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PRESS RELEASE

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Historic Ground breaking held for Regional Rusumo Falls Hydroelectric power plant

Ngara District, Tanzania–Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania yesterday held an official groundbreaking ceremony at the site of the Regional Rusumo Falls Hydroelectric power plant. The power plant will be located on the Kagera River at the border between Rwanda (Southeast) and Tanzania (Northwest) and about 25 kilometers downstream of Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania common border point.

After years of planning since 2006, this was a historic and exciting day for the three countries, their communities, the Nile Basin Initiative as a whole as well as all friends of the Nile.

“I see this ground breaking ceremony as a significant milestone to our journey towards the production of electricity for our region and a strong sign of cooperation between the Eastern African countries. Once the Rusumo project is completed, it will contribute to the much needed additional electricity for the three countries and enable interconnection with other countries,” said the guest of honor, Hon. Prof. Sospeter Muhongo, Tanzania Minister of Energy and Minerals.

The project will generate 80 megawatts of renewable, clean, relatively low cost power to be shared equally among Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania, with each getting an additional 26.6 megawatts directly connected to their respective national grid through the transmission lines. At least 1, 146,000 people will benefit from the additional power; 5.4% (520,000) in Burundi, 4% (467,000) in Rwanda and 0.34% (159,000) in Tanzania.

Besides leading to an increase in economic activity, improved access to renewable clean energy will have positive effects on the environment, while the relatively inexpensive electricity will contribute to foreign exchange savings and improved balance of payments since the power generated will replace imported petroleum products.

At the regional level, the transmission lines will form a 'backbone system' that will link the Great Lakes region allowing power exchange with Eastern DR Congo as well as other Nile Equatorial Lakes countries and later to the Southern Africa Power Pool, thus facilitating power trade among Member States and beyond and improving regional power supply reliability.

Other benefits are support to regional and political cooperation, enhancing regional integration, as well as peace and stability among the Nile Equatorial Lakes countries through shared facilities and development of common energy and water policies.

Among the immediate benefits creation of jobs for 500 people as well as improved access roads, to be built during construction.

The Regional Rusumo Falls Hydroelectric power plant and associated transmission lines will cost USD471. Construction of the power plant will cost USD 340 million funded by World Bank while the transmission lines will cost USD121 million funded by African Development Bank (AfDB).

The Nile Equatorial Lakes Subsidiary Action Program Coordination Unit (NELSAP-CU), NBI's investment arm, coordinated the project planning since 2006 and has been mandated by the three NBI Member States to take responsibility for the overall implementation of the Regional Rusumo Falls Hydroelectric Power Plant during the construction phase. During the operation, the Rusumo Power Company Ltd (RPCL) that owns the power plant will hire a private company to manage and operate the power plant.

The three power transmission lines to the respective three countries are coordinated and will be constructed and operated by the three respective national electricity utilities.

The contractors, CGCOC Group & JWHC JV from China for Civil Works and ANDRITZ Hydro from Germany/India for Electro-Mechanical works are already on site and construction is expected to be completed by February 2020.

The ground breaking ceremony was witnessed by Ministers in charge of Energy, Water and Finance affairs in Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania respectively, World Bank, African Development Bank, the board of Rusumo Power company limited, Rusumo Project Steering Committee members and Nile Equatorial Lakes Technical Advisory Committee members. Others are Managing Directors of the utility companies, development partners, as well as staff of NBI, local administration and the communities.

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Note to the Editor

The Regional Rusumo Falls Hydroelectric Project design is a Run-of-River (RoR) Development Scheme with a normal operating water level of 1,320 meters above mean sea level. The Run of River Development Scheme was selected by the governments of Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania because it maintains the natural flow of the river and does not significantly modify the natural environment. In addition, it minimizes environmental and social impacts of the project and provides for the least cost implementation for environmental management and resettlement.

ABOUT THE NILE BASIN INITIATIVE

The NBI is a regional intergovernmental partnership launched by the Nile Basin countries on 22nd February, 1999 to manage and develop the shared Nile Basin water resources in a cooperative manner, share substantial socio-economic benefits and promote regional peace and security. NBI Member States are 10 namely Burundi, DR Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. Eritrea participates as an observer.

The partnership is guided by a **Shared Vision Objective**: *'To achieve sustainable socio-economic development through equitable utilization of, and benefit from, the common Nile Basin water resources'*. The setup of NBI is informed by the principle of subsidiarity, hence the three NBI Centres: **A Regional Secretariat** (Nile-SEC) based in Entebbe, Uganda is the executive arm responsible for the overall corporate direction. Two subsidiary Action Programs offices namely the **Eastern Nile Technical Regional Office** (ENTRO) based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and the **Nile Equatorial Lakes Subsidiary Action Program Coordination Unit** (NELSAP-CU) based in Kigali, Rwanda are responsible for preparing investment projects of regional significance in three key areas namely Energy, Agriculture and River Basin Management.