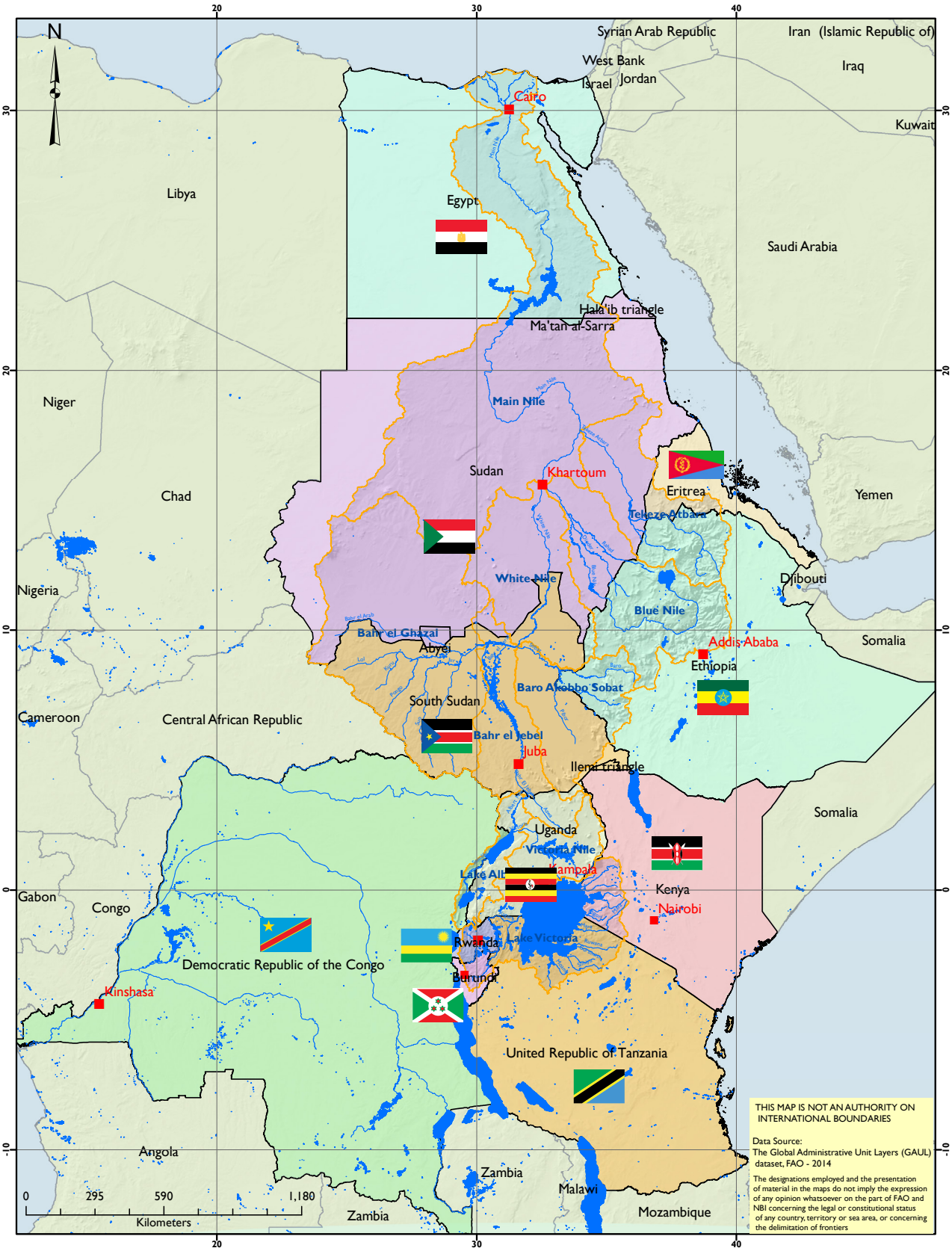
NILE BASIN INITIATIVE
INITIATIVE DU BASSIN DU NIL

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

On behalf of:
Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety
of the Federal Republic of Germany

THE FIRST NILE BASIN WETLANDS FORUM

NBI MEMBER STATES



* Eritrea participates as an observer

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ABOUT THE FORUM

The First Nile Basin Wetlands Forum event was held on 15th -17th July 2016 at Imperial Botanical Beach Hotel, Entebbe, Uganda. The Forum was established by the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) with technical and financial support from the Deutsche Gesellschaft für International Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH acting on behalf of the of the Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) of Germany. The Forum serves to mobilize and coordinate the interventions related to wetlands by state and non-state actors from across the Nile River Basin so as to protect and conserve wetlands of transboundary significance in the basin. It also promotes collaboration and synergy amongst wetland stakeholders so as to enhance their impacts on wetlands management.

The inaugural Forum event was held under the theme "*Building Partnerships for Nile Basin Wetlands Sustainability*" and was attended by 62 participants drawn from the ministries responsible for water resources and environment management in the Nile riparian countries; staff of the Nile Basin Initiative and Lake Victoria Basin Commission; international conservation agencies, international water resources management advocacy agencies; regional universities; international research institutions; civil society organisations and media houses.

The forum event, besides serving as an inauguration of the Nile Basin Wetlands Forum, was used to launch a project titled "*Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Utilisation of Ecosystem Services of Wetlands of Transboundary Relevance in the Nile Basin*". The project, whose shortened name is the Nile Basin Transboundary Wetlands Project, runs for five years (2015 to 2020) and has a budget of € 6 million provided by the German Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety through the International Climate Initiative (IKI). The project, which aims to strengthen the technical and institutional capacities of the Nile Basin Initiative and Nile riparian states for sustainable management of wetlands of transboundary significance, is being implemented in all the 10 NBI member States (namely Burundi, DR Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda). Interventions under the project include the development of a basin-wide knowledge base to facilitate management of transboundary wetlands, and support river basin planning; preparation of integrated management plans for major transboundary wetlands within the Nile Basin; and supporting capacity building and networking amongst key stakeholders in the basin.

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WETLANDS OF THE NILE RIVER BASIN

The Nile River is one of the major international water courses in Africa. The drainage basin of the river measures 3.18 million km² and covers parts of 11 countries in Eastern and Northern Africa (Burundi, DR Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Egypt, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda). The drainage area has many unique physical features that include large freshwater lakes and wide expanses of tropical wetlands abounding with plant and animal life. The large lakes, all of which are fringed by wetlands, include Lakes Victoria, Kyoga, Albert, Edwards, George and Tana. The freshwater wetlands in the basin, most of which traverse international boundaries, cover 1.1% of the total basin area and are mainly concentrated in two areas: the Nile Equatorial Lakes Region and the Sudd area in central South Sudan. The latter extends to the Baro-Akobo wetlands and Machar mashes to the east of the country. Wetland types represented in the basin include montane bogs, lowland herbaceous swamps, seasonally flooded grasslands, swamp forests, riverine wetlands, and lake-fringe herbaceous wetlands.

The Nile wetlands are of considerable economic importance and provide a wide range of ecosystem services to the Nile countries. The ecosystem services, which are the benefits that society derives from the wetlands, fall in four broad categories namely, provisioning services, such as production of food, water, fuelwood, building materials, medicines, etc.; regulating services like climate regulation, flood buffering, river flow regulation, water purification, and carbon sequestration; cultural services such as spiritual, aesthetic, recreational, educational and scientific services; and supporting services such as primary production and floodplain soil formation. The exploitation of these ecosystem services supports livelihoods for millions of people across the region and is essential for maintenance for general human well-being and socio-economic development of the Nile countries.

In recent decades, human pressure on the Nile wetlands and other natural ecosystems has been on the rise thereby leading to their rapid decline and threatening the sustainability of wetland biodiversity and many essential goods and services that healthy wetland ecosystems provide to society, and upon which society is heavily dependent. The drivers of wetland decline are numerous and include rapid population growth, rapid urbanisation, expansion in agriculture, rising global resource demand and global climate change. One of the responses of the Nile riparian countries to this challenge is the designation of 17 wetlands in the basin as Wetlands of International importance under the Ramsar Convention. Other wetlands are under protection through National instruments such as community protected areas, national parks or reserves including wetlands areas under other international protection mechanisms such as World Heritage sites. These measures are meant to protect the unique biodiversity of the selected wetlands and ensure they continue to provide goods and services for the benefit of present and future generations of Nile Basin riparians.

FORUM OBJECTIVES

Photo: NBI

The overriding objective of the inaugural Nile Basin Wetlands Forum event was to initiate the mobilization of state and non-state actors for collective and coordinated collaboration towards securing transboundary wetlands of Nile Basin that are coming under increasing anthropogenic and climate change threats.

The specific objectives of the inaugural Forum were to provide an opportunity for:

1. Enhancing understanding of the current status of Nile Basin Wetlands in relation to threats, gaps, opportunities and need for intervention.
2. Sharing knowledge and experiences on ongoing integrated wetlands interventions and best practices in the Nile Basin as a way of promoting synergies and collaboration amongst stakeholders.
3. Deepening understanding of topical wetland conservation approaches, methodologies and tools for learning and wider adoption. These approaches and tools include wetland economic valuation, transboundary wetlands management planning, wetlands as green infrastructure, and wetlands use in Ecosystem Based Adaptation (EbA) to climate change.
4. Official launch of the project titled "*Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Ecosystem Services of Wetlands of Transboundary Relevance in the Nile Basin*"
5. Joint visioning of a role for the Nile Basin Wetlands Forum as a multi-stakeholder platform facilitating collaborative efforts towards the wise use and sustainable management of transboundary wetlands and wetlands of regional significance in the Nile River Basin.

FORUM PROGRAMME

- The Forum event had a 3-days duration (15th -17th July 2016) and featured key note addresses, country presentations, question and answer sessions, breakout sessions and plenary sessions. The highlights of the program are shown below. The detailed program can be found in the Appendix.

Day 1: 15th July 2016

- Registration
- Opening session
- Insightful presentation 1: Wetlands for Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem Based Adaptation; Potentials and Case Studies
- Insightful presentation 2: Transboundary Wetlands Management Planning; Silver Bullet or Golden Goose? Case Study of Sio-Siteko Transboundary Wetland Management Plan and Envisioning Strategic Framework Plan for Nile Basin Wetlands.
- Country wetland status reports
- Dinner Reception

Day 2: 16th July 2016

- Stakeholder Presentations 1: The Nile Ecosystems *Wetlands Valuation* and *Wise-Use* (Nile-Eco-VWU) Project
  - Wetlands Valuation Case Study of Mara Eco-VWU
  - Wetlands Valuation Case Study of Back Swamps of the Blue Nile Eco-VWU
- Stakeholder Presentations 2: Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS) work on Semliki Landscape
- Stakeholder Presentations 3: The Ramsar Center for Eastern Africa (RAMCEA) Work on Nile Basin Wetlands
- Stakeholder Presentations 4: Wetlands International Work in Nile Basin/South Sudan/ Ethiopia
- Stakeholder Presentations 5: Lake Victoria Basin Commission Wetlands Portfolio
- Stakeholder Presentations 6: Nile Basin Discourse (NBD): Role of Civil Society in Nile Basin Wetlands Conservation
- NBI Presentation 1: NELSAP-CU Presentation: River Basin Management Planning; Investments and Wetlands Sustainability Integration
- NBI Presentation 2: ENTRO Presentation: Strategic Social and Environmental Assessment/ Integrated Water Resources Development Plan of the Baro-Akobo-Sobat Sub-Basin and Wetlands
- NBI Presentation 3: NBI Wetlands Completed, Ongoing and Future Work on Nile Basin Wetlands
- Envisioning for Nile Basin Wetlands Forum Platform
- Presentation on the Nile Basin Transboundary Wetlands Project

Day 3: 17th July 2016

- Nile Basin Transboundary Wetlands Project: work plan and milestones
- Nile Basin Transboundary Wetlands Project: Detailed implementation roadmap
- Group work on Nile Basin Transboundary Wetlands Project work plan
- Plenary session on Nile Basin Transboundary Wetlands Project work plan
- Wrap Up
- Forum Closure

REMARKS AND SPEECHES AT THE OPENING SESSION

Dr. Wubalem Fekade (ENTRO): Emphasized the need to collect baseline information on Nile wetlands and to roll out education and public awareness program on integrated wetland management and conservation.

Eng. Ellycard Nyabeeya (NELSAP-CU): Expressed a desire to see the development of an elaborate roadmap for the conservation of Nile Basin wetlands since they play an important role in supporting livelihoods of communities and the sustainable development of the region.

Dr. Abdulkarim Seid (Nile-SEC): provided insights on the imperative of ecological and hydrological link of Nile Basin Wetlands to River Nile and the need for mainstreaming wetlands into the river basin or basin-wide planning and incorporation of sub-basins and other cross-cutting issues.

Dr. Malte Grossman (GIZ): shared the vision and historical milestones of Nile Basin Wetlands work under Nile Basin Initiative and input from GIZ. Additionally presented the overarching goal of the Nile Basin Transboundary Project; aiming to assist state parties meet their Aichi Biodiversity Targets under Convention on Biological Diversity and Ramsar Convention Obligation. Thus need for regional dialogue on mainstreaming Biodiversity into sector planning and wetlands into river basin planning. Shared on the need to learn from National Successes for regional replication and scaling and the role of NBI in the process. Advised for the need for sustainability of initiatives and proactive role of Regional Wetlands Experts Working Group.

Dr. John Rao Nyaoro (ED-NBI): Noted that the Nile wetlands and their associated flora and fauna are an integral part of the Nile river complex, and emphasized, for this reason, that they must not be managed in isolation from the hydrological systems. Wetlands, he observed, provide a wide range of ecosystem services but remain undervalued across the world. He hoped to see an increased use of valuation tools in the region to increase justification for protection and conservation of wetlands. He pointed out that NBI's current work builds on past initiatives on wetlands and is in alignment to

Photo: NBI

NBI policies and strategies such as the NBI Wetland Management Strategy and NBI Climate Change Strategy. He further pointed out that NBI's current work will contribute to advancement of regional and international conventions and agreements such as the Transboundary Ecosystem Bill of the East African Community, the Lake Victoria Environmental Action Plan, the Ramsar Convention, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD),) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The NBI, he said, was well positioned to foster cooperation amongst Nile riparian countries, and drew attention to the catalytic role in regional cooperation that the NBI Wetlands Forum could play. He expressed the openness of NBI to collaboration with partners and concluded by wishing participants fruitful deliberations.

Hon. Sam Cheptoris (Minister of Water and Environment, Uganda and Nile-COM Chair): In an opening speech read out by Dr. Callist Tindimugaya (Nile-TAC Member for Uganda), the Nile-COM Chair warmly welcomed participants to Uganda. He reiterated the important role that wetlands play in the socio-economic development of the region, and underscored the importance of carrying out valuation studies to increase the protection of wetlands and mainstreaming of wetland values in socio-economic planning at national and regional levels. He urged for continued creation of mechanisms that promote collaboration and cooperation amongst Nile member states and pointed out the important role that the NBI Wetlands Forum will play in serving as a platform where state and non-state actors link and learn from each other, and where there is sharing of innovations, information and approaches in wetland management. The scale up and replication of the good wetland practices at local, national and regional levels through NBI's Transboundary Wetlands Project, he pointed out, will make an important contribution to the sustainable management of wetlands in the Nile region. He thanking GIZ for supporting the new initiative on regional wetlands management and ended by declaring the Inaugural Nile Basin Wetlands Forum officially open and Nile Basin Transboundary Wetlands Project officially launched.

COUNTRY WETLAND STATUS REPORTS

During the inaugural Forum, country representatives made presentations on the status of wetlands in their countries. The purpose of the session on country status reports was to build a basin-wide picture on the status of wetlands, the common challenges being experienced across the basin and the appropriate interventions needed to address them.

Each country presentation covered the following topics:

1. Geographical coverage and distributions of wetlands
2. Major transboundary wetland systems in the country
3. The policy and legal framework for wetland management in the country
4. The institutional arrangements for wetland management at local to national level
5. Wetland related international treaties to which the country the country is a signatory; international Ramsar sites in the country.
6. Wetland related programmes and projects in the country
7. Key wetland management issues and challenges
8. Potential measures for addressing the challenges, and existing opportunities for addressing the challenges
9. Experience concerning good wetland management approaches, tools and practices.

The key observations from the country reports are the following:

1. All of the Nile countries have areas covered by wetlands, but they differ considerably with respect to total area and coverage of wetlands. South Sudan and Uganda have the largest area of wetlands lying within the Nile River Basin.
2. Wetlands of transboundary significance in the Nile Basin are numerous and include the Sudd, Dinder Aletash, Sio-Siteko, Cyohoha, Kaya-Koboko, Kagera wetlands, Akanyaru, Semliki and Mara.
3. With the exception of Kenya, and Uganda, the countries do not have national policies specifically focusing on wetlands management, but wetlands are addressed under several sectoral policies. Also, all the Nile countries with the exception of Rwanda do not have a specific wetland law but wetlands are regulated through other sectoral laws such as on nature conservation, environment management, water resources management among others.
4. In all countries, the function of wetlands management is distributed amongst multiple institutions. Commonly there is little coordination between the numerous institutions.
5. All the countries, with the exception of Ethiopia are signatories of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat. All countries have International Ramsar sites, some of which are outside the Nile Basin. Also, all countries with the exception of South Sudan are signatories of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
6. A few countries such as Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda have wetland management strategies and programmes.
7. There are many recently-completed and ongoing projects that have a wetlands management component. The projects are of two broad categories: those involving two or more countries (transboundary) and those that involve only one country (national). The transboundary projects include the Lake Victoria Environmental Management Project Phase II (LVEMP-II; involving Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda), Planning for Resilience through Policy, Adaptation, Research and Economic Development (PREPARED) Project (East Africa), the Sio-Malaba-Malakisi Transboundary River Basin Management Project and Sio-Siteko wetlands system (Kenya and Uganda), Kagera Transboundary River Basin Management Project (Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda); and the Mara Transboundary River Basin Management Project (Kenya and Tanzania). The National programs are more numerous and include the National Programme on Environment, Forest, Wetlands and Biodiversity (PNEFEP-2, DR Congo); Sustainable Management of Biodiversity

and Ecosystem Services for Forests Under Climate and Human Pressure (BELSPO, DR Congo); numerous watershed management interventions in Ethiopia (such as NBI's Tana-Beles Integrated Water Resources Management and Development Project); the National Program for Mapping and Categorization of Wetlands (Rwanda); National Sustainable Wetlands Programme (Tanzania); Kilombero and Lower Rufiji Wetlands Ecosystem Management Project (KILORWEMP; Tanzania); and National Wetlands Management Project (Uganda).

8. Key wetland issues and challenges include wetland degradation from rapid population rise, agricultural expansion, wetland drainage, siltation, pollution, unsustainable harvesting/exploitation of wetland resources; urbanisation, oil exploration (in South Sudan and Sudan), damming of rivers, and industrial development; lack of monitoring systems and inadequate wetland data and information; weak policy and legal frameworks; lack of wetland management plans; weak institutional capacity; fragmented institutional setup; low budgetary allocation on wetlands among other factors.
9. Potential solutions to these challenges include formulation of national polices, strategies, action plans and programmes for wetland management; streamlining of roles and responsibilities for wetland management amongst national institutions; strengthening institutional capacity for wetland management from national to local levels; carrying out awareness raising and user community education on wise use of wetlands; strengthening institutional coordination mechanisms; strengthening enforcement of wetland regulations; and carrying out studies to establish baseline data and information on wetlands.

Good practice interventions in the NBI member states from which there could be useful lessons for other basin states include the Forest Partnership of the Congo Basin (PFBC) under which co-basin states of the Congo Basin are cooperating in developing and implementing a wetland management project on the transboundary Lakes Tele and Tumba Basins; the National Wetlands Atlas Project of Kenya; Rugezi wetlands restoration project in Rwanda; Relocation of Gikoro Industrial Zone away from wetland areas in Rwanda; the National Wetlands Management Program of Uganda – pilot interventions in Awoja and Namatala wetlands; COBWEB in Uganda – initiatives on Sustainable Livelihood Practices in Nakivale and Magoro, Watershed Management Practices in Kaceera and Awoja (Uganda), initiatives on inter-district management of wetlands focusing on Sezibwa, Doho-Namatala, Rwizi and Okole wetlands (Uganda), and studies on economic valuation of wetlands carried out on Nakivubo, Nyaruzinga, Kyazanga, and Sango Bay wetlands (Uganda) and Economic Valuation and Conservation Investment Plan approach under PREPARED project.

Important intervention points in wetlands management

- Establishing institutional coordination mechanisms is important for improving wetlands management as in all countries there are multiple institutions with overlapping mandates and activities on wetlands.
- Putting in place or enhancing cooperation between countries is essential for the management of wetlands that stretch across international boundaries.
- Too few studies on economic valuation of wetlands have been undertaken in the Nile Basin; many more valuation studies need to be commissioned to improve factual information about the economic importance of wetlands, and support evidence-based decision making on wetland management.
- Non-governmental and community-based groups are making an important contribution to wetlands management; this role needs to be recognized, valued and promoted.
- Economic considerations override environmental and ecological considerations during issuance of wetland use permits by regulatory authorities; greater efforts need to be expended in move towards a balance between environmental, social and economic interests during the issuance of wetland use permits.
- Private sector involvement in wetlands management is weak and needs strengthening.
- In many countries, baseline information on socio-cultural, economic and environmental state of

wetlands, existing institutional arrangements, and key wetland stakeholders, is missing; studies on capturing baseline conditions are needed to facilitate the management of wetlands in the Nile region.

- In addition to collection of baseline information, countries need to embark on continuous monitoring of major wetlands to enable timely detection of negative trends and introduction of control measures.
- It is important to incorporate political leadership in wetlands management/coordination institutional structures to reduce political resistance, and smoothen implementation of decisions and enforcement of wetland laws and regulations.
- Wetlands management policy needs to include a combination between incentives/motivation tools and enforcement/deterrent tools.
- A common shared vision of wetlands in the Nile Basin is needed to harmonize approaches in wetland management across the basin, and facilitate the management of transfrontier wetlands.

Key discussion points on forum themes

There were two themes under which much of the technical discussions in the Forum took place, namely: (a) Wetlands for Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem based Adaptation (EbA); and (b) Transboundary Wetland Systems Adaptive Management Approach. Below is a summary of key discussion points under these two themes.

Wetlands for Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem based Adaptation (EbA).

- The application of green infrastructure and Ecosystem Based Adaptation (EbA) to impacts of climate change within river basins is context specific – depends on the type and functions of the wetland, the river system, availability of ecosystem services sellers and buyers among other factors.
- The role of government in promoting green infrastructure and ecosystem based adaptation are broad and include policy setting, regulation, planning, awareness raising, capacity building of public agencies and communities, stakeholder engagement, and resource mobilization.
- Maintaining wetland integrity, promoting sustainable management and strengthening socio-economic services are the three triangular apexes of wetlands management interventions. Among other things, this calls for balancing between societal needs for goods and services and the integrity of wetland ecosystems, and making best tradeoffs between competing needs.
- The need to incorporate wetlands and other water-related ecosystems in water related infrastructural development investments through rigorous strategic environmental assessment, environmental impact assessment and overall regional wetlands management plan framework for the river basin as highlighted in presentations by NELSAP-CU on Integrated Water Resources Development and Management Investments targeting numerous sub-basins in the upper Nile and ENTRO on Strategic Social and Environmental Assessment (SSEA) in Integrated Water Resource Development and Management Plan and Wetlands for the of Case of Baro-Akobo-Sobat (BAS) Sub-basin.

Transboundary Wetland Systems Adaptive Management Approach

- Responsiveness to local needs, meeting expectations of stakeholder communities, raising awareness and creating ownership of wetland management initiatives are critical for the successful implementation of participatory adaptive plans for wetlands management.
- Mainstreaming adaptive management plans for wetlands into local government plans and budgets increases their chances for success and sustainability.
- It is critically important to avoid a project notion amongst local communities with respect to management plans for wetlands.
- In moving from strategic level wetland management plans, to medium- to short-term action plans, to implementation plans, adaptive management plans for wetlands become progressively more detailed and concrete.

VISIONING ON THE NBI WETLANDS FORUM

Photo: NBI

The initial ideas on functions of the Nile Basin Wetlands Forum included;

- Facilitating knowledge sharing on Nile wetlands
- Facilitating research and knowledge generation
- Facilitating sharing of experiences and adoption of good practices amongst communities in the Nile region
- Facilitating awareness raising on wetlands and supporting efforts to increase appreciation of wetland values
    - Facilitating initiatives to enhance coordination amongst wetland actors and stakeholders
- Providing informal mechanisms for cooperation between countries.
- Facilitating policy dialogue to strengthen enabling environment for wetlands management

A visioning session was held during the inaugural meeting of wetland stakeholders to continue the conceptual development of the Nile Basin Wetlands Forum. Below are the suggestions of the participants on the concept of the wetlands forum.

Suggestions on the objectives, structure and function of the Nile Basin Wetlands Forum

- Forum should be a multi-stakeholder platform that brings together state and non-state actors of wetlands management (government ministries and specialized agencies; private sector, business, civil society, communities representatives among others).
- Functions of the Forum to include:
    - coordinating the protection and management of wetlands at country and transboundary levels to avoid duplication and foster dissemination of information;
    - facilitating planning, integration, partnerships and networking, capacity building, information sharing, and technology transfer;
    - supporting the harmonization of wetland policies and regulatory frameworks across the Nile region;
    - facilitating awareness creation on wetlands conservation;

- building knowledge base at national and regional levels through facilitating sharing of case studies and relevant experiences
- supporting the preparation of guidelines of best practice to inform the countries on the approaches and models of wetlands management; supporting mobilization of funds

- There should be three levels of the forum: national level comprising of national stakeholders; sub-regional levels with two sub-groupings based on the two main Nile sub-regions – Nile Equatorial Lakes and Eastern Nile sub-basins; and regional level (key stakeholders across the Nile region)
- Existing institutional structures should be used to the extent possible; setting up new parallel structures should be avoided or minimised.
- The regional forum should meet regularly – at least once a year.
- There should be virtual forums among working groups
- Each forum to discuss specific topics/upcoming issues
- A country that offers to host a Nile Wetlands Forum event should be responsible for making the logistical arrangements for the event in close collaboration with the Nile Secretariat
- The Forum should also serve as a platform for dissemination of information and making follow up on agreed actions. Meetings of the Forum for this purpose (information dissemination and follow up) are proposed to be at three level:
  - Level 1: wetlands community in the cyber space; one monthly virtual meeting;
  - Level 2: task team level; bi-annual meeting on follow up involving national projects and institutions;
  - Level 3: regional forum: annual or bi-annual meeting.

Suggestions for sustainability of the Forum include:

- developing a clear long-term vision; goal sharing and common vision for all stakeholders;
- targeting funding towards impact-oriented interventions and concrete actions on the ground.
- creating and sustaining functional partnerships;
- mainstream interventions into the operations of local, national and regional institutions;
- anchoring the Forum to other NBI programs
- developing it as Ramsar's regional initiative cooperation platform to enable collaboration on wetlands work between governments, technical experts, international NGOs, local communities and private companies in Nile Basin region
- creating mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating
- fundraising with partners

Forum should be a multi-stakeholder platform that brings together state and non-state actors of wetlands management (government ministries and specialized agencies; private sector, business, civil society, communities representatives among others).

Photo: NBI

NILE BASIN TRANSBOUNDARY WETLANDS PROJECT

Photo: NBI

The objectives, strategic interventions, implementation structure, implementation roadmap and stakeholders involvement approach of the Nile Basin Transboundary Wetlands Project were shared with participants at the beginning of this session. This was followed by a period of breakaway group discussions focusing on the Nile Basin Transboundary Wetlands Project. During the breakaway period, Forum participants were clustered into groups composed of regional working group members, partners and NBI staff and deliberated on specific questions posed by the NBI. This activity was designed to provide feedback from key stakeholders in the region on the appropriateness of the project design and potential areas of improvement/adjustment. The suggestions from the Forum are summarised below.

Key issues/challenges that should be addressed jointly and regionally

- Harmonizing wetland policies in the region
- Mapping all actors and undertaking a situational analysis to avoid duplication of efforts
- Fostering cooperation on management of transboundary wetlands
- Mapping and inventory of all wetlands (status, size, importance, threats, etc.)
- Regional assessment of wetlands; establishing current status of wetlands (biodiversity richness treats, needs, etc.); the selection of project sites should be informed by the status report and equally distributed among the NBI Member States
- Capacity building (human resources and organizational levels)
- Integrating transboundary wetland management plans into existing plans
- Coordination of a transboundary wetlands fund mechanism
- Valuation of transboundary wetlands
- Fast tracking of protection of critical transboundary wetlands under threat
- Carrying out education and awareness raising campaigns targeting state actors and communities around key transboundary wetlands
- Introducing climate change adaptation measures in transboundary wetlands;
- Managing pollution, siltation and degradation of transboundary wetlands

Key issues of management –what to manage, assess, monitor and regulate

- Biophysical and socio-economic characteristics of transboundary wetlands; including characterization of anthropogenic pressures on the

wetlands

- Wetlands risk assessment and risk ranking as a way of determining priority areas for wetland management interventions.
- Developing a long-term vision of Nile Basin Initiative on wetlands
- Developing a working definition of wetlands for the Nile Basin
- Delineation and definition of wetland boundaries/ extent and buffer zones (based on wetland definition)
- Clearly determine how joint implementation will be done
- Stakeholder characterization (power and interest)
- Defining guiding principles for wetland management in the Nile Basin
- Scenario analysis and tradeoffs for development of major transboundary wetlands
- Developing of common tools – monitoring, learning, planning, decision making and prioritization
- Preparing wetland sustainability and management plans
- Closing the knowledge gaps on Nile wetlands
- Prioritizing wetland management in the national agenda

How the NBI Transboundary Wetland Programme could add value to cross-border wetlands management at sub-basin level

- By creating a forum to coordinate joint activities
- By supporting the integration of wetland management activities in river basin management planning at sub-basin level
- Introducing wealth of experience and best practices from around the world in wetlands management at transboundary level
- By supporting valuation of cross-border wetlands
- By creating a mechanism to facilitate participation of Permanent Secretaries and Civil Society Organisations in transboundary wetlands management
- By facilitating technology development and transfer
- Through NBI's high profile and knowledge on wetlands, helping to give importance to wetlands management at national level

Key approaches recommended for further scaling up and/or mainstreaming under the Project

- Ecosystem based adaptation (EbA) approaches
- Wetland classification/categorization
- Stakeholder involvement
- Putting communities at the centre
- Catchment based approaches
- Community based wetland management
- Mainstream wetland management in local government policies and programs
- Livelihood enhancement activities
- Climate-smart watershed activities

Key tools recommended for further scaling up and/ or mainstreaming under the Project

- Economic valuation of wetlands
- Wetland inventory
- Wetlands management plan
- Wetlands atlas
- Rapid wetland assessment
- Payment for ecosystem services (PES)
- Remote sensing techniques for wetland monitoring
- Trade-offs and scenario analysis

Photo: NBI

Elements of a basin wide wetlands inventory

- Geomorphological characteristics
- Hydrological characteristics
- Description of plant and animal communities
- Latitude/longitude
- Topographic/location map
- Area and delineation of permanent and seasonal wetlands
- Biophysical characteristics
- Inventory and quantitative assessment of wetland resources
- Existing wetland uses and wetland functions
- Socio-economic and cultural variables
- Wetland rank with respect to value
- Main threats, underlying factors and severity of threats
- Wetland classification by threat levels
- Wetland categorization by community of plants and animals
- Wetland categorization by transboundary/national status
- Conservation status (e.g. location within national park, game reserve, Ramsar site, communal land, etc.
- Management interventions (e.g. conservation, restoration, development, etc.)
- Photos
- List of relevant studies and reports with information on the wetland; location of the documents

PRESENTATIONS AND POTENTIAL AREAS OF COLLABORATION WITH PARTNERS

Photo: NBI

The Nile Basin Wetlands Forum benefitted from the following presentations from partners highlighting ongoing work and areas of collaborations;

Ramsar Centre for Eastern African (RAMCEA) shared their work on regional capacity building and potential area of collaboration as: Providing support to the Eastern African Contracting Parties, Non-contracting parties and other institutions and stakeholders to improve their capacity to implement the Ramsar Convention in the respective countries and institutions.

Global Water Partnership (GWP) shared their work in building water management partnerships in the region and potential area of collaboration as:

- Training and building capacity on multi-stakeholder wetlands and water management platforms.

Nile Basin Discourse shared their work on involvement of Civil Society Organizations in Nile Basin region water resources management and development work and noted area of collaboration as:

- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) mobilization in Nile Basin region for proactive participation in Nile Basin Wetlands Conservation tapping on their vibrant network of CSOs in every Country of Nile Basin region.

The Nile Ecosystems Valuation for Wise Use (Nile Eco-VWU) which is funded by CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems (WLE) and involved partners such as The Nile Basin Capacity Building Network (lead), Makerere University, Cap-Net, UNESCO Chair in Water Resources, Egerton University, UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education, Szent Istvian University, Ain Shams University, The Faculty of Geo-information Science and earth Observation of the University of Twente, Water Capacity Building Network presented two case studies by partners from those respective countries; Economic Valuation for Wetland Ecosystems Services Sudan Case Study (Dinder Wetland) and Mara Wetlands-Kenya-Tanzania Case

Study. Their identified area of collaboration included;

- Sharing experience on Wetlands Valuation studies from four case studies of Mara Basin Wetlands, Kenya – Tanzania, Burullus Wetland, Egypt, Back swamps of the Blue Nile and its tributaries, Sudan, Nakivubo Wetland, Uganda for forthcoming Nile Basin Transboundary Wetlands Project Wetland Valuation Study. **Lake Victoria Basin Commission** (LVBC) shared on The PREPARED project including Conservation Investment Plans (CIPs) for Nabugabo, Mara and Sango Bay-Minziro among others and Biologically Significant Areas (BSAs) work highlighting wetlands BSAs. The noted area of collaboration as:
- Working jointly on Lake Victoria associated wetlands and promoting Conservation Investment Planning which is a new paradigm in conservation planning approach and builds from Total Economic Valuation (TEVs) and existing frameworks including management plans.

International Water Management Institute (IWMI) shared on their working wetlands approach, highlights on wetlands conservation challenges in the region and noted the following areas of collaboration:

- IWMI interested in working with NBI in developing a working definition for wetlands for the Nile Region
- Available data within the region is fragmented with respect to focus and tools and metrics; this will make preparation of any regional synthesis, including hydrological analysis and trade off analysis difficult.
- There is no standard method for wetland valuation; instead there are several methodologies of varying complexity and data requirements used for wetland valuation. The NBI will have to decide on which methodology to employ for wetland valuation.
- It is necessary to manage expectations since the Nile Basin Transboundary Wetlands Project cannot be able to address all issues in the basin.
- There is need to be prioritization of tasks for the Nile Basin Transboundary Wetlands Project
- One approach could be to develop a long tem vision for wetlands in the Nile Basin, and support components of the strategy to attain the vision that can fit within the available resources envelope of NBI
- Continuous engagement of stakeholders will be necessary for effective knowledge transfer.
- IWMI has capacity in Earth Observation application on wetlands research, inventory, assessments, monitoring and conservation, working wetlands approach and environmental flows.

Wetlands International shared their wetlands work in Eastern Africa and noted the following areas of collaboration.

- Potential areas of collaboration include studies in the Sudd, development of wetlands management plans, wetlands activities in western Uganda
- Wetlands International's experience in the region hence collaboration areas include wetlands assessments, ecosystem based adaptation, The Economic of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) case studies, Cooperative Regional Assessment, management of satellite wetlands and water bird counts in collaboration with the Ramsar Secretariat.

Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS) shared their work on Great Lakes Freshwater and noted the following areas of collaboration:

- ARCOS has expertise in many areas of wetlands management and is open to partnership
- Component 3 of the NBI Transboundary Wetlands Management Project on Capacity Building and Networking has much similarity with what ARCOS is doing on wetlands; this is a potential area of collaboration
- Interested in cooperation in development of information systems and preparation of atlases.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUTPUTS

Photo: NBI

The key achievements and outputs of the inaugural Forum event include the following:

1. The Nile Basin Wetlands Forum comprising of state and non-state actors in the Nile River Basin was launched and its first meeting successfully held. During the meeting, the role of Regional Wetlands Experts Working Group was reviewed. The Forum event marked the initiation of the mobilization of state and non-state actors for collective and coordinated collaboration so as to securing transboundary wetlands of Nile Basin that are coming under increasing anthropogenic and climate change threats.
2. Understanding enhanced on the current status of Nile Basin wetlands in relation to threats, gaps, opportunities and need for intervention from sharing of detailed country wetland status reports.
3. Knowledge and experience on ongoing integrated wetlands interventions and best practices in the Nile Basin was shared and exchanged. This served to lay a foundation for future synergy and collaboration amongst key wetland stakeholders in the Nile region.
4. Understanding of Forum participants deepened on topical wetland conservation approaches, methodologies and tools such as wetland economic valuation, transboundary wetlands management planning, wetlands as green infrastructure, and wetlands use in Ecosystem Based Adaptation (EbA) to climate change.
5. The Nile Basin Transboundary Wetlands Project titled "*Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Ecosystem Services of Wetlands of Transboundary Relevance in the Nile Basin*" was officially launched and awareness about it raised amongst key stakeholders in the region.
6. An implementation road map for the Nile Basin Transboundary Wetlands Project was presented and discussed; Terms of Reference for major studies to be carried out under the project were presented and discussed.
7. Development of a shared vision for wetlands of the Nile River Basin initiated Visioning on the
8. Knowledge base on the Nile Basin wetlands initiated through the information provided by countries and other actors in the region.
9. A database of wetlands stakeholders in the Nile River Basin initiated through information collected through the Forum event.

PROGRAMME

Date	Time	Activity	Presenter/Facilitator	Organization
Day 1, 15 July	8:00 - 9:00	Registration of Participants	Beatrice Adongakulu	NBI Nile Sec
	Opening Session, Master of Ceremony; Jane Kyomuhendo Baitwa, Regional Communication Specialist, Nile-Sec			
	9:00-9:10	Introduction to Nile Basin Forum and Project Launch	Leonard Akwany	NBI Nile Sec
	9:10 - 09:55	**Welcome remarks**	Dr. John Rao Nyaoro;	Executive Director, Nile- Sec
			Eng. Elicad Elly Nyabeeya	Regional Coordinator, NELSAP-CU
			Fekahmed Negash	Executive Director, ENTRO
	9:55-10:15		Dr. Malte Grossmann	GIZ
		Keynote Speech: Transboundary Wetlands Conservation; Status, Challenges, Lessons and Opportunities for Nile River Basin (20 min)	Mr. Paul Mafabi	Director of Environment, Ministry of Environment, Uganda/RAMCEA
	10:15:10:30	Brief Overview of NBI Transboundary Wetlands Project Overview	Dr Abdulkarim Seid	NBI Nile Sec
	10:30-11:00	Opening Speech and Official Launch of Nile Basin Forum and NBI Transboundary Wetlands Project	Nile-COM Chair	Minister of Water and Environment, Uganda
	11:00-12:00	Health Break and Group Photo	All	Nile Sec
	Session 2 – Sustainable Management of Wetlands: Issues, Challenges and Opportunities; Lessons from Case Studies Chair: Dr. Callist Tindimugaya, Nile-TAC Uganda			
	12:00 -12:20	Wetlands for Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem Based Adaptation; Potentials and Case Studies	Dr. Amare Haileslassie	IWMI
	12:20 - 12:40	Transboundary Wetlands Management Planning; Silver Bullet or Golden Goose? Case Study of Sio-Siteko Transboundary Wetland Management Plan	Prof. Philip Raburu	VIRED International/ Eldoret University
	12:40 - 13:10	Facilitated Plenary Session	Session Chair	All
	13:10-14: 10	Lunch Break		Nile Sec
	Session 3 – Country Wetlands Status Reporting Chair: Prof Seifeldin Abadalla, Nile-TAC Sudan			
	14:10-14:55	Country Presentations Round I: Burundi, DRC, Ethiopia,	Country representatives	Country of Burundi, DRC and Ethiopia
	14:55-15:10	Q and A	Session Chair	All
	15:10-15:55PM	Country Presentations Round II: Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan	Country representatives	Country of Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan
	15:55 – 16:10	Q and A	Session Chair	All
	16:10- 16:40	Health Break		Nile Sec
	16:40 – 17:20	Country Presentations Round II: Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.	Country Representatives	Country of Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda
	17:20-17:35	Q and A	Session Chair	All
	17:35 – 18:00	Plenary Discussion and Wrap-Up of Day I	Mohsen Al Arabawy	NBI Nile-Sec
	18:30-20:30	Forum Dinner Reception	All	Nile Sec
	Session 3 – Regional Experiences on Addressing Wetlands Issues Chair: Mr. Mukiza Odilo, Nile-TAC; Rwanda			

Date	Time	Activity	Presenter/Facilitator	Organization
Day 2	9:00-10:15	Stakeholders Presentations Session: NBCBN Project and Nile Eco-VWU Mara Case Study Nile Eco-VWU Back Swamps of the Blue Nile and its tributaries, Sudan Case Study Wetlands International	Risper Ondiek Prof Prof. Dr. Abdalla Abdelsalam Ahmed Julie Mulonga and Yitbarek	NCBN/Egerton Univesity UNESCO Professor, Chair Holder UNESCO Chair in Water Resources, Khartoum, Sudan, Wetlands International, Eastern Africa
	10:15:10:30	Q and A Session	Session Chair	All
	10:30:11:00	Health Break		
	11:00:12:00	RAMSAR Center for Eastern Africa ARCOS LVBC Wetlands Portfolio Nile Basin Discourse (NBD): Role of Civil Society in Nile Basin Wetlands Conservation	Mr Paul Mafabi Jacqueline Ntukamazina and Salome Alweny Mr. Telly Eugene Muramira Dr. Hellen Natu	RAMCEA Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS) LVBC, NBD
	12:00-12:30	Plenary Session with Stakeholders Presenters: partnership opportunities for enhancing synergy	Session Chair	All
	12:30-14:00	Lunch Break	All	All
	Session 3 – Integrating Wetlands Sustainable Management in River Basin Planning Chair: Teshome Atnafie, Nile-TAC Ethiopia			
	14:00:14:20	NBI Completed, Ongoing and Future Work on Nile Basin Wetlands	Dr Abdulkarim Seid/ Leonard Akwany	NBI Nile-Sec
	14:20-14:40	NELSAP-CU Presentation: : River Basin Management Planning; Investments and Wetlands Sustainability Integration:	Mr. Emmanuel Muligirwa	NBI NELSAP-CU
	14:40 -15:00	ENTRO Presentation: Strategic Social and Environmental Assessment/Integrated Water Resources Development Plan of the Baro-Akobo-Sobat Sub-Basin and Wetlands	Mr. Jackson Elisoma Muso	NBI ENTRO
	15:00– 15:20	Nile Basin Wetlands Forum/Platform; GWP Experience	Kidanemariam Jembere	GWP-EA
	15:20 - 15:40	Plenary Discussion	Session Chair	All
	15:40-16:00	NBI Transboundary Wetlands Project Presentation: rationale, scope, and main components	Dr Abdulkarim Seid/ Leonard Akwany	NBI Nile-Sec
	16:00-16:15	NBI Transboundary Wetlands Project Q & A Session	Session Chair	All
	16:15-16:45PM	Health break	All	Nile Sec
	16:45 – 17:00	Wrap – up of Day 2	Mohsen Al Arabawy	Nile-Sec

Date	Time	Activity	Presenter/Facilitator	Organization
Day 3	Day 3: Wetlands Project, Work plan for 2016/17 for NBI Centres			
	Session 4 – Work Plan, Milestones and Implementation Arrangements Chair: Fekahmed Negash, Executive Director, ENTRO			
	9:30-10:15	NBI Transboundary Wetlands Project: work plan, milestones Q&A/Validation Sessions	Dr Abdulkarim Seid	NBI Nile Sec
	10:15 – 10:45	NBI Transboundary Wetlands Project Detailed implementation Roadmap Presentation Discussion	Leonard Akwany	NBI Nile Sec
	10:45 - 11:15	Health Break	All	Nile Sec
	11:15-13:00PM	Breakout Sessions (4 Groups)	Leonard Akwany	NBI Nile Sec
	13:00-14:00PM	Lunch Break	All	Nile Sec
	14:00-14:45	Breakout Session Group Presentations and Feedback TDA TOR TEEB TOR GI TOR Firming Role of Wetlands Experts Group	Leonard Akwany	NBI Nile Sec
	14:45 - 15:45	Plenary Discussion on Strategic Recommendations for Project Implementation	Emmanuel Muligirwa	NBI NELSAP-CU
	15:45-16:00	Wrap-Up	Dr Abdulkarim Seid	Nile Sec
	16:00-16:30	Health Break	All	Nile-Sec

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SPEECH 1

SPEECH OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE NILE BASIN INITIATIVE GIVEN AT THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE INAUGURAL NILE BASIN WETLANDS FORUM AND NILE BASIN TRANSBOUNDARY WETLANDS PROJECT AT IMPERIAL BOTANICAL BEACH HOTEL, ENTEBBE, UGANDA ON FRIDAY 15TH JULY 2016

Honourable Minister,
Nile TAC Members,
Invited Thematic Speakers,
NBI Wetlands Experts Working Group Members,
Invited Stakeholders,
All protocol observed.

On behalf of Nile Basin Initiative, I hereby express my welcome greetings and appreciation for accepting our invitation to participate in the inaugural Nile Basin Wetlands Forum and Transboundary Wetlands Project Launch. We are powerful when we jointly participate and work together on issues of Nile Basin Sustainability.

Wetlands are integral part of Nile River complex ecosystem. Therefore must not be managed in isolation. The hydrological and ecological link between these wetlands and the river system is what ensures sound health and life of River Nile that over 250 million inhabitants of the Nile Basin directly or indirectly depends on for multiple benefits. These benefits, summed as ecosystem goods and services derived from Nile Basin wetlands include; food supply, clean water, raw materials and medicines, critical habitats, refuge for migrating birds, shoreline and storm protection, climate regulation, flood control and tourism. The wetlands are also associated with unique biodiversity of flora and fauna. Thus, they are very crucial for livelihoods and associated economies.

Wetlands are one of the most undervalued ecosystems but provide a range of vital services. Examples include:

- The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment gave wetlands a value of US$15 trillion in 1997.
- A study of the role of coastal wetlands in reducing the severity of impacts from hurricanes in the United States found that they provided storm protection services with an estimated value of US$23.2 billion per year.
- The annual economic value of the remaining Danube River floodplains, including their flood mitigation function, was assessed in 1995 at EUR650 million.
- New York City found that it could avoid spending USD$3-8 billion on new waste water treatment plants by investing USD$1.5 billion in the purchase of land around the reservoirs upstate. This land purifies the water supply for free.
- In the Caribbean, the shoreline protection services provided by coral reefs are valued at up to US$2.2 billion annually.

Threats to wetlands sustainability are common despite their enormous values. From unfriendly local communities overexploitation, reclamation for commercial agriculture and infrastructural development. Threats which focus on short-term benefits and not long-term benefits associated with wetlands as natural capital with ecological, social and economic values. Case Studies of Wetlands performing services

in a cost-effective way than man-made technological alternatives, of wetlands enabling livelihoods and climate resilience in communities heavily depending on natural resources, of wetlands serving as hotspots or key biodiversity sites are in existence. Thus, it is imperative for the Nile Basin region to augment these cases in terms of proofing the concept and the value for wider adoption and practice.

Our current work on Wetlands builds on our historical endeavours towards wetlands sustainability and is anchored on multiple Nile Basin Initiative States strategic intent and obligations on Nile Basin wetlands as captured in the following relevant and strategic instruments; NBI Wetland Management Strategy, NBI Climate Change Strategy, NBI Environment and Social Policy and NBI Strategic Action Program, whose imperatives include, sustainable utilization and conservation of Nile Basin Natural Capital such as wetlands ecosystems for livelihoods security and climate change adaptation.

Additionally our work on wetlands advance Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention), The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and associated Aichi Biodiversity Targets, Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, The Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) whose strategic intent include sustainability of wetlands ecosystems and associated flora and fauna as targeted in the project.

Moreover our work on wetlands enables the East African Community's (EAC) Transboundary Ecosystem Bill and the Lake Victoria Environmental Action Plan, which provide for cooperation in the management of transboundary ecosystems including transboundary wetlands. Finally our wetlands portfolio ensures attainability of newly agreed upon Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which include working with nature such as Wetlands Ecosystems to achieve multiple SDGs, especially SDG1: No Poverty, SDG 2: Zero Hunger, SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation, SDG 13: Climate Action, SDG 15 Life on Land and SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals.

Transboundary Wetlands and Wetlands of Regional Significance such as Sudd Wetlands Complex are of obvious interest to NBI. This is not only because of their multiple benefits but also due to the need for transboundary collaboration and regional externalities impact thinking and approach in their management for sustainability. NBI is better placed to nurture and foster such collaborations and regional mentality. Thus our long-term endeavours to deepen and expand collaborations and partnerships among state and non-state actors, build knowledge base on the target wetlands, undertake capacity building and develop tools for sustainability of transboundary wetlands and wetlands of regional relevance. I hope we can join hands with all stakeholders present in this forum and more for desired critical mass required for wetlands sustainability.

This is why we are organizing this inaugural Nile Basin Wetlands Forum to establish or improve on desired partnerships. Moreover, the Nile Basin Transboundary Wetlands Project being launched today provide practical vehicle for joint interventions towards Nile Basin Wetlands Sustainability. We are open to proposals on how we can organize future wetlands forum and dialogues and improve on the NBI Transboundary Wetlands and pool resources for coordinated intervention, and greater impact devoid of duplication and waste of resources.

Our gratitude to our sponsor; the Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety via International Climate Initiative (IKI) facility through Deutsche Gesellschaft für International Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

Welcome!

JOHN RAO NYAORO, PHD
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
NILE BASIN INITIATIVE

SPEECH 2

SPEECH OF THE GUEST OF HONOR; NILE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS CHAIR AND MINISTER FOR WATER AND ENVIRONMENT, UGANDA; DURING THE INAUGURAL NILE BASIN WETLANDS FORUM AND OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF NILE BASIN TRANSBOUNDARY WETLANDS PROJECT AT IMPERIAL BOTANICAL BEACH HOTEL, ENTEBBE, UGANDA ON FRIDAY 15TH JULY 2016

Members of the Nile Technical Advisory Committee (Nile-TAC)
The Executive Director of Nile Basin Initiative (NBI)
Heads of NBI Centres in Kigali and Ethiopia
Invited Wetlands Experts,
Staff of the Nile Basin Initiative
Representatives of Development Partners present
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen.
Warm greetings and welcome to you all to Uganda, the Pearl of Africa. I hope you arrived safely and are enjoying your stay here in Uganda.

I am most delighted to have been invited to officiate the opening of Inaugural Nile Basin Wetlands Forum and launching of Nile Basin Transboundary Wetlands Project. This is coming just as I assume the leadership of Nile Council of Ministers in the just concluded 24th Council of Ministers meeting yesterday the 14th of July here in Entebbe, Uganda, where the riparian states re-confirmed their commitment to Nile Basin Shared Vision and their proactive participation in the sustainability of River Nile and its associated resources.

NBI has been at the forefront in facilitating Nile Basin Wetlands Sustainability; this has been done through designed projects targeting wetlands and also through development of NBI Regional Wetlands Strategy. We hope to see Wetlands Portfolio deepened and expanded in NBI so that transboundary wetlands and wetlands of regional significance that requires collaboration among riparian states does not suffer but NBI act as catalyst for transboundary collaborations geared towards wetlands sustainability.

Wetlands are very important resource in the Nile Basin. They support local livelihoods, provide food such as fish, supply clean water, raw materials, medicines, habitat for wildlife among other multiple benefits for human beings and nature. Additionally, wetlands are critical in climate change adaptation especially in the Nile Basin where local livelihoods is derived from natural resources.

Nile Basin Region requires Best Practices and Innovative solutions towards Wetlands Sustainability. Therefore there is need to tap into case studies of best practices and innovations to be able to sustain both the National Wetlands, Transboundary Wetlands and Wetlands of Regional significance. More work is needed to proof and show value for Wetlands in flood control, water purification, carbon storage, wastewater treatment and other services where artificial technologies have proven expensive and ineffective in the long-term.

Additionally we need to package wetlands values or benefits in a language that facilitates its mainstreaming in sectoral, national and regional planning processes so that financial and budgetary allocations can factor wetlands contribution to regional and national economies and invest in their sustainability.

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Therefore platforms such as Nile Basin Forum should be a common undertaking in NBI culture and calendar. It should serve as platform where state and non-state actors link and learn from each other, share innovations and information for wetlands sustainability and promote thematic dialogues on contemporary issues facing the wetlands of the Nile Basin.

Moreover, the Nile Basin Transboundary Wetlands Project whose goal is to build knowledge base and capacities with respect to wetlands in the Nile Basin region should result into exemplary significant stories or impact or innovations that can be up scaled and replicated at the local, national and regional levels, tapping on wetlands services for human welfare and biodiversity conservation.

I thank the GIZ for providing the funds towards Wetlands Portfolio in NBI.

With these few remarks, it is now my honour and privilege to declare the Inaugural Nile Basin Wetlands Forum open and Nile Basin Transboundary Wetlands Project officially launched. Success in the forum sharing and project implementation.

I thank you.

HONOURABLE SAM CHEPTORIS

MINISTER FOR WATER AND ENVIRONMENT, UGANDA

Photo: NBI

ONE RIVER ONE PEOPLE ONE VISION

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NBI MEMBER STATES

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