



IPSS Virtual Policy Dialogues

Making African Centered Solutions work for The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance DAM (GERD): Equitable Development and Peaceful Coexistence

28 July 2020

Concept Note

1. Background

Grand Renaissance Dam construction, believed to be a slingshot for Ethiopia's economy in various ways, began in 2011 on the Blue Nile or Abay tributary in the northern Ethiopia highlands, from where 86% of the Nile's waters flow. When complete, it will be not only Ethiopia's but Africa's biggest hydroelectric power plant. However, its construction has caused a row between Egypt and Ethiopia, with Sudan caught in between. At the centre of the dispute are plans to fill up the mega dam as Egypt fears the project will allow Ethiopia to control the flow of Africa's longest river. Hydroelectric power stations do not consume water, but the speed with which Ethiopia fills up the dam's reservoir will affect the flow downstream. Besides being a matter of national sovereignty, the \$4bn (£3bn) dam is at the heart of Ethiopia's manufacturing and industrial dreams. When completed it is expected to be able to generate a massive 6,000 megawatts (MW) of electricity enabling the country to address the acute shortage of electricity where over 65% of the total population is not connected to the grid. The energy generated will be enough to have its citizens connected and sell the surplus power to neighboring countries. Egypt on the other hand has proposed a longer period 12 to 21 years ensuring the level of the river does not dramatically drop. With the July deadline coming to end for the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) to become functional, the disagreement has escalated into a diplomatic stand-off. Some International Law experts have gone as far as predicting breakdown of political and diplomatic negotiations giving way to military means while others find such a notion as utterly unreasonable. The United Nations Development Programme expressed concern that conflict over water resources could expand into "water wars". This calls for African solutions for African problems – a commitment and determination by African leaders, the AU and RECs, to be in the driving seat in tackling the dilemmas facing the continent and ensure equitable development and peaceful coexistence as envisaged in Agenda 2063 the SDGs and other key regional and international instruments.



2. Objectives

The main objectives of convening this policy dialogue are twofold:

- Draw attention to current or emerging peace and security issues and thus deepen the policymakers' understanding of peace and security in Africa;
- Accord a platform for dialogue and exchange – the policy dialogue intends to be a podium for frank discussions between stakeholders taking into account all views in the efforts of the continent to solve the GERD issue peacefully;
- Support the “intellectual challenge” to find African-led solutions to peace and security issues on the continent;
- Proposing African centered solutions towards equitable development and peaceful coexistence in line with Agenda 2063, SDGs and other key instruments.

3. Expected Outputs

The followings are expected outputs of the virtual policy dialogue

- ✓ An outcomes document to be shared with peace, security and other stakeholders;
- ✓ Video recordings to be shared on IPSS and Tana Forum social media;
- ✓ Coverage of the dialogue proceedings on IPSS social media platforms;
- ✓ Virtual dialogue between stakeholders on the theme;

4. Expected Outcomes

The policy dialogue will have the following outcomes:

- ❖ Bring together concerned actors and stakeholders for meaningful dialogue and engagement and policy directions;
- ❖ Unpack the idea of AfSol with relation of the GERD and how the continent can solve the issue amicably, and
- ❖ Sustainable and practical policy recommendations targeting stakeholders