



## Remarks of the Nile Basin Discourse – Board Chair Jean Baptiste Habiyaremye

**On the occasion of the Nile Day 2015, Khartoum – SUDAN**  
**Theme “Water and Improved Livelihoods Opportunities in Nile Cooperation”**  
**February 22nd 2015**  
**Khartoum - SUDAN**

Your Excellency, Ahmed Saad - Minister of the Council of Ministers,  
Distinguished Members of the Nile Council of Ministers,  
Honourable Ministers Present,  
Honourable members of Parliament of Sudan,  
Nile-TAC Chair and members  
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,  
Representatives of Development Partners,  
NBI Management and staff,  
Colleagues from the NBD & NDFs  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Nile Basin Discourse and on my own behalf, let me begin by expressing our deep pleasure at the participation and growing recognition of the role of Nile Basin Discourse and Civil Society as we join hands in commemorating the Nile Day 2015, here in Khartoum - Sudan. The Nile Day has become an important event that now reminds all of us of the shared history and rallies our organizations to move towards our visions of the future characterized by sustainable social economic development and livelihoods of communities that benefit from the Nile water resources and related sectors of agriculture and energy. I believe that the whole Nile Basin Discourse Team and Civil Society represented here will effectively make up for those absent, through our effective participation throughout the celebrations of this important day. Our pivotal point is our role as civil society in fostering sustainable Nile cooperation

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,** I wish to thank the government and people of the Republic of Sudan for the generous offer in hosting this important Nile Basin Initiative regional event, and appreciate the warm hospitality accorded to us from the civil society fraternity. Allow me also, to give my special thanks and gratitude to the Nile Basin Initiative for spearheading the Nile Day and opening a collaborative window to us to this auspicious event to register the collaborative presence of the civil society.

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,** The Nile water resource and related sectors of agriculture and energy are pivotal and of great significance in sustaining life in both domestic and transboundary developments. It has come to our knowledge that the finite water resource is increasingly coming under pressure from the increasing population that derives its livelihood from it. The challenges of the basin are compounded by the advent of climate change and variation that is threatening the continued availability of water in a predictable manner. That has been the basis for NBD's direction of focus on... *"Engaging stakeholders in climate change resilience in the Nile Basin Countries"*

**Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,** I would like to reiterate the importance of mainstreaming civil society participation, specifically because across the basin, space for civil society interaction with government in policy and other development programmes is growing and the progress is encouraging. We are confidently building synergies and partnerships with national

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governments that will reach the optimal level in the near future. As we continually address issues of building confidence and cooperation, let us not forget that

sometimes beyond state-state cooperation, we must also work on building confidence between the state and civil society, state and media, state and private sector, etc. All these areas of cooperation and engagement are critical for taking our discourse and practice of cooperation in the Nile Basin to the next level. Cooperation forms the cornerstone of development for enhanced livelihood.

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,** The Theme for Nile Day 2015: "Water and Improved Livelihoods Opportunities in Nile Cooperation" Is re-aligned in the same direction as our NBD Vision which looks at a... *"A Nile Basin in which there is sustainable social and economic development for all peoples of the Nile Basin, free of conflict, leading to achievement of justice, human rights, good governance, poverty eradication and protection of the environment"*

With this vision, NBD has evolved into an independent network of over 900 member organizations throughout the Basin. Member organizations are local and national Civil Society Organizations and NGOs working on a range of issues relevant to Nile cooperation, including environmental conservation, gender equity, livelihoods, poverty reduction, and others. As an organization, we are focusing on how vulnerability of local communities to the impacts of economic poverty and food poverty, is reduced. This focus has been built in our mission is ... "to ensure that a fully informed and basin-wide civil society develops and plays a key role in achieving the vision, through pro-active and critical influencing of projects, programs and policies of the Nile Basin Initiative and other development processes."

**Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,** NBD has an understanding with NBI to influence the designing and implementing tools, actions and policies that will help communities and governments in our countries in the basin to enhance livelihood. To this end, NBD plays three critical roles for the network in...:

1 a bottom-up communications pipeline for raising the evidence-based concerns of citizens and civil society up to the governmental and regional levels

2 a top-down pipeline for educating, informing and creating awareness of citizens and civil society on Nile issues, policies, development projects and programs, and...

3 a horizontal pipeline between citizens and civil society organizations both within and across national borders for peer-to-peer knowledge and capacity sharing

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,** Since 2002, the NBD exists with its large growing members of CSOs and an operational MoU with NBI. Our collaboration is to foster Nile cooperation. Now we are here today, to strengthen our partnership with all stakeholders of the Nile basin countries, and to show the existing added value of CSO participation in programs and projects in the Nile basin. Tomorrow, NBD and NBI will collaborate on other activities focusing on cooperation on the Nile. The NBI undertaking investments, while the NBD creating platforms for dialogue on obligations of stakeholders, and how communities can enjoy the benefits of cooperation with minimal harm. As civil society, let me also make a commitment that we will do our part as partners in basin development to make our contributions towards our obligations.

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**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,** Let me take this opportunity to inform, that tomorrow, on February 23rd 2015 here Khartoum-Sudan, the NBD working closely with the Sudan National Discourse Forum is to use the opportunity of meeting more stakeholders in Sudan gathered for the 9th Nile day celebration. To:-

1 undertake the stakeholder mapping exercise, sieving out issues for synthesis and dialogue to address stakeholders' interests, relationships, capacities, communication modes and policy intervention. The NBD also has the objective of using the stakeholder mapping platform for two other related exercises:

2 in collaboration with NBI, to create a discussion platform on the issue of Cooperation on the Nile. The objective is to create awareness and emphasize benefits of Nile Cooperation; and

3 to build the capacities of the Republic of Sudan NDF member CSOs/NGOs on Climate Risk Management in view of Nile cooperation.

Over the next six months, the three activities would have been undertaken in the all the ten (10) Nile Basin countries. These are some of the steps towards ensuring the mainstreaming of civil society in the important dialogue on livelihood as well as development and cooperation on the Nile.

**Ladies and gentlemen,** As we celebrate the Nile Day 2015, we also hope in this process to find the opportunity to make those important and progressive steps of riparian dialogue on cooperation and its benefits. Time and again, it has been demonstrated that as countries, it is only possible to realize win-win interventions in the basin when we choose to listen to our greatest hopes, our aspirations and when we address the threats and pursue the opportunities that we share. This Nile Day presents to us a chance to make progress in our often long and historic journey of cooperation – let us take it.

**In concluding my remarks, I say...** That Nile Basin and Africa as a whole has so many of our peoples facing poverty. In addition, our water resources are stressed and under threats. As the health, livelihoods and lives of those hundreds of millions of poor people are at risk daily, for our governments and non state actors, the call to act immediately is necessary. In the face of all the uncertainty and even sometimes lack of clarity, cooperation still remains as our only option.

Thank You!!

