



Report on

# **Egypt's Efforts to Realize the Right to Water (in Commemoration of the World Water Day, March 22<sup>nd</sup>)**

- The World has celebrated World Water Day on March 22<sup>nd</sup> of each year since 1993, reflecting the dedication of the international community to put the sustainability of freshwater supply at the center of its priorities towards achieving sustainable development. However, given the growing world population, a critical need emerges to address the challenges of increased water demand, especially with the shortage of freshwater resources, due to a number of factors. On this occasion, the Technical Secretariat of the “Egyptian Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights” has prepared this Report in order to highlight Egypt’s intensive efforts to realize the right to water. Furthermore, it highlights measures put in place by the Egyptian State, to address the challenges facing such a right, taking into account the considerable water gap between supply and demand which stands above 20 billion cubic meters.
- Commemorating World Water Day this year comes at a critical time for the Egyptian State, which faces an existential challenge and an eminent threat that compromises Egypt’s water rights and interests. This is Ethiopia’s intention to undertake unilateral steps, particularly in its announcement to fill the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) in the absence of a mutual agreement, which contravenes with its obligations under the Declaration of Principles signed in Khartoum on 23 March 2015. Egypt has in good faith participated in all rounds of negotiations. The Washington negotiations resulted in reaching a fair and balanced agreement on filling and operating the GERD; an agreement that observes Ethiopia’s right to power generation, without prejudice to water interests of the two downstream states.
- Egypt underscores the importance of respecting the relevant principles of international law, most notably the rule not to cause significant harm to riparian states; the principle of equitable and reasonable utilization of international watercourses; the principle of cooperation; and the principle of prior notification and consultation. Non-sustainable utilization of water resources in a way that denies the rights of other parties is totally unacceptable. Furthermore, the environmental, social and economic impacts caused by mega development projects constructed by states on international river courses that pass through their territories should be thoroughly assessed, with the aim of preventing any harm to other Basin countries, especially those primarily depending on river water resources.

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- In this context, Egypt is deeply disturbed by Ethiopia's intransigent policies throughout the long course of negotiations on GERD, and its plans of filling the GERD reservoir by July 2020 in the absence of a mutual agreement, thus violating the Declaration of Principles.
- Despite the great set back at the present time regarding the fate of the negotiating process on the rules for filling and operating the GERD, there is still an opportunity to observe the interests of all states. This opportunity can materialize if Ethiopia signs the agreement concluded under the US auspices and the active participation of the World Bank. Such an agreement would safeguard the common interests of over 240 million people in Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia.
- It is noteworthy that the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation has discussed the impacts of such megaprojects, in particular, those that massively utilize water resources. The Special Rapporteur warned that such projects can be severely detrimental to the human right to water and sanitation. Further, the Special Rapporteur stressed that trans boundary river basins should be rationally regulated, and that watercourse states have a due diligence obligation of ensuring that activities undertaken in their territories must not incapacitate other states in realizing the right of individuals under their jurisdictions to have access to water.

### Current Water Situation in Egypt

The annual total of accessible traditional freshwater supplies is approximately 59.25 billion cubic meters, including Egypt's share of Nile water at 55.5 billion cubic meters. While deep groundwater aquifers provide 2.1 billion cubic meters, supplies of rainwater and floods amount to 1.3 billion cubic meters, in addition to desalination of brackish and sea water of 0.35 billion cubic meters. It is evidently clear that Egypt relies upon the River Nile as a major source of water, given the limited supplies of other water resources, such as rainwater, floods and deep groundwater. Accessible water resources account for only 7% of the State's water supplies. The Nile water supplies come from the Ethiopian Highlands that feed about 85% of the Nile's water up to Aswan, whilst the Great Equatorial Lakes share the remaining 15% of the Nile's water starting from South Sudan.



However, Egypt's current needs of water supplies account for about 110 billion cubic meters per annum. Egypt's annual imports of "virtual water" (water embedded in crops and animal products) amount to 30 billion cubic meters, which equals the total water supplies required to plant and produce such products in Egypt. Disregarding imported virtual water, Egypt's annual water demands would approximately be 80 billion cubic meters. Given that the total water supplies in Egypt is at 59.25 billion cubic metre, the water gap between widening needs versus limited water resources currently accounts for 20.7 billion cubic meters annually.

There are incremental water demands for all relevant sectors in light of population growth. Overpopulation widens the food gap, making it necessary to expand the agricultural footprint

and accordingly increase agricultural water demand. Moreover, higher population growth rates would raise the likelihood of watercourse pollution, thus impacting water usage in many ways. Further, climate change also impacts the Nile flow and lead to increased water demands, especially for agricultural purposes. Rising sea level would also affect northern coasts and consequently groundwater off the Mediterranean shore due to sea-water intrusion.

### The Right to Water and Sanitation

The water and sanitation sector is a top government priority, in line with the Egypt 2030 Vision. The government has been keen to use the latest water purification and wastewater treatment technologies, for several purposes. Additionally, the government has endeavored to offer citizens improved services within this sector, whilst observing health and environmental regulations and stipulations.



Given water scarcity, Egypt has developed the “2050 Strategy for the Development and Management of Water Resources” to support Egypt’s water security by means of sustainable development and management. This strategy is centered on a number of pillars, and chief amongst them is to: (1) develop traditional and non-traditional water resources; (2) rationalize water consumption and maximize the yields of water used by relevant consuming sectors; (3) improve water quality by tackling pollution of watercourses; and (4) create a favorable environment for an integrated water resource management (IWRM). The national strategy has also defined measures to be undertaken in relation to these four pillars.

### National Indicators on Accessibility to Drinking Water and Sanitation:

In order to provide safe drinking water for citizens, the government has implemented 276 projects since late 2014, in parallel with 155 sanitation projects in cities, and 624 projects in the countryside. In 2018, coverage of drinking water networks reached 98% nationwide. Daily water supplies are approximately 30.1 million cubic meters fed into networks of 166,000 km, in comparison to a 97% coverage rate in 2014, with a daily water supply of 24. million cubic meters, fed into networks of 148,000 km.

In 2018, sanitation coverage reached 65% with an actual wastewater treatment capacity of nearly 12.8 million cubic meters on a daily basis, across networks of 53,000 km. This is compared to a 50% coverage rate in 2014 nationwide, with an actual daily treatment capacity of 10.5 million cubic meters, across networks of 42,000 km.

During the last four years, a plan was set out to rationalize water consumption, while raising public awareness on the importance of rationalizing consumption and reducing water losses. This was, on one hand, to maintain such vital, non-renewable source of water, while maximizing the benefits of accessible water resources, on the other. It is carried out via providing alternative drinking water resources (e.g. water desalination plants in coastal cities, an approach pursued by the State given the

scarcity of water, while ensuring to capitalize the use of groundwater). Additionally, capacities of the Regulatory Agency for Drinking Water, Wastewater and Consumer Protection have been stepped up.

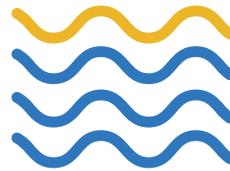
Moreover, the government assiduously strives to develop non-traditional solutions for the provision of sanitation services to rural areas, bearing in mind respective conditions and potentials of such areas, and guided by international cases. In this respect, it has also put in place decentralized systems along with adopting cost-effective solutions.

### Recent Initiatives for Providing Drinking Water

The Holding Company for Water and Wastewater (HCWW) is to pilot and introduce new means of maximizing the use of water resources. In this context, HCWW is considering the River Bank Filtration (RBF) technology to provide high-quality drinking water. Being a natural means of filtering drinking water, this technology is used worldwide, since it helps eliminate bacteria, parasites, pollutants and algae together with absorbable organic and non-organic compounds, with no need to add chlorine or alum for water sterilization. Applying such technology in Egypt would help cut purification-related costs, while providing sustainable, high-quality, cost-effective and low-risk drinking water supplies.



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