.

The upcoming NBI 20th anniversary and Regional Nile Day 2019 celebrations scheduled to take place on February 22, 2019 is one such event. Hosting this event is an honour and privilege to our country, given the fact that the inaugural Regional Nile Day celebration was hosted by Rwanda in 2007.

Event theme:

The celebrations, jointly organised by the Ministry of Environment and the NBI, will take place under the theme: NBI@20: Stronger Together.

Twenty years of NBI is a time for us to celebrate commendable achievements:

At least 84 joint investment projects with an accumulated investment volume of USD 6.5 billion have been prepared. These projects, like the Nile itself, span across national borders and play an integral part in achieving not only water security, but also food and energy security as well as eradicating poverty in the Nile Basin.

Through capacity building, generation of policies and knowledge, the NBI supports the countries and people of the Nile Basin to better manage their shared water resources. To date, 30,000 people have benefited from capacity building activities through the NBI while 10,000 Knowledge products produced and 16 strategies that provide policy directions for Member States on transboundary aspects, developed.

Maintaining, for the last 20 years, the joint institution and dialogue platform that contributes to a culture of dialogue, building mutual trust and confidence within the Nile Basin for regional transformation is a great achievement in itself.

As we reflect on these achievements as well as the challenges and opportunities, it is important not to forget the founding principle of the NBI – transboundary water management is better done together, which is also the most optimal way of harnessing the opportunities offered by the River and address the challenges that range from population growth and much needed development initiatives, to the expected impacts of climate change.

Rwanda and Nile cooperation:

The Nile Basin Initiative partnership has been beneficial to Rwanda in several ways:

Integrated Management of Trans-boundary Water Resources of Lakes Cyohoha, Rweru and Akanyaru Marshland Project (2010 – 2012). The Integrated Management of Trans-boundary Water Resources of Lakes Cyohoha and Rweru and Akanyaru Marshland project (abbreviated in French as GIRET Project) was financed by the Bank through African Water Facility of the African Development Bank to the tune of Euro770,000. Project results are: i) Integrated Management

and Development Plans (IMDP) for the three water resources and Investments Profiles (IP); ii) a Diagnostic Analysis with an environmental screening of the water-resources, among others.

The Regional Rusumo Falls Hydroelectric Project, under implementation with an installed capacity of 80 MW (Run of River Scheme at 1320masl) will be shared equally among Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania. The power generation infrastructure will be located at Rusumo Falls at the border of Tanzania and Rwanda. The transmission lines will extend from the power generation plant to Gitega in Burundi, Kigali in Rwanda, and Nyakanazi in Tanzania. The project will develop renewable hydropower as part of a broader program to support sustainable management of the Kagera River Basin and promote growth and poverty reduction.

The Interconnection of Electric Grids of the Nile Equatorial Lakes Countries Project's total transmission line is 927km at 220kV and 400kV with associated 17 sub-stations. The project involves five countries of the NEL region; Burundi, DR Congo, Kenya Rwanda and Uganda aims at strengthening the interconnections between NEL region countries and other regional electric grids at the total cost of US\$415Million from different financiers (AfDB, Government of Japan JICA, Government of Germany (KfW), the Government of the Netherlands and the European Union and Sida.

Event venue and activities

The main event will be hosted at the Kigali Serena Hotel. Celebrations will kick off with a brass band-led march starting from the Car free zone where all participants will converge. The day will also be marked by a panel discussion which will include members of the Nile Council of Ministers and some founders whose objective is to reflect on the last 20 years' journey of Nile cooperation, draw lessons on strategic issues and agree on the way forward for sustainable Nile cooperation.

There will also be an interactive and dynamic exhibition by various partners showcasing achievements and on-going works in water and water-related activities as well as public speeches, a drawing competition for school children and a cultural show.

Participants:

The celebrations will be attended by at least 400 Nile Basin citizens and friends of the Nile including Ministers in charge of Water Affairs in the Nile Basin countries (Nile Council of Ministers); representatives from NBI Member States embassies and officials from Ministries whose activities touch on the management and development of the shared water resources, namely Water, Environment, Energy, Agriculture, Foreign Affairs, Finance. Others are Members

of Parliament, Development Partners, Researchers, Academia, Civil society, Youth, Media, and school children.

Another important activity to commemorate NBI's 20th birthday will be the launch of a special anniversary publication, which documents the 20-year journey since the establishment of this umbrella body.

Appreciation:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for keeping your readers, viewers and listeners informed about the Regional Nile Day celebrations as well as issues surrounding Nile cooperation. I take this opportunity to invite you all to the celebrations on Friday February 22, 2019.