



Press Release - For Immediate Release

February 23, 2019 | Kigali, Rwanda

Nile Basin Countries Celebrate 20 Years of Cooperation & Partnership

Representatives of the ten Nile Basin States that form the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) gathered in Kigali, Rwanda, on February 22, 2019 to mark Regional Nile Day 2019 and celebrate 20 years of cooperation and partnership through the NBI - an intergovernmental partnership of Burundi, DR Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda with Eritrea also participating as an observer.

Themed “NBI at 20: Stronger Together”, the event was an opportunity for Member States and friends of the Nile to reflect on the progress made over the last two decades to advance sustainable management of the shared Nile Basin water resources. Since the Nile Basin Initiative was established in 1999, investments worth US \$6.5 billion have been prepared and facilitated thanks to collaborative efforts between Member States, development partners and private enterprise. Thanks to the Nile Basin Initiative, 30,000 people have also been trained to improve the region’s ability to manage the Basin and 10,000 knowledge products have been created. This work has been underpinned by the development of numerous strategies that have advanced Member States’ shared goals.

Speaking at the celebration event, Rwanda’s Minister of Environment and Guest of Honour, Dr. Vincent Biruta, commended countries for their efforts to collaborate across borders.

“The success of the Nile Basin Initiative over the last two decades is thanks to the investments we have made as Member States, and the contributions of many others we are proud to call partners. I encourage Member States and the Nile Basin Initiative to adopt an integrated water resources management approach that prioritises both water management and landscape restoration. By taking a holistic approach to catchment management, we can improve both the health of our waterways and the land we rely upon so heavily,” he said.

In his last official engagement as Executive Director of the Nile Basin Initiative, Eng. Innocent Ntabana thanked Member States for their contribution to the success of the initiative.

“The Nile Basin Initiative has helped to build a culture of dialogue, mutual trust and confidence within the Nile Basin. I express my sincere gratitude to the Member States for the continued commitment to Nile Cooperation, and to development partners for their unwavering support, both financial and technical,” he said.

The European Union's Head of Delegation in Rwanda, Nicola Bellomo, pledged continued support: *"The fact that we are all gathered in Kigali today shows that there is hope to overcome any present challenges. The European Union has been and will remain a partner on this journey."*

Speakers at the 2019 Nile Day celebration also discussed the growing challenge of climate change. World Bank Representative, Ayat Soliman, noted that climate risks will be critical to the future of the Basin and called for adaptation to be strengthened. This was complemented by Kenya's Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Water and Sanitation, Simon K. Chelugui who stressed the need for collaboration among Member States in responding to climate change.

Participants also engaged in a robust discussion about the potential for the Nile Basin Initiative to transition to a permanent cooperation mechanism, and pledged to continue discussions to ensure all Basin countries reach an agreement that suits their development agendas.

The event also featured the release of a special Nile Basin Initiative anniversary publication titled 'A Long River Journey', which identifies successes and challenges of basin cooperation over the last two decades.

During the celebrations, three primary school aged children from Rwanda were each awarded with a cash prize as well as educational materials after they emerged winners of a Nile Basin Initiative drawing competition. Paul Imasiku Mwenda from Camp Kigali School won the first prize for his illustration of "What does the Nile mean to you?" Dorcas Uwineza, GS Saint Dominiques Savio, and Tresor Bizimungu, Rwiza Primary School, took home the second and third prizes respectively.

The Nile Day celebrations concluded with a panel discussion featuring Dr Osman Eltom Hamad, Technical Advisor in Sudan Ministry of Water Resources, Meraji Msuya, first NBI Executive Director (1999-2004), Patrick Osbert Kahangire, former NBI Executive Director (2004-2006), Dr. Barbara Miller, who facilitated support to the NBI as World Bank Lead Water Specialist, and Dr David Grey, who initiated and led the World Bank's support to Nile Cooperation from 1997 to 2009. A second panel closed the day with contributions from Members of the Nile Council of Ministers, NBI's highest political body represented at the event.

As part of 2019 Nile Day, a dynamic and interactive exhibition was also organised to showcase knowledge products and scientific tools developed over the last 20 years that empower Member States and Nile Basin citizens to manage shared water resources effectively.

The 2019 Nile Day and NBI 20th anniversary was organised with support from the European Union, German Federal government, World Bank, and Cooperation in International Waters in Africa (CIWA) program

Additional Information

- Visit <http://nbi20.nilebasin.org/> for more information and resources on the 20th Anniversary of the Nile Basin Initiative.
- Download the Nile Basin Initiative Anniversary Publication [here](#).

Resources

- Follow [@EnvironmentRw](#), [@nbiweb](#) and the #NileDay2019 hashtag on Twitter for updates from the event.
- Photos are available for free download and use from the Ministry of Environment [Flickr account](#).

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