



Contacts: P.O Box 192, Entebbe- Uganda
Tel:+256 417 705 000/+256 417 705 120
Email: nbisec@nilebasin.org
Website: www.nilebasin.org

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 23, 2020

Project on enhancing conjunctive management of surface and ground water resources in the Nile Basin launched

ENTEBBE, Uganda – The Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have today September 23, 2020 jointly launched the implementation of a project entitled: **“Enhancing conjunctive management of surface and groundwater resources in selected transboundary aquifers: Case study for selected shared groundwater bodies in the Nile Basin.”**

The Chairperson of the Nile Technical Advisory Committee, Ms Gladys Wekesa noted that Nile Basin countries regard groundwater as an insufficiently understood asset that can contribute to climate resilience. She added that “Nile Basin countries are heavily dependent on groundwater resources for water supply for, among others, home use, livestock and even irrigation as well as municipal water supplies.

The UNDP Resident Representative Ms Elsie Attafuaah reiterated the role that ground water plays in complementing surface water systems, including rivers, wetlands, lakes, which have not been adequately considered in most transboundary river basin management initiatives, including the Nile Basin.

The Executive Director of the NBI Secretariat, Prof Seifeldin Hamad Abdalla said the aim of the project is to foster the more effective utilisation and protection of selected shared aquifers in the Eastern Nile and the Nile Equatorial Lakes regions through further improving the understanding of available groundwater resources and demonstrating ‘conjunctive management that enhances recharge and optimises the joint use of surface and groundwater. “The project will also respond to climate change impacts and contribute to national achievements and reporting of water-related

Sustainable Development Goals. It will further support environmental protection whilst enhancing socio-economic development of the Basin's population," he added.

The project will be implemented over five years from 2020 –2025, with funding of USD 5.3 million from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through UNDP as well as USD 27.9 million co-financing from countries and partners.

The project will focus on three selected shared aquifers namely the Kagera aquifer shared by Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda; Mt. Elgon aquifer shared by Kenya and Uganda as well as Gedaref-Adigrat aquifer shared by Ethiopia and Sudan.

Benefits expected from the project include: mapping of aquifers and understanding of quantity and quality of water resources available to utilise, through conjunctive use and management for sustainable socio-economic development and meeting ecosystem requirements; improved understanding of the interactions between surface waters and ground waters, including opportunities for artificial recharge when surface water is abundant or to harvest runoff for recharge in arid and semi-arid regions.

Other benefits are better defined Sub-basin and national climate change scenarios through the knowledge on groundwater, to build-in resilience strategies to adapt to potential climate change and ensure sustainable use of groundwater use towards effective risk-reduction adaptation measures;

The seven participating countries will also be equipped to achieve and report progress towards water-related Sustainable Development Goals (specifically SDG 6 (Access to Water), 2 (Food and Nutrition Security) and 15 (manage forests, halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss, etc).

The virtual meeting was attended by members of the Nile Technical Advisory Committee from the participating countries, namely Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda; Project management team from NBI; UNDP Country Office staff and the UNDP/GEF Regional Technical Advisor.

ENDS

NOTE TO EDITOR

Water demand for various uses in the Nile Basin is rapidly growing and will outstrip the supply of conventional surface based sources in the near future. More than 70% of the rural population in many parts of the Nile Basin depends on ground water. There is also an increasing use of groundwater for other economic activities such as irrigation, fisheries, mining and industries.

Groundwater holds the promise of closing the gap between water supply and demand, and in buffering the effects of climate variability. However, pressure on groundwater resources, through over exploitation and pollution, is already felt in many small aquifers in the upper Nile riparian countries.

The Groundwater project is one of the interventions by NBI under its 10-year Strategy (2017 – 2027), aimed at supporting Member States to address the rising water demands for their rapidly growing economies and population.