

A call to action from journalists of the Nile

On this day, 25 May 2020, we, journalists from the Nile Basin stand in support of our respective governments of Sudan, Ethiopia, and Egypt who are collectively shaping the futures of millions of people through their efforts to find a cooperative solution to the filling and operation of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). As journalists and citizens of the Eastern Nile, we have supported the willingness of our governments to prioritize diplomacy in finding a win-for-all solution and we remain hopeful that our governments will soon find a way to return to the negotiating table. We strongly believe that a cooperative outcome is possible, and we are united in the hope that a peaceful and constructive conclusion to the GERD negotiations may illuminate the path towards cooperation more broadly across our region.

As journalists, it is our mandate and privilege to ensure that our people remain informed about the issues that impact their lives and the lives of future generations. Since news first broke that there would one day be a Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, millions of people have waited with bated breath to learn how our leaders will overcome the political and technical hurdles that stand in the way of cooperation over our most precious resource.

In following the GERD negotiation process we note that access to information and transparency is vital. Where transparency is lacking, unfounded assumptions prevail – often leading to dangerous polarization and hostility that can serve no fruitful outcome. It is our hope that our leaders will return to the negotiating table and provide journalists with the necessary access to facts and insights required to perform our duties.

Additionally, we call upon our fellow journalists to pursue truth at every corner and to observe the long-held journalism code of ethics of presenting the news impartially and with balance. We must avoid framing issues related to the Nile through only a nationalistic lens that ignores our *shared* struggles or concerns for the future. Regardless of our nationalities, our accountability as journalists is to the public and it is incumbent upon all of us to put the interests of the public above our own. An informed public will understand the value of cooperation and the importance of finding win-for-all solutions to these complex problems. Anything less would be a disservice to the peoples of Sudan, Ethiopia, and Egypt and indeed to millions of others whose lives are dependent on the Nile River. We should stand to foster trust between and among riparian countries, rather than perpetuating mistrust and a hardening of positions.

This call seeks to encourage the governments of Sudan, Ethiopia, and Egypt to pursue a cooperative outcome to the negotiations over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). We urge Nile governments to be more forthcoming to journalists and to the public with regards to the progress already achieved and any remaining hurdles to concluding an agreement. We urge all our fellow journalists to support this process through their impartial and fact-based reporting, understanding that anything less may inspire division amongst our countries and fuel unnecessary conflict. We envision a Nile Basin which serves the needs of all, through cooperation and shared values which can only be reached through a common effort of political leaders, media, and an informed public.

In friendship and partnership,

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