United Nations
Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

By Sean Bischofberger

POSITION OF ETHIOPIA REGARDING WATER FLOW CRISES WORLDWIDE

General information

The Blue Nile (Abay) is Ethiopia's lifeline: rising at Lake Tana, it and the other highland rivers supply ~86% of the Nile water that reaches Egypt.[1] Yet about 56% of Ethiopians still lack basic electricity,[2] which makes the Grand Ethiopian (Renaissance) Dam (GERD) a national project. Inaugurated on 9 September 2025 after 14 years of work, it has ~5,150 MW of capacity and a ~74 billion m^3 reservoir, and its ~$5 billion cost was raised largely by Ethiopians themselves (certain parts were financed by China) .[3,4,10] It already exports power to Kenya, Sudan and Djibouti.[2]

Ethiopia is in a long-running dispute with Egypt and Sudan. The 1959 agreement split the Nile's average flow (~84 bn m^3) between Egypt (55.5 bn m^3) and Sudan (18.5 bn m^3), leaving Ethiopia nothing, as it was not a negotiating party.[4,7] Talks have been frozen since December 2023; Egypt has taken the dam to the UN Security Council, and on the 2nd of November 2026 Egypt and Sudan again demanded a binding agreement.[3,4]

Position on the matter

Ethiopia's stance is firm: developing the Abay is a sovereign right under the principle of equitable and reasonable utilization, and



colonial-era treaties Ethiopia never signed cannot bind it.[1,4] The Nile Basin Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA), ratified by six upstream states, entered into force on 13 October 2024 and codifies exactly this principle together with the duty not to cause significant harm.[5,6] Egypt and Sudan reject it.[6] For Addis Ababa the GERD is a hydropower dam: the water passes through the turbines and flows on downstream.[1] Ethiopia says the dam even softened the record 2025 flood season and spared Sudan worse damage,[8] while Egypt called its management "reckless".[9] With the Karadobi, Mandaya and Beko Abo dams (~5,700 MW) planned, Ethiopia will not accept a downstream veto over future projects.[3,7]

Proposed solutions

Ethiopia should urge ECOSOC to:

- Affirm equitable and reasonable utilization as the core of transboundary water law, and recognise that colonial-era quotas cannot bind states that never signed them.[1,6]
- Support basin-wide frameworks such as the Nile CFA and its Nile River Basin Commission, and invite Egypt and Sudan to join.[5,6]

© ETHMUN Content Team 2026

United Nations
Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

By Sean Bischofberger

- Create a UNESCO-IHP / WMO data platform for real-time flow and dam-release data, so floods like 2025's are managed jointly instead of blamed on each other.[8]
- Back African-led mediation through the African Union and keep water disputes out of the Security Council.[3]
- Promote benefit sharing through regional power grids, so upstream hydropower also reduces energy poverty downstream.[2]
- Fund climate adaptation and jointly agreed drought-management rules instead of fixed water quotas.

Potential Blocks

Allies: the upstream CFA states Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, Burundi and South Sudan,[5] Kenya and Djibouti (buyers of Ethiopian power), China (loans and investment),[2] and other upstream states wary of binding limits, such as India and Türkiye. The United States has offered to mediate.[7] Against: Egypt, backed by the Arab League, and Sudan, which insist on the 1959 agreement;[4] Eritrea and Somalia, which joined Egypt in the October 2026 El Alamein Declaration on the Red Sea;[7] and downstream states such as Pakistan and Iraq that seek binding upstream limits.

Sources

1. Al Jazeera – The Nile and Colonial-Era Treaties
2. Mongabay – GERD Fuels Energy Hopes
3. Al Jazeera – After GERD: Ethiopia's Next Dams
4. allAfrica – Egypt, Sudan Invoke 1959 Treaty
5. Nile Basin Initiative – CFA Enters into Force
6. EJIL:Talk – The CFA: Challenges and Prospects
7. Rio Times – The GERD Dispute Explained
8. Ethiopia MoWE – Press Release on 2025 Floods
9. Africanews – Egypt Accuses Ethiopia over Floods
10. allAfrica – Ethiopia Inaugurates GERD

© ETHMUN Content Team 2026