

Open letter addressed to Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel (-German-English Translation-)

Chancellor
Dr. Angela Merkel
Bundeskanzleramt
Willy-Brandt-Straße 1

10557 Berlin

July 10th 2020

Dear Chancellor,
Dear Dr Angela Merkel,

Ethiopia and Egypt are among the oldest cultures in the world and have been connected for centuries not only through the river Nile, but also through social and cultural relationships. In the past both countries have maintained close contacts. Currently this relationship has been very tense due to the construction of the Grand-Ethiopian-Renaissance-Dam (short: GERD) on the Ethiopian territory. Unfortunately, Germany-based and other media outlets consider the filling of the dam primarily as disadvantageous for Egypt and as a potential source for conflicts in the region - the manifold advantages that are associated with other Nile Basin countries are rarely a subject of discussion. With this letter we would like to provide you with balanced information on this specific subject matter.

Ethiopia has an area of 1.104.300 km², 114 million inhabitants and is landlocked. Egypt has an area of 1.001.449 km², 100 million inhabitants. It has approximately 2,450 km of coastline to the Mediterranean and approximately 800 km of coastline to the Red Sea. Ethiopia contributes over 86% of the water of the Nile river, while Egypt's contribution is 0% but has 100% utilization abilities. There are several rivers originating in Ethiopia, 70% of which leave the country and flow into the neighbouring countries. Huge quantities of freshwater, over 50.000 km³ lay hidden under the earth mantle of Egypt, while Ethiopia's freshwater reservoir is around 10.000 km³ only. In contrast to Ethiopia, Egypt uses the Nile to irrigate agricultural crop land, e.g. for growing fruits, that are exported to Europe. In addition, one Egyptian person consumes an average of 1510 kilowatt-hours (kWh) per year, while an Ethiopian consumes only 69 kilowatt-hours (kWh). Today, 55.000 megawatt-hours (MWh) of electricity is being generated in Egypt while Ethiopia generates around 4.300 megawatt-hours (MWh). After completion of the filling of the GERD, Ethiopia's total electricity generation capacity will increase to 10.000 MW.

The above-mentioned data is intended to illustrate how important and essential the GERD dam is for Ethiopia. GERD is Africa's largest dam with an output of 6.000 megawatts (MW) and

is self-financed by Ethiopia. In addition to funds from the state budget all classes of the population made significant contributions to the financing of the dam with private donations. We can proudly say that the GERD is being built by Ethiopians. But also by German, American and Italian companies with their technical and professional contributions. The dam is almost two kilometres long and 145 meters high. The gradual filling is supposed to start in the rainy season in July 2020 and to last until 2027.

The fair use of Nile water as one of the natural resources will enable Ethiopia to provide sufficient electricity to a nation that currently has less than 40% electrification. The electricity generated by the GERD will have a significant impact on accelerating Ethiopian economic growth, increasing infrastructure, improving ecology and agriculture, and creating jobs for millions of people. Thereby making an important contribution to the overall development of the country. This will promote stability and peace not only in Ethiopia, but throughout the Horn of Africa. Once the dam is fully completed, Ethiopia will be able to offer electricity to neighbouring countries at low cost. Moreover, GERD will also bring benefit to Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea and Djibouti.

Egypt insists on the Colonial Nile Water Agreement that has been made between Great Britain and Egypt in 1929 and later between Sudan and Egypt, which excludes Ethiopia as a source of 86% of the Nile water and authorizes only the two countries mentioned to make use of the water. The colonial Nile Water Agreement is neither valid nor binding for Ethiopia, which has never been colonized. Egypt and Sudan would be well advised to find common ground on the use of this important resource, which can and will significantly improve the living conditions of 114 million Ethiopians and the people of neighbouring countries. A trilateral agreement that considers the interest of all sides.

Of course, Ethiopia has always been willing to accommodate the interest of its neighbours Egypt and Sudan and to solve the problem peacefully. History shows the role Ethiopia played for African unity. And the age-old tradition of peaceful economic cooperation with neighbouring countries should continue. It is not a coincidence that Addis Ababa is the capital of the African Union and other international institutions such as the UN and the EU.

Thus far, numerous technical and political negotiations have taken place, some of which have been prolonged by Egypt's approach and change of negotiation positions. The UN Security Council met at the request of Egypt in early July, with the majority Security Council Members favouring an African Union led process to find African solution for African problems, as proposed by Ethiopia. It should be reiterated that Ethiopia does not regard the construction and use of the GERD as a security risk for the region and the world. It is an African flagship project and it serves the economic development and improvement of quality of life within the African region thus the gratification of millions of people of all generations in the African countries in question.

Like Germany and other countries in the world, Ethiopia has the natural right and sovereignty in the utilization of its own resources.

Filling the dam will also benefit Egypt as it will minimize flooding and provide water filtered by removing over 80% of sedimentation. Also considering that the dam lies in a deep canyon with cool temperature, it is expected that the evaporation will be lower than assumed in many reports.

Regrettably, the media often highlights only Egypt's unproven negative consequences of building the dam as it would destroy the livelihood of the local population. This is distortion of available facts, which often has a negative impact on people's opinion and, particularly in the current time of the immediate availability of information, has a huge potential for igniting a conflict where there is actually no conflict.

Due to these reporting's, increasing number of people around the world often throw themselves into actionism. In African countries in particular, as well as in the German media, subjective information is often taken at "face value", cementing one-sided view on the issue at hand. The consequences of misinformation or disinformation can be extremely fatal, especially in our countries, and would further exacerbate our already considerable problems and domestic conflicts.

We demand thorough research, balanced and equitable reporting and would like to request fair reporting from media outlets that show not only the "one side of the coin".

We Ethiopians and German-Ethiopians living in Germany, - representatives of organizations, communities and associations, academics from various disciplines, artists and entrepreneurs, would like to request you (and the German government) to examine the matter not only as a politician, but also as a scientist and friend of Ethiopia and - as during your entire Chancellorship - to mediate fairly, where it is possible. We are convinced that your opinion and statement will be greatly appreciated and recognized by all participating countries.

Thank you!

Sincerely yours,

[Signed]

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[Signed]

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[Signed]

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[Signed]

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Cc.

- Federal President Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier,
- Dr. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission,
- Heiko Maas, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs,
- Dr. Gerd Müller, Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development,
- Ms. Anja Karliczek, Federal Minister of Education and Research,
- Ms. Julia Klöckner, Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture,
- Mr. Udo Michallik, Secretary General of the Conference of Ministers of Education (KMK), Berlin,
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- Mr. Peter Palasch, GIZ, Country Director Ethiopia, Addis Ababa
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- Dr. Anja Langenbucher, Director Europe Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
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- Dr. Markus Söder, Chairman of the Christian Social Union in Bavaria
- Ms. Saskia Esken and Mr. Norbert Walter-Borjans, Chairpersons of the Social Democratic Party of Germany,
- Dr. Christian Lindner, Chairman of the Free Democratic Party,
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- Mr. Christian Ude, Chairman of the Foundation Council Menschen für Menschen,
- Dr. Norbert Röttgen, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the German Bundestag (The Parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany),
- Ambassador Mulu Solomon Bezuneh, Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in Berlin / Germany,
- Ambassador Brita Wagener, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany Addis Ababa / Ethiopia,
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- Office of the Prime Minister of Ethiopia,
- Mr. Gedu Andargachew, Minister of the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
- Dr. Seleshi Bekele, Minister of the Ethiopian Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Electricity,
- Ethiopian Diaspora Agency,
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- The German Press Agency / Deutsche Presse-Agentur (dpa)
- To German and Ethiopian media

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