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**Nile Basin Initiative**

**Press statement of the Chairperson of the Nile Council of Ministers and**

**South Sudan’s Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation, Hon. Paul Mayom Akec**

**At the end of the 21st Nile Council of Ministers Meeting**

**20th June 2013, Juba, South Sudan**

The 21st meeting of the Nile Council of Ministers of Water Affairs (Nile-COM) took place on 20th June 2013 in Juba, Republic of South Sudan. The Nile-COM addressed strategic issues to advance the Nile cooperation as well as operational business issues. As per the tradition of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) to rotate the position of chairperson of the Nile-COM among Member States on an annual basis and in alphabetical order of the countries’ namely; Burundi, DR Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda, South Sudan took over the chairmanship of the Nile-COM from Rwanda.

Outcomes from the meeting were:

1. **Nile cooperation:** Cooperation is the only way forward to achieve the Shared Vision of sustainable socio-economic development through the equitable utilization of, and benefit from, the common Nile Basin water resources.The Nile is one of the world’s great assets and its sustainable management and development is essential if the countries of the Nile Basin are to continue to reduce poverty and to gain economic prosperity.

The Nile-COM applauds Republic of Sudan’s resumption of full participation in NBI activities after a suspension of participation due to differences over the CFA. Nile-COM Members call upon the Arab Republic of Egypt to follow the example of Sudan and return to the cooperation platform for Nile issues, the Nile Basin Initiative that it has contributed to building.

1. **Institutional strength:** The Nile-COM appreciates the Nile Basin Initiative as a strong regional institution offering its Member States a platform for dialogue, leadership and technical capacity for basin knowledge and planning, and leadership and technical capacity for the identification and preparation for cooperative water resources management and development. The three NBI Centres are now well functioning organisations, each with a clear role and with appropriate capacity to carry out that role.
2. **Investment financing:** The Nile Basin Initiative is responding to Member States’ demands for action on the ground. It is leveraging substantial investment financing for the implementation of projects that it has prepared, currently over US$ 1 billion. The flagship project to date is the US$430 million Rusumo Falls hydroelectric scheme benefiting Burundi, Rwanda, and Tanzania. This project - and others such as the regional power interconnection for US$403 million - demonstrate NBI’s growing credibility for project preparation to international standards and its ability to attract substantial financing for Member States.
3. **Transboundary water resources analysis:** The NBI has technical and scientific capabilities that support joint deliberation and dialogue among Member States. The Nile-COM urges Member States to increasingly make use of these capabilities for quantifying the transboundary benefits and impacts in national water resources development planning. The Nile-COM also urges Member States to provide NBI access to information on development projects that are outside NBI’s investment project portfolio to enable NBI to establish the most current status of basin development and potential future scenarios using their analytic tools and knowledgebase.
4. **Donor partnerships:** The Nile Basin Initiative has benefited from a strong coordinated donor partnership through the Nile Basin Trust Fund and with bilateral partners. The Nile-COM calls upon Development Partners to continue support to Nile cooperation, and to implement the second phase of the Nile Basin Climate Resilient Growth program for the benefit of the 238 million people living in the basin. The Nile-COM notes that the NBI intends to maintain the Strategic Dialogue as the primary annual forum for engagement and discussion of strategic issues and program priorities with Development Partners.
5. **NBI Business:** The operational business of the Nile Basin Initiative was successfully concluded. This included review of the progress achieved over the last year, agreement of plans and budgets for the coming year, approval of the NBI’s dedicated Trust Fund, and approval of policies including environmental and social safeguards to ensure the preparation of development projects aligns with international standards. The Nile-COM appreciates the commitment and professionalism of the staff of the Nile Basin Initiative.

During my one year tenure as chairman of the Nile-COM, I will focus on strengthening the Nile cooperation. I will also work towards Member States’ continued support to NBI, bearing in mind that NBI is the only viable mechanism for effective cooperation to ensure equitable utilization and benefit from the common Nile Basin water resources. Its accumulated achievements and experience over the years places NBI in a unique position for addressing not only current but future key water resources issues in the basin.

I urge the NBI Member States to deepen the cooperation on the Nile to enable more tangible benefits for the inhabitants of the Nile Basin.

The next Nile-COM meeting shall take place in Khartoum, Sudan in mid 2014.