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Seventy-sixth year

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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. De Rivière/Mrs. Gasri	(France)
 <i>Members:</i>		
	China	Mr. Zhang Jun
	Estonia	Mr. Jürgenson
	India	Mr. Tirumurti
	Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
	Kenya	Mr. Kimani
	Mexico	Mr. Ochoa Martínez
	Niger	Mr. Abarry
	Norway	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. King
	Tunisia	Mr. Ladeb
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield
	Viet Nam	Mr. Dang

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Sameh Hassan Shokry Selim, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt; Her Excellency Mrs. Mariam Alsadig Al Sedeeg Al Mahadi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan; and His Excellency Mr. Seleshi Bekele Awulachew, Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy of Ethiopia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa; and Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Onanga-Anyanga.

Mr. Onanga-Anyanga (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to address the Security Council on the thorny issue of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, better known by its English-language acronym "GERD". Allow me also to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your wise conduct of the affairs of the Council, which France is presiding this month.

(spoke in English)

The GERD encapsulates the conflicting narratives, hopes and fears, challenges and opportunities related to water usage, security and energy in Egypt, Ethiopia, the Sudan and the wider Horn of Africa. This is the second time we are briefing the Security Council on this issue. The last time was in June 2020 (see S/2020/636). Since then, despite various attempts at negotiations, the parties have been unable to agree on a framework of engagement to settle the remaining contentious issues.

While Member States have also acknowledged that most aspects related to the GERD have been addressed, we do understand that the parties still have to agree on some core issues, including a dispute-resolution mechanism and on drought mitigation, particularly the filling and operation of the dam in drought years. My colleague, Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), will provide the Council with more details on the relevant technical issues surrounding the negotiations.

At the virtual meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Ministers of Irrigation of the three countries held on 27 October 2020 and chaired by South Africa, and the virtual tripartite meeting held on 10 January 2021, the parties could not agree on the exact role of the experts and observers supporting the negotiations process led by the African Union (AU).

On 6 February, the Sudan put forward a new proposal contemplating a quadripartite joint mediation by the African Union, the United Nations, the European Union (EU) and the United States of America. On 15 March, the Sudan, with the support of Egypt, formally requested the AU, the United Nations, the United States and the EU to mediate between the parties regarding the GERD. Ethiopia, however, preferred fewer changes to the ongoing AU-led process.

During the talks that took place in Kinshasa from 5 to 7 April this year, which were chaired by His Excellency President Félix Tshisekedi of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in his capacity as Chairperson of the AU, the parties were, once again, unable to agree on a mediation framework.

On 13 April, Sudanese Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok offered to activate the dispute-resolution mechanism at the level of Heads of State and Government contemplated in the 2015 Agreement on Declaration of Principles on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. On 21 April, in response to Prime Minister Hamdok's invitation, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed stated that a meeting of the AU Assembly's Bureau should, rather, be the way forward.

Owing to the lack of progress in the talks, President Tshisekedi stepped up his engagement on the GERD, and between 8 and 11 May started a regional tour with visits to Khartoum, Cairo and Addis Ababa. President Tshisekedi engaged with the parties on the basis of a two-step approach addressing first the most pressing issue of the filling of the GERD during the rainy season,

and, secondly, guarantees for a more comprehensive agreement on the subsequent filling and operation of the dam.

On 24 June, President Tshisekedi convened virtually the Bureau of the African Union Heads of State for an exchange of information on the GERD. Unfortunately, no significant progress was registered in the presence of Ethiopia and Egypt, while the Sudan decided not to attend.

Also, on 15 June, the League of Arab States met in Doha and adopted a resolution on the GERD dispute that, *inter alia*, called on Ethiopia to refrain from filling the GERD reservoir without reaching an agreement and on the Security Council to hold consultations on the matter. In response, Ethiopia objected to the League of Arab States communiqué, which it saw as an attempt to politicize and internationalize the dispute, and stressed its commitment to AU mediation while reiterating its plan to move forward with the second filling of the dam in July.

Meanwhile, we are aware of bilateral interactions between Ethiopia and the Sudan on the issue of the GERD as well as of the Sudan's recent statement expressing readiness to accept an interim agreement on the filling of the dam on the condition that a deal be signed regarding all other points that have been agreed to date and ensuring the continuity of negotiations within a set timeline.

While no formal agreement has been reached yet on this development and we have yet to see the results of that effort, it is in line with the efforts of a phased approach proposed by President Tshisekedi, or at least that appears to be the case.

In the meantime, on 5 July the Government of Ethiopia wrote a letter to the Governments of Egypt and the Sudan to inform them of the commencement of the second-year filling of the GERD. Both Egypt and the Sudan have objected to that notification, reiterating their position that any further filling should take place in the context of an agreed-upon framework.

Each of the countries sharing the Nile waters has both rights and responsibilities, and, as they agreed in the 2015 Agreement on Declaration of Principles on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, the use and management of that natural resource require the continued engagement of all nations involved, in good faith, with a view to reaching common ground.

Indeed, the Secretary-General has always encouraged Member States to pursue negotiations in that manner. To assist in the process, he has entrusted UNEP with providing technical advice based on the best available scientific data and knowledge, with a view to helping countries reach a mutual understanding on how to handle this delicate matter.

Clearly, more needs to be done given that recent negotiations have yielded little progress and that it is undeniable that this is a matter of critical importance. We therefore call on all parties to remain engaged and to avoid making any pronouncements that would increase tensions in a region that is already subject to a series of challenges, including the impact of the coronavirus disease and conflicts.

I would like to take this opportunity to also commend the work done by the African Union rotating Presidents, His Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa and the current Chair of the African Union, His Excellency Félix Antoine Tshisekedi, to facilitate a mutually beneficial and peaceful outcome.

We believe that together, along with other interested partners, there is room to move forward with a view to addressing the matter of the GERD in a peaceful, constructive and comprehensive manner, in line with the spirit of cooperation highlighted in the 2015 Declaration of Principles.

The United Nations remains available to promote a win-win solution in supporting Member States in navigating this complex issue, where genuine political will, compromise and good-neighbourliness are essential.

In closing, I believe that this important issue, if properly addressed, could offer significant opportunities for all the parties and countries in the region and beyond. I would like to once again stress that cooperation is not a zero-sum game and that a collective effort could help deliver on the development potential of the region as a whole.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Onanga-Anyanga for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Andersen.

Ms. Andersen: While shared watercourses have been the cause of dispute, they can also be the foundation for cooperation. Indeed, well-planned hydraulic infrastructure on a shared river course can

be a source of enhanced collaboration and need not be a zero-sum game. With integrated planning, damaging seasonal inundations can be prevented; energy can be traded; water storage can be optimized; and benefits can materialize both in terms of development and in terms of water optimization.

The Blue Nile constitutes a critical water resource for the peoples of the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Republic of the Sudan. The headwaters of the Blue Nile are in the highlands of Ethiopia, where the highly seasonal rains produce 69 per cent of the annual river flow just between July and September. The Blue Nile merges with the White Nile at Khartoum, from where the river flows downstream through the Sudan and into Egypt. The Nile has delivered fresh water, fed agriculture and supported livelihoods in those countries for thousands of years.

Since 2011, Ethiopia has been constructing the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the Blue Nile. The GERD is a major hydropower project located in Ethiopia's Benishangul-Gumuz region. Through the generation of hydroelectricity, the GERD will enhance Ethiopia's energy sources, allowing it to increase electrification, accelerate industrialization and export surplus electricity to the region.

Construction of the dam is now nearing completion. During 2020 the reservoir began to fill for the first time, and approximately 4.9 billion cubic metres of water were impounded. The 2021 rainy season is beginning now, and Ethiopia has announced that additional water has begun to accumulate in the reservoir.

During the past century, the Nile riparian countries have developed infrastructure to regulate the river flow, store water, reduce flooding, supply agriculture and generate hydropower. While there are a number of dams in the Nile Basin, including smaller dams on the Blue Nile, I will here mention only the larger hydraulic infrastructure located in the Nile Basin in the three countries.

In the Sudan, the largest infrastructure is the Merowe Dam, which can store 12.4 billion cubic metres of water and generate up to 1,250 megawatts. Also of importance in the Sudan is the Roseires Dam on the Blue Nile, which is situated approximately 100 kilometres downstream of the GERD, with a total volume of 5.9 billion cubic metres. Egypt's most significant infrastructure is in upper Egypt, namely the High

Aswan Dam. Completed in 1970, it can store 162 billion cubic metres and generate up to 2,100 megawatts. When finished, the GERD will store 74 billion cubic metres of water and generate up to 5,150 megawatts.

Any large dam impacts and alters a river's flow. Where water is scarce and drought is frequent, as is the case in the Blue Nile basin, cooperation on a shared river is the only long-term sustainable option. In the coming years, two of the world's largest dams — the High Aswan Dam and the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam — will substantially control and regulate the flow of the River Nile. That infrastructure has important implications both for human development and the environment. As mentioned, careful and cooperative basin-wide management can maximize the opportunities and positive effects of such major infrastructure and help to minimize any negative consequences.

The Governments of Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan have made sustained efforts to enhance their cooperation relating to their transboundary water resources over the years. Indeed, as we heard from my colleague, in 2015 they signed an agreement on the declaration of principles in which they committed to some core principles, including cooperation, equitable and reasonable utilization, preventing the cause of significant harm and the peaceful settlement of disputes. That declaration of principles was the outcome of a series of cooperative transboundary efforts undertaken during the previous years.

As we have heard, the parties have persisted with those efforts to enhance cooperation, while the African Union (AU) has played a critical role during recent years in taking negotiations forward.

The three parties have recognized the tireless efforts made by the AU Chairpersons to facilitate negotiations to reach an agreement. Of course, we also applaud those sustained efforts. While progress has been made in many areas of the negotiations, consensus has not been reached regarding some critical aspects, including arrangements for the management of protracted drought; development upstream and downstream of the GERD; and a dispute-resolution mechanism. Some differences also remain regarding the scope and nature of the proposed agreement.

At this stage and with other sources of regional tension increasing, we must recognize that overcoming the remaining differences among the parties will require careful, meticulous work, supported by the relevant

technical and legal experts and with a determination by the three States to arrive at a cooperative solution in pursuit of sustainable development for all in the spirit of one river, one people and one vision.

An agreement on the GERD can and indeed must be reached. Cooperation among the riparian States regarding that critical natural resource has never been more important. As the Governments of Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan have all recognized, the countries are experiencing rising demand on the water resource, be it in terms of agriculture or energy demands. That is due to a combination of factors, including population growth, urbanization and industrialization.

Effective, cooperative water management also becomes all the more important in the context of climate change. Indeed, climate models indicate that the flow of the Nile will exhibit increasing variability during the period of modelling up to 2040, leading to more floods and more intense droughts. It is therefore imperative that the parties work together to manage those interconnected challenges. In order to reach an optimal agreement, trust, transparency and open engagement will be key.

As we have heard, the United Nations remains ready to support Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan, as well as the African Union, in their efforts to achieve an agreement on the GERD that is beneficial to all. Coordination around hydro-infrastructure in that basin is critically important. When done right and with strong political leadership by the riparian nations, it can provide a basis for deeper, mutually beneficial regional cooperation around shared natural resources, which would enhance sustainable development and peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Andersen for her briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Empole (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to read out a statement by His Excellency Mr. Christophe Lutundula Apala Pen'apala, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on behalf of the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Chairperson of the African Union, His Excellency Mr. Félix Antoine Tshilombo Tshisekedi.

The Deputy Prime Minister was unable to travel to New York due to circumstances beyond his control. Nevertheless, he has asked me to convey his greetings to you, Mr. President, as well as to the members of the Security Council and all other participants in this meeting.

Allow me now, without further delay, to read out the statement by the Deputy Prime Minister.

“At the outset, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your presidency of the Security Council for the month of July. I express the satisfaction of my delegation at seeing France, a country with whom the Democratic Republic of the Congo maintains excellent friendly relations, leading the deliberations of the Security Council.

“I also wish to take this opportunity to express to the Council the gratitude of the Government and the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the efforts made by the United Nations to preserve our sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as to guarantee peace and stability in the country.

“I would also like to thank the Council for inviting the presidency of the African Union to take part in this important meeting.

“The Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) is situated on the Blue Nile, approximately 15 kilometres from the Sudanese border. Its principal objective is to produce electricity, with the aim of increasing Ethiopia's energy supply, accelerating its industrialization and supplying energy to other countries in the region. It will be the largest dam in Africa, 1,800 metres long and 155 metres high and with a total volume of 74 billion cubic metres.

“However, that enormous project, which seeks to promote regional economic integration, is causing issues for its immediate neighbours, namely the Sudan and Egypt. Their economies and the well-being of their populations depend greatly on the waters of the White Nile, which is situated downstream from the Blue Nile. Certain tensions have therefore been observed between those two countries and the Federal Republic of Ethiopia for some years now.

“The conflict around the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam is not a new issue for the Council,

which is considering it today for the second time after an open meeting held on 29 June 2020 (see S/2020/636).

“A number of initiatives have been undertaken in attempts to resolve the crisis surrounding the GERD, in particular the tripartite negotiations held under the auspices of the United States of America and the World Bank and the consideration of the issue by the Council on 29 June last year. In the end, the matter was referred back to the African Union which, under the leadership of its Chairperson at the time, His Excellency Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa, began to tackle the resolution of the dispute in accordance with the principle of African solutions to African problems.

“There have been several positive developments to date, especially in the form of the draft agreement put together by the parties with the assistance of African Union experts. The proposals put forward indicate that 90 per cent of the technical problems have already been resolved. It now remains for the parties to settle their outstanding technical and legal differences, including the nature of the agreement to be signed, the dispute-resolution mechanism and waterflow management during periods of drought.

“To that end, as the country that holds the chairmanship of the African Union for the period 2021 to 2022, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has taken a series of diplomatic initiatives at the highest level, including organizing in April an in-person ministerial conference in Kinshasa on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and subsequent diplomatic efforts between the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the leaders of the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Republic of the Sudan and the Federal Republic of Ethiopia. The consultations with the leaders of those three countries allowed for the sharing of information on the best ways to resume negotiations on an agreement that takes into account the interests of all parties.

“During the most recent meeting of the Bureau of the African Union Heads of State and Government on 24 June, the current Chairperson of the African Union, His Excellency Mr. Félix Antoine Tshilombo Tshisekedi, gave an account of the consultations he led. He assured the members of the Bureau that discussions with the parties

were ongoing with a view to restoring trust among them and finding a consensus on key issues. The Chairperson promised that, once those discussions had ended, he would submit a comprehensive report to the Bureau, which would allow for a more substantive and timely discussion.

“In the meantime, he requested that everyone refrain from making statements or taking positions that could jeopardize or complicate the very delicate negotiations process under way to find an African solution. The Bureau congratulated him and encouraged him to continue his facilitation efforts. Those efforts, together with the assistance of observers, have led to the drafting of a summary document, which will soon be presented to Ethiopia, the Sudan and Egypt as the basis for negotiations and for resolving differences. Those differences relate primarily to the filling and operation of the dam.

“President Tshisekedi believes that a solution can be found to the crisis concerning the GERD. All parties are ready and willing. However, we must all work to break the wall of mistrust and ensure all parties that their interests will be taken into account, thereby guaranteeing a successful conclusion to the process. To assist in the current facilitation efforts, the Security Council invited representatives of Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan to continue discussions, under the auspices of the African Union and mediation by its Chairperson, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity and the Charter of the United Nations. The Security Council, whose primary role in resolving international disputes is indisputable, should support the African Union and assist the facilitator in the quest for peace in that volatile area of the Horn of Africa.

“With the minimum political will, the parties can reach an agreement on the GERD. They demonstrated that with the 2015 Agreement on Declaration of Principles on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, which reflects the commitment of the three countries to respecting the following principles — cooperation, the equitable shared use of the waters of the Nile, security and the peaceful settlement of disputes.”

Mr. Ladeb (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank France for organizing

today's meeting on the dispute among Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan with regard to filling and operating the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. I welcome the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt and the Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy of Ethiopia. Their presence here today is a testament to the extreme importance they attach to the issue and their willingness to overcome the differences among their countries in the context of multilateral frameworks.

I would like also to thank Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa; Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme; and the Chargé d'affaires of the sisterly Democratic Republic of the Congo, who spoke on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union, for their valuable briefings.

The Security Council already discussed the issue last year (see S/2020/636). However, the dispute remains unresolved among the relevant countries. We hope that today's meeting will give new and firm impetus to the negotiations under the auspices of the African Union, to help the three countries reach a binding agreement that respects the vital interests of their peoples, protects their water security and the right to development, provides new opportunities for cooperation in the region and prevents the growth of additional tensions.

The Nile is a very critical shared source of water. It is the source of livelihoods and development for the people of Ethiopia, the Sudan, Egypt and the region. In the light of the current situation related to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, there is an urgent need for a coordination and cooperation mechanism among the countries concerned on the use of that water resource and the resolution of the disputes that might arise. That would ensure the rights of the upstream country without harming the rights and interests of downstream countries at the same time.

In our view, that is not impossible. It requires political will from all three countries to settle the outstanding legal and technical issues. They should refrain from taking unilateral measures, which would only further complicate the situation, and should continue constructive negotiations under the auspices of the African Union in order to reach an agreement within a reasonable time frame, based on mutual benefits and interests. The agreement should pave the way for a promising new era of constructive cooperation

and partnership, as agreed at the second extraordinary meeting of the African Union Bureau of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, held on 21 July 2020, and in line with the 2015 Agreement on Declaration of Principles on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.

We believe that it is important for the United Nations and the Security Council to support the pivotal role of the African Union in sponsoring those negotiations by sending a clear message on the issue, as part of cooperation and integration between the United Nations and regional organizations. The three countries must be encouraged to resume negotiations in a constructive way and reach the desired agreement. That is stressed in the draft resolution that has already been circulated.

In that regard, I highly appreciate the valuable efforts of His Excellency Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa, President of South Africa. We also commend the intensive efforts of His Excellency Mr. Félix Antoine Tshisekedi, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and current Chairperson of the African Union, in facilitating and advancing negotiations among the three sisterly African countries.

We are confident that, with the help of the African Union and the encouragement and assistance of the international community, those countries can overcome their differences and move forward towards a just negotiated solution, based on mutual understanding, consensus and cooperation.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): Let me begin by thanking Special Envoy Onanga-Anyanga, Executive Director Andersen and the Chargé d'affaires of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who spoke on behalf of the African Union, for their briefings today.

I would also like to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan and the Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy of Ethiopia to our meeting today. The United Kingdom shares strong partnerships with all three nations and recognizes the vital interests that each has in Nile waters.

The United Kingdom places strong emphasis on consensus among parties on developments that impact a shared natural resource. We are pleased that many of the key elements needed to reach that consensus on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam are captured in the 2015 Declaration of Principles on the Grand Ethiopian

Renaissance Dam, in particular the principles not to cause significant harm and of equitable and reasonable utilization. Since the Declaration of Principles, the three parties have continued talks to reach a more detailed trilateral agreement on the filling and operation of the dam. We would like to thank African Union (AU) Chairperson Tshisekedi and former Chairperson Ramaphosa for their support for the process.

We recognize that reaching agreement requires compromise by all parties. The United Kingdom notes Egypt and the Sudan's disappointment that a resolution has yet to be reached, as well as the stated commitment of all three countries to the AU-led talks. The United Kingdom is confident that, working together with the ongoing support of the African Union and the wider international community, Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan have the strength and resolve to reach agreement to the benefit of all. We call on all three sides to refrain from actions that undermine negotiations. We encourage them to engage constructively and urgently in a spirit of compromise to conclude negotiations and reach a mutually acceptable agreement.

In conclusion, let me once again reaffirm the United Kingdom's strong support for the AU-led process and the Governments of Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan in their endeavours to reach an equitable, mutually acceptable agreement.

Mr. Kimani (Kenya): I thank you, Sir, for holding this meeting. I also thank the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for conveying the message of his Minister for Foreign Affairs on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union (AU), who is an actively seized mediator on the matter of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD).

I recognize the legitimate concerns that have prompted the presence here in the Security Council of Her Excellency Mrs. Mariam Alsadig Al Sedeeg Al Mahadi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan; His Excellency Mr. Sameh Hassan Shokry Selim, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt; and His Excellency Mr. Seleshi Bekele Awulachew, Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy of Ethiopia. I also thank the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa, Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, for their briefings.

The human settling of the Nile basin throughout history has been a source of hope and connection. It is

unfortunate that we are discussing it here today in the Security Council, whose mandate is to deal with dangers to international peace and security. The basin is home to more than 257 million people. It covers the territory of a dozen African countries whose population is close to half a billion. The majority of them have woken to a busy day and may not be aware of this meeting in New York City, but every single one will be impacted by the statements and decisions made here today.

This meeting directly concerns the GERD and the three countries represented here, but the story that arises from it also concerns the 10 countries joined by the ambition that gave rise to the Nile Basin Initiative in 1999. The objectives of this riparian intergovernmental partnership are to develop the Nile basin water resources in a sustainable and equitable way to ensure prosperity, security and peace for all its peoples.

It seeks to pursue the same aims pursued in the Declaration of Principles on the GERD within a framework agreement. The millions of people whom it serves only desire to throw off the shackles of poverty and its associated ills of disease and war. They do not consider such a desire to be a threat to international peace and security because the legal principles underlying the initiative are protective of all its members.

Today, the Security Council is considering the legitimate concerns of two riparian States — Egypt and the Sudan — arising from the legitimate utilization of the Nile waters by another riparian State — Ethiopia. Kenya stands with the three States, recognizing their equality and that all their people equally deserve development and prosperity. We pay tribute to His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa who, as Chairperson of the African Union (AU), initiated the negotiations among the three countries.

We commend the Governments of Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan for their faith and confidence in the capacity of African Union mechanisms to assist them to mediate an agreement. We respectfully recognize and support the mandate of mediation presently held by His Excellency President Félix Antoine Tshilombo Tshisekedi, the current Chairperson of the African Union. We call on all parties supporting the process to commit their expertise to ensure that it is adequately resourced.

We direct the attention of the Council to the fact that the Chairperson is actively seized of the matter, as reflected in the remarks by the Special Envoy of the

Secretary-General and the representative of the Foreign Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That was reflected in the communiqué of the 24 June meeting of the Bureau of Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union. It reports that the AU Chairperson travelled to Cairo, Khartoum and Addis Ababa during the week of 9 May, when he had encouraging bilateral talks with the Heads of State and Government.

Kenya recognizes the critical importance of the principle of subsidiarity in the matter and recommends it to the Security Council. We call on the parties to recommit to negotiating in good faith within the AU-led process in a spirit fired by our shared dream of building a more united and prosperous Africa by 2063. We urge them to avoid inflammatory utterances, because making them is what may lead to tension, as opposed to the underlying issue of the Nile River and its uses. Kenya has total confidence that our Egyptian, Ethiopian and Sudanese brothers and sisters will make the principle of African solutions for African challenges a reality.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I thank the briefers for their important insights. We also welcome the Ministers and representatives of Egypt, Ethiopia, the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to today's meeting. The three parties — Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan — have legitimate interests in the Nile River and its water resources. A sustainable solution to the issue of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) can be found only by the parties themselves.

Much has already been agreed through the Declaration of Principles on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, which is a good framework to seek equitable and reasonable use of the Blue Nile. What remains now is for the parties to reach a consensus on modalities for future cooperation, based on the Principles as well as on transparency and trust. That requires constructive engagement, political will and courage to find compromise. We call on the three parties to refrain from any action that could undermine negotiations and make full use of the good offices of the African Union, especially through its facilitator role.

Norway encourages Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan to invest politically in an agreement on the GERD that all parties can benefit from. We are confident that the return on the investment will be development and prosperity for the people of all three States and beyond.

Let the GERD and the Nile be a source of opportunities, not conflict.

Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): At the outset, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines expresses its appreciation to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, speaking on behalf of the African Union, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa and the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for their comprehensive briefings on this very important, yet complex and sensitive topic.

We also welcome the Foreign Ministers of Egypt and the Sudan, as well as the Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy of Ethiopia, to today's meeting and reaffirm our unwavering solidarity to our sister nations.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines acknowledges the paramount importance of the River Nile and its intrinsic value as a transboundary water resource to each of the parties and, by extension, all riparian States in order to enhance the quality of life of their peoples. That was underscored during our meeting last year (S/2020/636) and is worth repeating today.

Indeed, the Nile is indispensable to the sustainable and socioeconomic development of each of the parties and we note their disagreements and credible concerns pertaining to its usage. We encourage them to assuage their entrenched positions and continue with the trilateral negotiations in good faith in order to reach an amicable, equitable and reasonable agreement. Such agreements between riparian States become even more critical as climate change increases both flooding and drought in the river, as highlighted earlier by the UNEP Executive Director, Ms. Inger Andersen.

The good offices of the African Union remains pivotal to facilitate constructive dialogue and meaningful negotiations. In that context, we are appreciative and pleased that the African Union is fully seized of the issue and commend the current mediation efforts of President Tshilombo Tshisekedi, as well as those of his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa, President of South Africa.

It is our principled position that the African Union is best-suited to facilitate the pacific settlement of disputes on the motherland, and we further underscore the importance of respecting the principle of subsidiarity, as well as Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. More pertinently, the existing

disagreement is among family members. To that end, we are fully confident that Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan will resolve their difficulties, as all families do, with wisdom and harmony.

In conclusion, we underscore that the Nile remains a beacon of hope and prosperity and a sanctuary for millions of people. Our sister nations have a common and shared history that is linked by the Nile and whose futures will be interwoven by it. Accordingly, it is in their collective interests to find a palatable solution to ensure that they can provide a dignified future for their peoples.

Despite the current setbacks, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines remains very optimistic that the parties will reach a lasting agreement, especially since they have already agreed on approximately 90 per cent of the issues. We hope that the parties recommit to negotiations, in good faith, under the auspices of the African Union. We believe that this would benefit all three parties and ensure the continuation of their peaceful and harmonious coexistence.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation of Mr. Sameh Hassan Shokry Selim, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt; Mrs. Mariam Alsadig Al Sedeeg Al Mahadi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan; and Mr. Seleshi Bekele Awulachew, Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy of Ethiopia, in today's meeting.

We thank Ms. Inger Andersen, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme; Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa; as well as the Chargé d'affaires of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations, Paul Empole.

The Russian Federation is closely following developments in the situation of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam being built by Ethiopia on the Blue Nile. We fully understand the political and socioeconomic significance of this hydropower project, the largest on the African continent, for the millions of people living in Ethiopia, a country that is experiencing a major electricity shortage. At the same time, we note the legitimate concerns expressed by Egypt and the Sudan regarding the possible negative effects the operation of the dam could have, in the absence of an agreement, on the inhabitants of those countries during dry years.

We believe there is no alternative to settling this water dispute through political and diplomatic methods via negotiations involving the three countries. We are convinced that the search for a solution must be carried out in accordance with the spirit and the letter of the 2015 Khartoum Declaration of Principles, taking into account the progress already achieved trilaterally in defining the operating parameters of the Ethiopian hydroelectric complex. Mutual understanding and trust are necessary. Escalating the situation and making statements about the possibility of using force are unacceptable. We will be frank — we are concerned about the escalation of confrontational rhetoric, which is not conducive to finding compromise solutions.

We are convinced that differences on socioeconomic development should not lead to threats to peace and security. We believe that gradually reaching agreements on certain aspects of filling the reservoir and the further operation of the hydroelectric power plant could lead to a de-escalation among the parties and a help to gradually reach a comprehensive mutually acceptable agreement. The best option would be to negotiate such a document with all the Nile basin countries, which should participate in determining the parameters of water use on an equal footing.

We commend the significant involvement of the African Union in resolving the dispute over the dam, including the work of its Specialized Technical Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs. We believe that the capacity of this authoritative regional organization to resolve the current water crisis has not yet been exhausted. We call on the Congolese presidency of the African Union to step up its efforts in that direction. In our view, an increase in the number of mediators or observers in the negotiations will not bring added value. However, their involvement is possible with the consent of all parties.

In conclusion, we would also like to make a concrete proposal. Since all the interested parties are gathered here in New York, why not hold a round of negotiations, brokered by the presidency of the African Union, to resolve the differences over the dam? We believe that this would be the best possible contribution of the Security Council to resolving the situation in the spirit of our shared principle of African solutions to African problems.

We would like to emphasize the Russian Federation's readiness to help resolve this complex problem. Egypt,

Ethiopia and the Sudan are close friends of our country, and we sincerely hope that they will soon be able to resolve outstanding differences, agree on modalities for further filling the dam's reservoir and, in general, reach compromises on its functioning.

We confirm Russia's readiness to provide satellite monitoring of the filling of the reservoir in the event of a request from all participants in the trilateral negotiations.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): Let me start by thanking you the briefers — Special Envoy Onanga-Anyanga, Executive Director Andersen and the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, speaking on behalf of Chairman Tshisekedi — for the information that they shared with us today. I would also like to welcome the participation of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Egypt and the Sudan and the Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy of Ethiopia.

The Horn of Africa is at an inflection point. Decisions in the weeks and months ahead will have significant, long-term implications for the people of the region. The United States is committed to addressing the interlinked regional crises and to supporting a prosperous and stable Horn of Africa, so we stand ready to support collaborative and constructive efforts by Ethiopia, Egypt and the Sudan to resolve the issues over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD).

We understand that the Nile waters and how these waters are used are important to all three of these countries, and we believe that this is an issue that can be reconciled. A balanced and equitable solution to the filling and operation of the GERD can be reached with the political commitment the all parties. Egypt and the Sudan's concerns over water security and the safety and operation of the dam can be reconciled with Ethiopia's development needs.

This begins with the resumption of productive, substantive negotiations. Those negotiations should be held under the leadership of the African Union (AU) and should recommence with urgency. This process should use the 2015 Declaration of Principles on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam signed by the parties and the July 2020 statement by the Bureau of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government as foundational references.

We believe that the African Union is the most appropriate venue to address this dispute, and the United States is committed to providing political and technical support to facilitate a successful outcome. We urge the African Union and the parties to use the expertise and support of the three official observers — South Africa, the European Union and the United States — as well as the United Nations and other partners to help achieve a positive outcome.

We also urge representatives of the Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt to continue to discuss with our Government the full range of possible means to de-escalate tensions and to demonstrate flexibility in their approach to resolving this matter peacefully. We call on all parties to refrain from making any statements or taking any actions that might jeopardize the negotiation process and to commit themselves to a negotiated solution that is acceptable to everyone. Reaching a solution on the GERD would pave the way for additional cooperation on water resources, regional development and economic integration.

We reaffirm our commitment to working with Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan, as well as our allies and partners, to ensure that the African Union-led negotiations resume with urgency and move towards productive, substantive and constructive ends.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): I too would like to thank the briefers for their insightful briefings.

The heightened tensions surrounding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) are very concerning. Estonia has closely followed the developments. We have also carefully studied the letters that the concerned parties have submitted to the Council.

It is obvious that there is no easy solution to this question. Therefore, it is twice as important that all three parties involved be willing to make the necessary concessions that would allow them to arrive at a fair and equitable solution. I believe this is achievable if all involved negotiate in good faith.

We acknowledge the role that the African Union has played in trying to help to find a solution. However, we regret that so far no agreement has been found on the outstanding issues, despite more than a year having passed since the Council last discussed this matter. We hope that with the facilitation of the African Union, the parties will continue to work to come to an agreement

in a timely manner. The African Union, as the regional organization, should remain the main forum for this. Estonia also supports the continuation of the work of observers in this process.

It is crucial to find a peaceful solution at the earliest opportunity before the tensions escalate. We are urging all parties to refrain from taking any unilateral actions that might escalate the situation. The best chance of finding a solution remains through negotiations and not through escalation.

The time to come to an agreement is now. There is no more time for any further delays. Estonia fully supports finding a peaceful solution to this dispute.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): I thank our briefers for their insights. I also want to recognize the presence of our guests today, the Ministers of Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan and the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, speaking on behalf of the Chair of the African Union (AU).

It is our shared conviction that only a negotiated settlement can offer a solution to this critical issue. A negotiated agreement stands to benefit millions of people living in the Blue Nile basin. Ireland recognizes how fundamental this issue is for all parties, who see the Nile as a vital natural resource, critical to the livelihoods and development of the people across Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan. A lasting agreement on how the dam is managed is absolutely critical to the long-term stability and development of the entire region.

Clearly, cooperation between the Blue Nile States has never been more important. Transboundary water cooperation is a key element in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan are experiencing first-hand the impacts of climate change, population growth and rapid urbanization, which will only increase water-management challenges. Sustained cooperation over water resources can only strengthen and support mutually beneficial relationships among neighbours. We believe that the parties are right to be looking ahead for their own people's future, but they need to do this in relative harmony and together.

We recognize the African Union's efforts in leading negotiations on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). We are encouraged by the leadership of the African Union and the chairmanship of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, working to facilitate

negotiations to find an equitable and peaceful solution that is acceptable to all parties.

We believe that the African Union-led negotiations remain the best forum for finding a comprehensive agreement on the GERD. We encourage the African Union to continue to draw on the necessary technical expertise and political support to carry out this highly complex facilitation role. Ireland fully supports the efforts of the African Union and the observers to the process to bring the parties together and find a negotiated solution, and we encourage the swift resumption of the talks.

We urge the parties to avoid any actions that might call into question or damage the prospects of an accord. We encourage the parties to redouble their efforts to explore confidence-building measures, to decrease tensions and build trust. As envisaged in the Declaration of Principles on the GERD, this could include establishing a reciprocal information-sharing arrangement, with the support of observers, to facilitate mutual sharing of data. Predictability and transparency, we know, are critical to achieving a settlement.

After a decade of negotiations, we believe that an agreement on the filling of the GERD should be within the reach of Ethiopia, the Sudan and Egypt. In the 2015 Declaration of Principles on the GERD, the three countries committed to cooperation, equitable and reasonable utilization, security and the peaceful settlement of disputes. We hope that the remaining differences can be overcome with the necessary political will and a spirit of compromise that will benefit all the people of the region.

Once again, we urge the parties to return to the negotiating table. We also understand that, to achieve that, political support is required. We see our meeting here today as part of the international community's response to that. We will continue to support a negotiated resolution on the matter. We fully support the European Union's role as an observer to the AU-led process, and we, as Ireland, stand ready to assist as needed.

Mr. Tirumurti (India): Let me begin by thanking the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa, Mr. Onanga-Anyanga, and Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, for their briefings. I welcome the presence of the Foreign Ministers of Egypt and the Sudan; the Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy of

Ethiopia; and the chargé d'affaires of the Democratic Republic of the Congo at today's meeting.

India is closely following the developments on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). The river basin of the Nile encompasses 11 countries in Africa, which also includes Ethiopia, the Sudan and Egypt. Therefore, there is no doubt that this is a complex transboundary water dispute, involving many countries in the region as well as several legal and technical issues.

We recognize that the parties have already undertaken several initiatives to address issues arising out of the construction and filling of the GERD in Ethiopia. Those include the establishment of an international panel of experts in 2012 to examine the dam's design and construction plans, a follow-up Tripartite National Committee in 2014 and the 2015 Declaration of Principles on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. We believe that those initiatives, particularly the 2015 Agreement on Declaration of Principles, provide a good basis to continue negotiations aimed at reaching an amicable solution that protects the interests of all three countries. It goes without saying that Nile water usage should benefit the people of all the countries, while respecting the rights of both upper- and lower-riparian States.

The Chairpersons of the African Union (AU) — South Africa in 2020 and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2021 — have made commendable efforts to facilitate a meaningful discussion together with the observers. There were many meetings of the African Union on the issue last year. We understand from the 26 June AU communiqué that the tripartite negotiations have brought about agreement on 90 per cent of the issues, although not all the issues.

As a lower- and upper-riparian State, India is only too aware of how difficult such negotiations can be. It is important that the AU continue with those efforts in good faith. We call on Ethiopia, Egypt and the Sudan to work constructively with the AU-led processes, with a view to resolving the outstanding issues in a purposeful manner and with the urgency it deserves. Since the AU is seized of the matter, it is important that all parties engage urgently to find a way forward.

Based on our own experience, we know that transboundary-water disputes should ideally be resolved through mechanisms agreed upon by the primary stakeholders and taking into account the respective rights and issues of technical details, historical usage

and socioeconomic aspects. India is of the view that the countries should continue their bilateral engagements, as well as cooperate fully in a focussed manner with the AU, to reach a mutually acceptable, long-term solution to the relevant issues. Only such a solution will endure and serve the developmental needs of upper- and lower-riparian regions. We also urge other countries concerned to support the efforts of the AU in that regard.

Mr. Abarry (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa, Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, and Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, for their excellent briefings. I commend the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on delivering the statement on behalf of the current Chairperson of the African Union. I am pleased to note the presence of the Ministers of Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan among us.

This is the second time that the Security Council has taken up the issue of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) (see S/2020/636), an infrastructure project with immense potential, the operationalization of which has unfortunately been a source of misunderstanding among Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan for many years. The presence of the representatives of those countries at the Security Council attests to the evident will of three neighbours to resolve the misunderstanding peacefully and amicably

The Niger fully supports the negotiation process under way through the good offices of President Félix Antoine Tshilombo Tshisekedi, current Chairperson of the African Union, and calls on the parties present to demonstrate greater political will by providing the committee on technical and legal issues, which was established as part of the outcome of the 26 June 2020 meeting of the Extraordinary African Union Bureau of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, with the opportunity to develop compromise proposals, so that their adoption can enable the resolution of the remaining 10 per cent of issues as soon as possible. It is equally important that the parties refrain from any comments or actions that could undermine the negotiation process under way.

One can have differences among brothers, but among brothers, one must overcome them, as peaceful coexistence is priceless. Successful examples in this area exist in Africa. As a member of a water-management organization, namely, the Niger Basin Authority, the

Niger would like to share its experience in the joint management of the exploitation of the natural resources of the Niger basin.

The nine States of West and Central Africa, which make up the Niger basin, have in effect agreed on a management strategy for the efficient and sustainable use of the waters of the Niger River by any State under the authority of the Niger Basin Authority, established in 1980. That successful example of cooperation in water resources development can effectively serve as a source of inspiration for an accelerated solution to the GERD issue, especially with a view towards the sustainable development and management of the waters of the Nile among all riparians in future.

In conclusion, the Niger welcomes the communiqué issued at the conclusion of the virtual meeting of the Bureau of the Assembly of the African Union Heads of State and Government on June 24, which reaffirms the organization's commitment to remain seized of the dispute, and, based on the principle of subsidiarity, calls on all parties to prioritize reaching a regional and African solution to the GERD issue. To that end, we remain convinced that, under auspices of the African Union, the parties will spare no effort to ensure that the GERD is a source of shared development and prosperity, which will contribute to the strengthening of solidarity and cooperation among the three countries.

Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan are major countries of the great civilizations in Africa and have helped in the settlement of numerous crisis in the continent. I am certain that they will be up to the task of meeting the challenge at hand.

Mr. Ochoa Martínez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Onanga-Anyanga, Executive Director Andersen and the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who spoke on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union, for their briefings. We also welcome the Foreign Ministers of Egypt and the Sudan, and Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy of Ethiopia.

Mexico has closely followed the tripartite negotiations among Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. We recognize the importance of the Nile for the livelihoods and well-being of the three countries. We therefore understand that the issue can be viewed from specific political,

technical, developmental and security perspectives. We must take of all of them into account.

We regret that, despite the good offices of the African Union leadership, the process continues to lack substantial progress. We are concerned that the dispute could exacerbate tensions in the region and relations among the three countries, which would be of significant consequence not only for the Horn of Africa but for the entire continent.

We have taken note of the positions of the three countries, which have been articulated in several letters to the Security Council. While the Council must focus on all matters that could potentially pose a threat to international peace and security, in this case a preventive approach must be sought at all times, consistent with Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations. Mexico's position with regard to international disputes, especially those affecting several countries at the same time, has been to promote, above all, a peaceful and mutually acceptable solution for all parties, based on dialogue.

Moreover, as this is an issue that affects three African countries, and based on Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, we consider it particularly important that the international community support the efforts of the African Union to bring the positions of the three countries closer together and resume negotiations, taking into account the proven capacity of that regional organization to seek African solutions to problems affecting the continent.

We call on the parties to continue the dialogue in good faith and to move towards an agreement on the filling and operation of the dam so that a satisfactory and beneficial solution for all three countries and the region as a whole can be reached within a reasonable period of time. Mexico supports regional mediation as well as all actions aimed at facilitating political dialogue and technical understanding. The continued involvement of the African Union is welcome and very necessary in that regard.

Mexico urges all parties to refrain from any actions that could jeopardize negotiations or undermine the spirit of goodwill necessary to reach an agreement. Likewise, any dissuasive or pressurizing actions should be avoided in order to prevent unnecessary escalations of tension.

Just as the representative of the Niger mentioned earlier, Mexico also has a long history of shared management of transboundary water resources, both on its northern and southern borders. We are therefore well aware of the great relevance and complexity involved in the administration of such a vital resource as water. One example is the International Boundary and Water Commission, which was established by Mexico and the United States in 1889. Mexico has also established a similar mechanism with Belize and Guatemala.

Those institutions are devoted to implementing boundary and water treaties between our neighbouring nations and have allowed for the construction, operation and maintenance of relevant infrastructure for the management of cross-border rivers. Perhaps they could serve as a model, with the necessary adaptations on a case-by-case basis, in future rounds of negotiations among Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan. We would be happy to provide further details on those arrangements if useful to the parties.

Nevertheless, even with agreements of that nature in place, we must remember that the management of water resources is never immune to potential disputes. That is why a shared reference framework and the appropriate mechanisms to deal with disputes are key, so as to prevent any escalation from the technical to the political level.

Finally, I wish to underscore that Mexico will continue to follow developments on the ground and will constantly seek to support, here and in other forums, a peaceful and negotiated solution, as well as any preventive diplomacy efforts.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): I would like to begin by warmly welcoming the Foreign Ministers of Egypt and the Sudan and the Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy of Ethiopia to our meeting today. I also welcome the Chargé d'affaires of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union, to this meeting. I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa and the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme for their insightful briefings.

Water resources play a critical role in supporting the livelihoods of billions of people on Earth and its countless ecosystems. The sustainable and equitable use of water resources is therefore vital for securing peace, stability and economic development, as well as the protection of nature. Therefore, we are concerned

by the increasing tendency of the utilization of many international watercourses in a manner that may not ensure the legitimate rights and interests of riparian countries, especially downstream countries.

The adverse effects of that tendency, compounded by those of climate change, have posed significant challenges to the security, stability and development of many regions, including in Africa, where the lives of millions of people depend upon shared rivers. We believe that the use of water resources for development purposes is a legitimate right of any party concerned, be it a water-surplus or water-deficit country. We also believe that best practices on transboundary watercourses include the adequate exchange of views, consultations and the full implementation of legal frameworks among stakeholders concerned in order to address outstanding issues.

Furthermore, the utilization of international watercourses must be in line with international law and the commitments of the countries concerned, with a view to harmonizing the interests of riparian States, both upstream and downstream, to ensure the sustainable use and equitable sharing of water resources. We would like to emphasize the importance of fostering the further codification and development of international law regarding the sustainable use of transboundary watercourses, including through the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses.

With regard to the Blue Nile River, we take note of the positions of the relevant parties, including those elaborated in the recent letters addressed to the President of the Security Council. We support the efforts of the parties directly concerned to promote the sustainable and equitable utilization of water resources, including through cooperation, consultations and negotiations on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) project.

It is our wish that all the parties concerned will build upon the results already achieved and fully implement the 2015 Agreement on Declaration of Principles on the GERD project. We take note of the efforts by all sides over the past year during negotiations. However, given the ongoing fragile situation in the region, it is important that the parties concerned uphold the principle of settling disputes through peaceful means, continue their dialogue and meaningful negotiations and take into account one another's views and legitimate interests in a spirit of neighbourly brotherhood and good

faith, as well as in accordance with international law and the 2015 Agreement on Declaration of Principles.

As we have stated time and again here, we continue to support the important role of the African Union (AU) in upholding its responsibility to promote negotiations and mediation on regional issues, as it has done over the past year on the GERD issue. Given the continued stalemate, we believe it is high time that the AU accelerate its efforts in assisting the three countries to resolve the outstanding issues, including legal and technical questions. In that connection, all parties should refrain from any measures that could escalate tensions or undermine the opportunity to achieve a negotiated solution to the issue.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt, Mr. Sameh Shokry Selim; the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan, Mrs. Mariam Al Mahadi; and the Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy of Ethiopia, Mr. Seleshi Bekele Awulachew, to today's meeting.

China thanks the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Christophe Lutundula Apala Pen'apala; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa, Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga; and the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, Ms. Inger Andersen, for their briefings.

Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan are all at an important stage of development, and the River Nile is of great significance to the life and development of all three countries. China supports the three countries in reaching an agreement on transboundary water cooperation through dialogue and consultation for the sustainable management and utilization of the Nile's water so that all riparian countries can benefit from it.

China believes that, through joint efforts, the completion of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) can become a tripartite development project to enhance mutual trust and win-win cooperation. China attaches great importance to the issue of the GERD and appreciates the fact that, in 2015, the three countries signed the Agreement on Declaration of Principles on the GERD following a dialogue and the holding of multiple rounds of negotiations under the auspices of the AU. The AU has made many efforts to facilitate the tripartite negotiations. China appreciates the active role played by President Tshilombo Tshisekedi and President Ramaphosa, as current and former AU Chairpersons.

China notes the positions expressed in the very recent letters sent to the Council by the Foreign Ministers of Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan. The utilization of transboundary water resources involves national interests upstream and downstream, which is very complex and sensitive. China fully understands the legitimate concerns of Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan regarding the GERD.

On this issue, China remains consistent in its position that the parties should resolve their differences through dialogue and consultation in order to achieve mutual benefit and win-win results. African countries have a fine tradition in resolving regional problems through dialogue and consultation. Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan are all important countries in the region and good friends of China. My country sincerely hopes that the three countries will resume dialogue and consultation in the spirit of friendly cooperation as soon as possible, as well as reach an agreement expeditiously on a solution that is acceptable and beneficial to all three.

China looks forward to the AU's continued proper role in that regard. The international community, including the Council, should support the three countries in resolving their differences through dialogue and consultation and, to that end, create an environment conducive to jointly maintaining peace, stability and development in the African region. China stands ready to continue to play a constructive role alongside all the parties.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of France.

I welcome the Foreign Ministers of Egypt and the Sudan and the Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy of Ethiopia to the Security Council. I would like to thank Mr. Onanga-Anyanga, Ms. Andersen and the Chargé d'affaires of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for their briefings.

I would like to stress three points on the issue under consideration.

First, the responsibility of the Security Council is to prevent the prolongation of this dispute from becoming a threat to the maintenance of international peace and security. That is why it was important for this meeting to take place. All parties have legitimate interests, but after 10 years of negotiations, trust has eroded. In the

absence of prior agreement, the continued filling of the dam reservoir is exacerbating tensions.

At a time when regional stability is under threat, the priority is to avoid compounding each country's current challenges. Those challenges include the democratic transition in the Sudan, whose success is a priority for France, and the challenges facing Egypt in meeting the needs of its population. Also included are the development challenges in Ethiopia. The conflict in Tigray has fueled other tensions, particularly in the Al-Fashaga triangle area.

Secondly, we call on the countries of the region to show political will in order to resolve their differences through dialogue, with the support of the African Union. The solution can come only from dialogue among the parties. We call on them to refrain from any action that could hinder the continuation of discussions and the achievement of a negotiated solution.

France commends the efforts of the African Union chairmanship to support the negotiations, especially the personal engagement of President Ramaphosa, and now, President Tshilombo Tshisekedi. Those efforts must continue and be intensified. We encourage the United Nations to continue to bring its expertise to bear on the process and urge the three parties to accept a more active role for observers in the negotiations.

Thirdly, France is convinced that an agreement can quickly be reached between the parties on the filling and management of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. There are elements of convergence, which must form the basis of negotiations, under the auspices of the African Union. France solemnly calls on Ethiopia, Egypt and the Sudan to demonstrate responsibility, compromise and cooperation in order to settle the outstanding issues expeditiously. France will remain mobilized so that a negotiated solution can be found as soon as possible.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt.

Mr. Selim (Egypt): At the outset, I would like to extend my congratulations to Ambassador De Rivière on assuming the presidency of the Security Council. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment

Programme, as well as Mr. Onanga-Anyanga, Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, for their remarks.

Egypt, a nation of over 100 million souls, is facing an existential threat. A grand structure of mammoth proportions has been constructed across the artery that bequeaths life to the people of Egypt. A colossal wall of iron and steel has arisen along the banks of a great and ancient river and has cast a long, dark shadow over the future and fate of the people of Egypt. With every brick and every layer of mortar, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) grows higher, its reservoir grows larger and it continues to constrict the lifeblood of innocent millions living downstream of this giant dam.

Last year, on 29 June 2020, Egypt came before the Security Council (see S/2020/636) to warn the international community of this burgeoning danger that was brewing on the horizon. We alerted the world to the impending first filling of the GERD and cautioned against the costs of seeking to establish exclusive control over a river on which our survival depends. We implored this organ to act with vigilance and vigour to avert an escalation of tensions that could jeopardize the peace in a fragile region. We called upon our brethren with whom we share the riches of the Nile to exercise responsibility and to recognize that the future and fortunes of our peoples are intrinsically intertwined.

And yet, within days of the meeting on the question of the GERD, the Rubicon was crossed. Ethiopia commenced the unilateral filling of the GERD, and its Foreign Minister declared, with no small measure of impudence, "the river became a lake ... the Nile is ours".

Nonetheless, Egypt's response to this assault on the river was to act with restraint and pursue the path of peace by seeking a settlement to this crisis through an equitable agreement that preserves the interests of all three parties. We wholeheartedly embraced the initiative of the then Chairperson of the African Union, President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa, to initiate negotiations under the auspices of the African Union, and we engaged in a whole year of talks convened and facilitated by our African brethren to forge an African solution to this intractable problem.

And yet we have failed. After a year of abortive negotiations and despite the tireless efforts of the Chairpersons of the African Union and our international partners, we find ourselves again confronted by the reality of the unilateral execution of the filling of the GERD, without an agreement to protect downstream

communities against the dangers of this dam. Indeed, in a further demonstration of its obstinacy, Ethiopia announced, on 5 July 2021, a mere three days before the convening of today's meeting, that it had commenced the second year filling of the GERD, without an agreement.

This blatant act of unilateralism is not only a manifestation of Ethiopia's irresponsibility and its callous indifference to the damage that the filling of this dam could inflict upon Egypt and the Sudan, but it also illustrates Ethiopia's bad faith and its attempt to impose a *fait accompli* in defiance of the collective will of the international community as expressed and embodied in the holding of this Security Council meeting to discuss and take action on the question of the GERD. In this regard, I take note of the European Union's issuance of a statement today expressing regret that Ethiopia has begun executing the second filling without an agreement — and commend it for that. I encourage the Security Council and its member States to take a similar position in response to this deeply troubling development — something that has not been displayed in today's statements.

This persistent practice of unilateralism betrays Ethiopia's disregard, if not its contempt, of international law and reflects its underlying policy objectives of seeking to arrest the Nile and transform this transboundary river of life into an instrument of political influence and control, all of which threatens to undermine peace and security in the region. This is why Egypt has elected to again bring the question of the GERD before the Security Council.

Ethiopia's unrelenting unilateralism, the continued failure of negotiations and the absence at this juncture of a viable path towards a political settlement of this matter have all impelled Egypt to call upon the Security Council to intercede expeditiously and effectively to prevent an escalation of tensions and to address this situation, which could, as stated in Article 34 of the United Nations Charter, endanger the maintenance of international peace and security.

We have come to this Chamber out of an abiding faith in the value of international law and an unwavering belief in the virtue of multilateralism as a vehicle for promoting peace and preventing conflict and strife. We are driven by a commitment to the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and an enduring confidence in the capacity of the Security Council to discharge its duty to maintain international peace and

security by taking the necessary action in relation to the question of the GERD. Indeed, the great value to humankind of this body is its ability and authority to act pre-emptively to protect and uphold the peace and not to stand by in a state of indifferent abeyance as the rights of nations and indeed their very existence are threatened.

Egypt has engaged in a whole decade of negotiations on the GERD. Since Ethiopia unilaterally commenced the construction of this dam without fulfilling the duties incumbent upon it as an upstream State to notify and consult its downstream co-riparians, Egypt has sought to reach an agreement on the GERD that would preserve the rights of our three countries — Egypt, the Sudan and Ethiopia — and promote their common interests.

Our hope was and remains to conclude a legally binding agreement that enables Ethiopia to achieve its developmental objectives by generating hydropower from the GERD expeditiously, efficiently and sustainably. This reflects the fact that Egypt was and remains committed to Ethiopia's stability and prosperity, and it also exemplifies Egypt's long-standing policy of engendering and expanding cooperation with our co-riparians throughout the Nile basin.

However, any agreement on the GERD must be equitable, reasonable and legally binding. It must include provisions to mitigate the adverse effects of this dam, especially during periods of drought. It must prevent the infliction of significant harm on the riparian interests of Egypt and the Sudan. It must guarantee the safety, functionality and resilience of downstream dams. And it must ensure that Egypt's water security is not imperilled by the filling and operation of what will become Africa's largest hydropower facility.

Realizing this objective of concluding a fair and balanced agreement on the GERD is not unsurmountable, nor is it beyond reach. Indeed, the continued failure of negotiations is not due to a lack of scientific solutions to the outstanding technical issues, nor is it because we lack the requisite legal expertise to draft an agreement. Rather, the singular source of our failure has been and remains Ethiopian intransigence. This reality is best reflected in the following statement from the letter addressed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia to the Security Council on 23 June 2021:

“Filling and operating the GERD without seeking agreement from Egypt and [the] Sudan is the bare minimum of the exercise of this

sovereign prerogative as a riparian country of an international watercourse”.

The sentiment in this statement is the root of the problem. It demonstrates that the cause of this crisis is political. It reveals that Ethiopia is operating under the assumption that it is engaging in negotiations on the GERD out of comity or charity.

Ethiopia has conveniently decided to ignore the realities of geography and appears to be under the illusion that the Blue Nile is an internal river that it can exploit to its exclusive benefit. And it seems to presume that this watercourse, which freely and naturally flows to the territories of its co-riparians, can be subjected to its sovereignty and placed under its dominion.

This unfortunate posture has thwarted every effort to reach an agreement and has been echoed in the positions that Ethiopia has adopted throughout a decade of negotiations. For instance, Ethiopia refuses to sign a legally binding agreement. It has even objected to calling the instrument being negotiated an “agreement”; it has proposed to designate the text as merely “guidelines and rules”. Ethiopia has refused to include any form of binding dispute resolution provisions and insists on codifying an unlimited right to alter and amend the GERD agreement whenever it so desires.

Ethiopia has sought to justify these unreasonable positions by invoking some mythical injustice that had been wrought upon it by so-called colonial treaties or by an unfair status quo. Nothing can be further from the truth. Ethiopia was never a colony and has never concluded a treaty relating to the Nile under the threat of coercion or compulsion.

Moreover, Egypt has never objected to Ethiopia’s right to harness the resources of the Blue Nile. However, Egypt expects and indeed demands that its upstream co-riparian complies with its international legal obligations, which require it to prevent the infliction of significant harm against the interests of its downstream neighbours.

Ethiopia is also seeking to use the GERD negotiations as a backdoor through which to consecrate an unlimited and an unregulated right to construct future projects along the Blue Nile and has demanded that its co-riparians sign a hydrological blank check that grants it unrestricted control of the river. This was expressed in no uncertain terms in a letter dated

8 January 2021 from Ethiopia’s Minister of Water in which he stated,

“Ethiopia does not have an obligation emanating from law or practice to acquire agreement from downstream countries to construct the GERD or any future water development project”.

This policy was put into practice when the Prime Minister of Ethiopia announced, on 30 May 2021, that his country plans to construct over a hundred dams over the coming fiscal year without even the slightest mention of the interests or equities of its co-riparians, as if Ethiopia holds exclusive proprietary rights over the Nile and the other rivers that it shares with its neighbours, which was especially apparent in the damage inflicted by Ethiopia on Lake Turkana in Kenya.

Despite Ethiopia’s persistent pattern of bad faith and in spite of its incessant unilateralism, Egypt continued to negotiate in good faith and with a genuine political will to reach an equitable agreement. For a whole decade, we explored every avenue and exhausted every opportunity to conclude a document that would enable Ethiopia to fill and operate the GERD while mitigating its harmful downstream impacts. We sought an agreement that would become an instrument of regional integration and collaboration and that would herald a new era of cooperation among our three countries.

We sought an agreement through years of fruitless trilateral negotiations during which Ethiopia effectively torpedoed our efforts to undertake joint studies on the socioeconomic impacts of the GERD and to assess its environmental impacts, and, as a result of Ethiopia’s obstructionism, we now have no impartial scientific record of the adverse effects of this mega-dam.

Egypt also accepted an invitation to participate in negotiations facilitated by the United States of America and the World Bank Group, in which Ethiopia participated fully and freely, and that led to the drafting — after 12 rounds of intensive negotiations — of a comprehensive agreement on the filling and operation of the GERD, which Egypt signed but which Ethiopia rejected. We also engaged in negotiations held upon an invitation from His Excellency the Prime Minister of the Sudan, which, despite the significant progress achieved, were ultimately undermined by Ethiopian intransigence.

Moreover, for a whole year, since the previous meeting convened by the Security Council on the question of the GERD, Egypt participated actively in the negotiations led by the African Union.

We engaged in this AU-led process with a sense of optimism and faith in the ability of our African brethren to facilitate the adoption of an agreement on the GERD.

We worked diligently to implement the instructions of the Bureau of the Assembly of the African Union at the summit level to reach a legally binding agreement on the filling and operation of the GERD, and we welcomed the constructive engagement of our partners from the European Union and the United States in that process.

However, after a year of faltering negotiations, and despite the highly appreciated good offices and untiring efforts of His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa and His Excellency President Félix Tshisekedi of the Democratic Republic of the Congo during their respective periods as Chair of the African Union, the AU-led process failed to yield the desired agreement.

Our three countries were even unable to execute the simple task of compiling a complete text of a zero draft of the GERD agreement that provides a record of their negotiating positions, and countless weeks were exhausted in ineffectual virtual meetings and disagreements on peripheral matters of procedure.

More troublingly, throughout this process, Ethiopia effectively derailed the AU-led negotiations. It repeatedly attempted to redirect the talks towards reaching non-binding arrangements for the filling of the GERD or for the appointment of focal points for the exchange of technical data.

While those ideas may appear reasonable to the untrained eye, the reality is that these Ethiopian proposals contravene the instructions of the Bureau of the Assembly of the African Union at the summit level, which directed us to agree on the rules governing both the filling and the operation of the GERD.

More importantly, the practical effect of those Ethiopian proposals is to deny downstream States any meaningful protection against the adverse effects of the GERD and entitle Ethiopia to fill its reservoir and activate its massive turbines without instituting rules to mitigate the harmful impacts of the dam and regulate

its operation, thereby posing a grave danger to our rights and interests.

Furthermore, despite claiming to support the granting of an enhanced role to our partners who attended the AU-led negotiations as observers, the reality is that during the latest ministerial meeting, held in Kinshasa from April 4 to 6, upon the kind invitation of President Félix Tshisekedi, Ethiopia rejected every proposal submitted by the Sudan and Egypt to augment the AU-led process and expand the role of our partners in order to assist us in reaching an agreement on the GERD.

As such, I find it deeply disheartening that I must report to the Security Council that the AU-led process, in its current format, has reached an impasse. A whole year of negotiations was expended in fruitless talks while Ethiopia continued the construction of the GERD and has now reached the point of continuing to unilaterally fill its reservoir.

Throughout those winding and arduous processes and at every juncture of the negotiations, Ethiopia remained implacable.

It refused every proposal and rejected every idea presented by Egypt that would have guaranteed that Ethiopia would be able to generate hydropower from the GERD at optimal levels of efficiency while protecting downstream States against the potential harms of this dam.

Ethiopia also blocked every compromise formula submitted to us by our international partners and continued to adopt inflexible positions designed to evade and elude any commitment to protect, or even provide minimal safeguards to, the interests of Egypt and the Sudan. Even our efforts to engender confidence and build bridges of trust between our countries came to naught.

We signed the 2015 Agreement on Declaration of Principles on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam to affirm our commitment to reaching a fair and equitable agreement on the GERD. We presented a plan to establish a common infrastructure fund to broaden the horizons of cooperation between our countries. We proposed to contribute to the financing of the GERD to turn this dam into a symbol of friendship and brotherhood between our peoples, and we suggested extending our power lines to help energize Ethiopia and

assist in its quest for development; and still Ethiopia remained unyielding in its intransigence.

As a result, the two downstream States are now left vulnerable to the evils of the GERD.

We have no independently verifiable guarantees regarding the safety and structural stability of the GERD, and, as such, 150 million Sudanese and Egyptians are condemned by Ethiopia to live under the harrowing spectre of a towering structure that can hold up to 74 billion cubic metres of water without assurances regarding its safety or reliability.

Nor do we have any protection against the incalculable damage that the GERD could inflict during future periods of drought. At a time when the river grows dry and the land gets parched under the searing sun, and the livelihood of Egyptians is imperilled, Ethiopia is unwilling to release the waters of the Blue Nile to quench the thirst of the downstream valley. Indeed, that is the crux of the problem.

All that Egypt has called for and sought is a binding agreement that includes an insurance policy against the harmful impacts of the GERD on Egypt's water security by designing a mechanism through which our three countries could cooperate to collectively bear the burden of addressing future periods of drought. Unfortunately, however, Ethiopia remains steadfast in its rejection of any form of agreement that provides any meaningful measure of protection to the interests of downstream States. It is therefore not an overstatement to affirm that for Egypt the GERD is an existential threat.

Our estimates and scientific models indicate that this mega-dam can wreak incalculable damage on Egypt, despite the precautionary measures that we have taken in anticipation of Ethiopia's unilateral filling of the GERD and our tireless efforts at conservation and water reuse.

For us, the harm that the GERD might inflict will affect every aspect of the lives of the Egyptian people like a malignant plague.

In the absence of an agreement that regulates its filling and operation, the GERD can cause cumulative water shortages in Egypt amounting to 120 billion cubic metres. It will diminish access to clean drinking water; it could deprive millions of farmers of the water they use to irrigate their fields; it will rob countless families of their income and livelihood; it will destroy thousands of acres of arable land; it will increase desertification

and degrade the riparian ecosystem; and it will increase vulnerability to the effects of climate change. That is a situation that Egypt cannot, and will not, tolerate.

It is therefore imperative for the international community to exert every effort, including by acting through the Security Council, to pre-empt that eventuality and prevent the GERD from becoming a threat to the very existence of Egypt. That requires the Council to unequivocally call upon the parties to reach an equitable agreement on the GERD, within a defined timeline, and to encourage them to work diligently and with earnestness to achieve that objective forthwith. Otherwise, if its riparian rights are jeopardized, or if its survival is imperilled, Egypt will be left with no alternative but to uphold and protect its inherent right to life, which is guaranteed by the laws and customs of nations and the imperatives of nature.

The fact that Egypt has brought this matter — which is of the greatest consequence — to the attention of the Security Council for a second time is a testament to our unshakable faith in the ideals of the Charter of the United Nations as expressed in its Preamble, which affirms our collective commitment to “practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours” and to “unite our strength to maintain international peace and security”.

We come here in search of a viable path towards a peaceful, amicable and negotiated solution to this crisis and to avert the dire consequences of our inability to reach a settlement to the matter. Our hope is that the Security Council will recognize the gravity of the situation and fulfil its responsibility to maintain international peace and security. Our expectation is that the Council will take the necessary measures to ensure that the parties engage in an effective process of negotiations that can yield an agreement that serves our collective interests.

Indeed, the people of Egypt — and peoples throughout the region — are watching the deliberations of the Security Council today with great interest and high hope. They look to the United Nations and to the Council as the guarantors of peace and the custodians of the collective will of our human family. They are confident that the Council will not fail in the discharge of its responsibilities in that regard.

It is in that spirit that I wish to underscore that, in executing the unique responsibility conferred upon the Security Council to maintain international peace and

security, the members of the Council are instructed, pursuant to Article 24 of the Charter, to act on behalf of the general membership of the United Nations and in furtherance of the noble purposes for which the Organization was established and the principles that guide and inspire its work.

It therefore behoves the members of the Council to consider the matter that is before us today not from the narrow lens of their respective national interests, but in the light of their collective responsibility to act on behalf of the international community to preserve the peace and uphold the principles of justice and equity.

Accordingly, Egypt calls upon the Security Council to adopt the draft resolution on the question of the GERD that was circulated by the Republic of Tunisia. As evident from the text of that draft resolution, we do not expect the Council to formulate solutions to the outstanding legal and technical issues, and neither do we request that the Council impose on the parties the terms of a settlement of a riparian dispute.

Rather, the draft resolution is political in nature. Its purpose, which we believe is eminently balanced and constructive, is to relaunch negotiations according to an augmented format that retains and enhances the leadership of the Chairperson of the African Union and that enables our international partners, including the United Nations, to use their expertise in this area to aid our three countries in their quest to conclude, within a reasonable time frame, an equitable agreement on the GERD.

Indeed, if anything, the draft resolution aims at implementing and effectuating the outcomes of the two meetings of the Bureau of the African Union Assembly that were held on the matter, which instructed the parties to expeditiously finalize, with the assistance of our partners attending those talks as observers, the text of a legally binding agreement on the filling and operation of the GERD and called upon them not to take unilateral measures that could jeopardize that process.

Adopting that draft resolution would reaffirm the Security Council's resolve to upholding its responsibility to maintain international peace and security and would send an unequivocal signal of reassurance that it remains committed to the peace and prosperity of our African continent — while a failure to take effective action on the question of the GERD would be a disheartening dereliction of duties.

Finally, I assure you, Mr. President, and members of the Council that Egypt will exert every effort to reach an agreement on the GERD that upholds the unbreakable bond of brotherhood between our countries and that reflects the timeless kinship among the peoples living along the banks of the Nile River. I call upon my colleagues, brothers and sisters in the Sudan and Ethiopia, to embrace that spirit and redouble our efforts to secure a future of peace and prosperity for our countries and our peoples.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan.

Mrs. Al Mahadi (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, at the beginning of this statement, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of July, and to wish you all the best. I also congratulate the Permanent Representative of Estonia on its success in presiding over the Council last month. I would like as well to express my thanks and appreciation to the members of the Council in general, and France in particular, for their generous response in organizing this meeting on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, which is an extremely important issue for my country and highlights the interest of the United Nations in partnering with the African Union and working to promote international peace and security in Africa and the world.

I thank Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa, and Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, for their valuable briefings. I also thank President Tshilombo Tshisekedi of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the statement delivered on his behalf. I appreciate all the other statements delivered by the members of the Council, to which I listened along with their valuable and useful proposals on the management of international rivers. I also salute my brothers Mr. Sameh Shoukry, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt, and Mr. Seleshi Bekele Awulachew, Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy of Ethiopia. I also salute my colleague who accompanies me, Professor Yasir Abbas, Minister of Irrigation and Water Resources of the Republic of the Sudan.

The Sudan expresses its appreciation for the role and efforts of the African Union since the beginning of its involvement in the process of negotiating with the three countries on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance

Dam. We highlight the leadership of the process by the African Union and continue to cooperate with it in that context, with the aim of finding a just and equitable solution that is accepted by all parties.

As we address the Security Council today, looking forward to its help and positive role in resolving this thorny conflict, we confirm at the outset that the Sudan recognized, and continues to recognize, the rights of neighbour Ethiopia in the current and future exploitation of the Nile waters. We have supported the Renaissance Dam from the outset and are well aware that its benefits will not be limited to neighbouring Ethiopia alone, provided that it is filled and operated under a legal agreement among the three countries in accordance with international law and the principles of equitable and reasonable exploitation of transiting water resources and without causing significant harm to downstream States, preserving the foundations of human rights and promoting the customs of good-neighbourliness between States.

We are aware of the benefits of the Renaissance Dam for the Sudan in terms of flood prevention and regular flow throughout the year. Those benefits will materialize if the Grand Dam is filled and operated in such a way that the Sudan is aware of how it is filled and operated, one of the applicable principles of well-established norms and laws in cross-border rivers all over the world. We in Africa have vivid and successful measures that have helped stabilize States sharing transboundary rivers, such as the example of the significant experience of four countries of West Africa that have continued to consistently and jointly manage the Senegal River since 1972. Another eight African countries have jointly operated the Niger River under a legally binding agreement since 1980.

However, without an agreement on filling and operating the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, the loss of its benefits could imperil half of the Sudan's population and all the population of Egypt. The Renaissance Dam — this huge African project — could serve as an ideal model for constructive cooperation for more than 250 million African citizens if it is used effectively and on the basis of cooperation and complementarity.

The Sudan has vast expanses of fertile and arable land that could provide the three countries, the region and the entire world with sustainable food security, electricity from Ethiopia and transformative processing

capabilities from Egypt. The three countries could also ensure the provision of qualified labour. The dam would offer an enlightening example of regional cooperation in that way.

The Sudan underscores the importance of a binding legal agreement on filling and operating the dam for the following reasons: first, safeguarding the security of the populations of the Sudan and Egypt; secondly, safeguarding Sudanese dams; and, thirdly, safeguarding the Sudan's strategic security.

A huge dam such as the Renaissance Dam — whose reservoir capacity is 74 billion cubic metres and which is located a few kilometres from the Sudanese borders and without coordinated safety measures with the communities living downstream — poses a direct threat to those communities and their security.

With regard to safeguarding the security of the population, millions of Sudanese have lived for thousands of years on the banks of the Nile and its tributaries. They rely mainly on river agriculture, but the Renaissance Dam could change their way of life and decrease the area of cultivatable floodplains by 50 per cent. It is a price that we are willing to pay as long as those communities are able to benefit from a regular flow of the Nile while enjoying protection from the devastating effects of flooding.

We cannot accept, however, that the filling and operating methods for the dam, adopted unilaterally, should be used to terrorize those citizens, undermine their dignity and violate their human rights, which Ethiopia did a few months ago by invoking its self-declared right to decide unilaterally on how to operate its dams. Since last November, Ethiopia has unilaterally closed the Tekezé dam on the Setit River, which originates in Ethiopia. That led to drought for a large area of land downstream.

In early June, Ethiopia once again unilaterally notified the Ministry of Irrigation of the Sudan that it would open the dam to allow the flow of nearly 2.5 billion cubic metres of water over a period of two weeks only. Consequently, the Ministry used the media to notify residents on the banks of the Setit River of the need to evacuate their homes within a mere three days. One can only imagine those people's panic and terror as a result of that decision.

Furthermore, last July Ethiopia filled the Renaissance Dam, for 2020, with 5 billion cubic

metres of water without prior notification, which led to a sudden drop in the water level of the Blue Nile and the stoppage of many water stations for more than three days in the capital Khartoum, not to mention the considerable economic and political consequences, which the entire world witnessed.

Finally, the Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy of Ethiopia sent a letter to us on 5 July confirming Ethiopia's determination to fill the dam for the second year in a row, although we notified them of the considerable damage that had occurred and would occur to the Sudan as a result of this unilateral filling.

Ethiopia has clearly demonstrated through its actions how it will behave towards Sudanese citizens in the absence of a legally binding agreement, in disregard of the rights of neighbourly countries, and use its capability to unilaterally operate the dams that stand on its territories in order to threaten the security and safety of the citizens of the Sudan.

Concerning the protection of Sudanese dams, the Roseires Sand Dam, as pointed out by Ms. Andersen, is located 100 kilometres from the Renaissance Dam and is less than one-tenth of its size in terms of water capacity. Along with other dams, it irrigates 70 per cent of the Sudan's agricultural projects and generates almost 40 per cent of the electricity in the Sudan. Therefore, without the regular and systematic provision of information on how the Renaissance Dam is to be filled and operated, the safety and the security of the Roseires Dam will be seriously jeopardized. Its ability to generate electricity and provide water for significant strategic projects, which is part of the Gezira project, as well as other projects on which the Sudan depends for its food security and agricultural investment, would be doomed to failure.

With regard to protecting the strategic security of the Sudan, as we underscored earlier, 70 per cent of the Sudan's existing irrigated agricultural projects depend on the country's dams in the Blue Nile basin. It is therefore vital for us to be kept up to date on the filling and operating of the Renaissance Dam in order for us to operate the Roseires Dam, so that the Sudan can plan now and in the future for its agricultural projects. As everyone is aware, the Sudan is currently open to the world following the success of its great revolution, made possible by the ultimate sacrifice of Sudanese youth and the courageous and tenacious leadership

of the women and men of the Sudan, which dazzled the world.

The Sudan has been removed from the list of State sponsors of terrorism. The Sudanese revolution succeeded in breaking us from the yoke of totalitarian rule, under which Sudanese had lived in terror. That rule targeted the communities of Darfur, the two regions and the eastern part of the Sudan. None of the Sudanese provinces were spared its criminal acts. The world celebrated the great revolution, undertaken by a civil-military partnership that represents the unique Sudanese model presented to the world. It managed to achieve peace by signing the Juba Peace Agreement.

The Sudan is determined to pursue its efforts towards achieving peace. The Prime Minister of the Sudan, Mr. Abdullah Hamdok, is currently chairing the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, where we are working to realize regional stability in East Africa and neighbouring countries in West Africa. The Sudan has carried out deep economic reforms based upon its faith in cooperation with the rest of the world. Indeed, at the Paris Conference, France celebrated the return of the Sudan to the international community and introduced it to the world delightfully by highlighting the opening of the Sudan to the world for constructive cooperation and smart partnerships in all areas, where agricultural investment would be preponderant.

Therefore, Ethiopia's attempt to disrupt the Sudan's agricultural capabilities by imposing its hegemony in a unilateral manner with regard to the filling and operating of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam is extremely dangerous and threatens our promising emerging agricultural renaissance and the Sudan's widespread strategic agricultural projects. Our relation with Ethiopia, which is our neighbour for better or worse, is characterized by a special relationship of cooperation, solidarity and concern to safeguard our common interests by strengthening relations between our two brotherly peoples, which means that together we need to go forward towards satisfying ends that maintain this relationship while Ethiopia puts a stop to further harm to the Sudan.

Based upon our faith in regional cooperation, the Sudan has participated, effectively and in good faith, in all the rounds of tripartite negotiations on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam since they began in 2011. I wish to underscore here the colossal efforts made by the Sudan to persuade its two neighbours, Egypt and

Ethiopia, to sign the Agreement on Declaration of Principles in Khartoum in March 2015.

We also wish to underline the initiative of Prime Minister Abdullah Hamdok in June 2020, which was aimed at continuing negotiations on the few remaining controversial issues following the end of the Washington, D.C., round in early 2020. The Sudan responded to the initiative of His Excellency the President of South Africa and former Chairperson of the African Union at its 2020 session to find an African solution to the dispute, as per the slogan “African solutions for African problems”.

The Sudan participated effectively in all the negotiating rounds, which lasted for more than six months. However, the failure to improve the negotiating mechanism by conferring a greater role on experts resulted once again in a failure to reach an agreement. Moreover, the Sudan maintained its positive involvement by participating in the last round called for by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and current Chairperson of the African Union.

In that regard, the Sudan submitted a proposal to bolster the African negotiation mechanism by granting it a mediation role under African Union leadership, with the participation of the United Nations, the European Union, the United States and South Africa, the latter three having been observers to preceding negotiations. However for the same reasons concerning Ethiopia’s intransigence and its rejection of all proposals put forward, that round was also unsuccessful.

We hope that the Council will assume its responsibilities in maintaining regional peace and security in a preventative way by strengthening the negotiations under the auspices of the African Union and by calling on the parties concerned to resume negotiations under the auspices of the African Union, while allowing international mediators and observers to assume their role so as to facilitate the negotiations and reach an agreement in accordance with a set time frame and to call on Ethiopia to abstain from any unilateral measure without prior agreement, which could pose a threat to millions of inhabitants behind the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.

Before I conclude, I should like to say unequivocally that this issue is before the Council today. It is a just and urgent cause. Members of the Council are called on to promote a process that continues to be hindered by obstacles. They can help the process easily and in

a cost-effective way by alleviating the suffering of the Sudanese people by ensuring that the filling and operating of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam happen pursuant to a comprehensive and legally binding agreement. No filling should take place without an agreement, which would have bad and harmful consequences for the Sudan.

However, silence from the Council would send a wrong message that a unilateral filling that harms the interests of the Sudan and the security of its people is acceptable. That might have serious consequences.

To conclude, having informed the Council of this issue with all its sovereign, legal, security and humanitarian implications, and the fact that it poses a serious threat to international peace and security and a direct challenge to the Council’s mandate under the Charter of the United Nations, we have given the Council an opportunity to shoulder its responsibilities and take diplomatic and preventive measures to bring the parties back to negotiations and promote the African action upon which all parties had agreed, while conferring a greater role on international facilitators in the context of strengthening partnership between the United Nations and the African Union.

Finally, the Sudan reaffirms its sincere commitment to participating in good faith in all efforts to reach a binding agreement that fulfils the interests of the three parties.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy of Ethiopia.

Mr. Awulachew (Ethiopia): Please accept my best wishes, Sir, as you steer the work of the Security Council for the month of July. I wish to extend my respectful greetings to the members of the Security Council and my heartfelt greetings to my brother Minister Selim and my sister Minister Al Mahadi. I recognize and thank Ms. Inger Andersen and Special Envoy Onanga-Anyanga for their participation. I also thank the representative of the African Union (AU) Chairperson for addressing this meeting.

At this meeting and deliberation of the Security Council, where a hydroelectric dam is under scrutiny in an unprecedented manner, I am not sure if I am not the first water minister to address the Security Council. Ethiopia believes this is an unfitting use of the time and resources of the Security Council to discuss the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). Nevertheless, it

is an honour for me to speak before this organ to voice the concerns and just causes of my country, Ethiopia.

A year ago, on 29 June 2020, under your presidency, Sir, Council members encouraged Ethiopia, Egypt and the Sudan to continue negotiations to resolve the outstanding issues and expressed support for the African Union-led process to facilitate further talks (see S/2020/636). Ethiopia took part in the negotiation with renewed commitment and good faith to reach a mutually acceptable, negotiated outcome under the auspices of the African Union.

I would like to pause to express special recognition and thanks to the Republic of South Africa for effectively facilitating the negotiation until the end of its African Union chairmanship in February 2021. Similarly, Ethiopia commends and stands with the Democratic Republic of Congo, current Chairperson of the African Union, for its relentless effort under trying circumstances, including the repeated disruption of the negotiations.

We are dealing with a hydroelectric dam project, which is not the first of its kind in Africa or in the world. We are building a reservoir to store water that will generate electricity by hitting turbines. For the Council's information, the GERD reservoir is two and half times smaller than that of the Aswan Dam in Egypt. Perhaps what makes the GERD distinctive as compared to other projects is the extent of hope and aspiration it generated for 65 million Ethiopians who have no access to electricity. It is also unique because the construction of this \$5 billion dam is financed by the blood, tears and sweat of ordinary Ethiopians. The GERD is the right dam built at the right place for the betterment of people in the broader region.

Our unfortunate inability to utilize the Nile River so far is deeply embedded in the psychology of our people. Two famous Ethiopian proverbs underscore that point. Roughly, they translate as "the irony of the tribulations of a poor man who stood in the middle of a river and lamented about experiencing extreme thirst". To change that generational lament, we have nowhere else to look but the Abbay or Nile basins, in which two thirds of Ethiopia's water resources are found. In this mighty river, which we share with our neighbours, our people saw hope to extricate themselves from darkness and march towards it by building the GERD.

The dam bears the fingerprints of Ethiopia's farmers, pastoralists, daily labourers, students, business-women

and men and the diaspora throughout the world who eke out a living in extremely difficult circumstances. In equal, if not exceeding, terms, Ethiopians have best wishes and neighbourly concern for their compatriots in Egypt and the Sudan. We have every intention to live together in peace and cooperate for our mutual benefit. The GERD demonstrates that core principle of collective well-being and prosperity. That is why the GERD is one of the regional integration projects under the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa.

Africa, the cradle of humankind, is currently the youngest continent in the world. Africa is set to reap its demographic dividend by investing in its youth. Similarly, 70 percent of Ethiopia's population is under the age of 30. More than 100,000 Ethiopians graduate from higher education every year. Moreover, over 30 million Ethiopians are currently in school at various levels of education. Catering to the needs of that growing population is an imperative and existential matter for my country.

The lives of Ethiopians who languish in the Sahara Desert attempting to cross into Europe; the migrants in the Middle East who sacrifice their youth to bring about a better day for their families; the young boys and girls in migrant prisons in Africa and beyond; the bare-footed migrants that one sees returning to their homeland in mass deportations from the Middle East — they all deserve a dignified life. The GERD is a people's project and our humble attempt to realize that dream. Against all odds, we chose to act, and act in spite of the arduous obstacles we faced. Instead of becoming enmired in those challenges, we struggled to prevail. Little by little, we are overcoming.

Unfortunately, we are here because Egypt and, most recently the Sudan, expressed its opposition to this hydroelectric dam. It is important to note that our two neighbours have large and small dams and canals they constructed with absolute disregard for the rights of other riparian countries and rejecting Ethiopia's repeated pleas for consultation. After a series of initiatives to address the concerns of our neighbours in good faith, we are compelled to conclude that their objection is not as such directed at the GERD, but rather to stop any water use by Ethiopia.

The fact of the matter is that we have no viable alternative. Unlike Egypt and the Sudan, Ethiopia has no considerable ground-water reserves. We also do not

have seawater to desalinate. Nearly 70 per cent of my country's water is in the Nile basin. Even if we wanted to, even if we tried, we cannot avoid utilizing the Nile River.

In fact, constructing dams is only part of our focus. Our main objective is to maximize our scarce water resources by rehabilitating nature and preventing further depletion through our Green Legacy Initiative — a prominent initiative of my Prime Minister, Mr. Abiy Ahmed. With an overall goal of planting 20 billion trees in five years' time, we planted 10 billion trees in past two years. This initiative, which also consists of seedling-sharing outreach with our neighbours, is part of the Green Belt Initiative of the African Union. We call upon Egypt and the Sudan to join this afforestation programme, which improves resilience and increases water availability.

Ethiopia believes that an agreement is within reach, given the necessary political will and the commitment to negotiate in good faith. We have already reached an understanding on a considerable number of the issues. The African Union is seized of the matter and is ably facilitating our negotiations, which is why it is regrettable that our sisterly countries opted to bring the matter to the Security Council.

I will not drag Council members into a discussion of issues despite my usual disposition to explain technical details on dams and hydrology. However, I want us to truly appreciate the subject matter we are compelled to discuss, and we are speaking of a hydroelectric dam.

For the first time since its establishment, the Security Council is being asked to pronounce itself on a water development project. The Security Council is a political and security organ. It is unhelpful and misguided to present to this global security body an issue that requires a hydrotechnical solution.

It must also be clear that the underlying problem for the differences among the three countries — Ethiopia, Egypt and the Sudan — is the quest to preserve the colonial and monopolistic status quo over the Nile. The approach of trying to solve problems using the mindset that created them is what blocks our consensus on the GERD.

The Security Council is faced with the question of determining whether or not Ethiopians have the right to utilize the Nile River. On behalf of all Ethiopians, I implore our friends in the Security Council and in the

wider international community to answer this question: do Ethiopians have the right to drink from the Nile?

As a point of information, allow me to share with the Council the most recent status of the African Union-led negotiations. On 24 June 2021, the AU Bureau of Assembly convened a meeting to discuss various issues, including the GERD. The President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, His Excellency Mr. Félix Tshisekedi, briefed the Bureau and introduced his plans for the upcoming negotiations. Unfortunately, the Republic of the Sudan did not attend that high-level meeting. With the absence of the Sudan in the 24 June Bureau meeting, the two countries — Egypt and the Sudan — have blocked nine meetings between us since June 2020.

We should have learned by now that Ethiopia does not respond well to undue political pressure and interference. Ethiopia will continue to exercise maximum restraint and showcase cooperation because we are forever linked by this majestic river. Whether we like it or not, we will continue to drink from the same river and must learn to live together as neighbours.

I reiterate Ethiopia's long-standing commitment to the AU-led process, which is underpinned by a belief that Africans have the wisdom, the technical expertise and, most importantly, the agency to address their challenges. We believe that the phased approach proposed by President Félix Tshisekedi, the Chairperson of the African Union, could help us work towards resolving the quagmire created by the colonial heritage in the Nile basin that Egypt and the Sudan are determined to preserve.

Allow me also to address the much-talked-about second-year filling of the GERD. The second-year filling of the GERD is happening in July and August of this year. We have proactively provided the necessary data on the modalities for the filling of the dam. Let me be clear: the filling of the GERD is part of the construction process. This is clearly stipulated in the Agreement on Declaration of Principles on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam our three heads of State signed in March 2015.

The filling of the dam is pure physics. Once the dam concrete reaches a certain height, the water either flows through the bottom outlets or flows over the concrete. As designed, the dam will store water until it reaches the 13.5 billion cubic meters indicated in the filling schedule agreed to by Egypt and the Sudan. It is

only fair that a country that generates 77 billion cubic meters of water impounds a small fraction of the annual inflow for its hydroelectric dam.

Egypt and the Sudan do not need any convincing as to the fortunes they will acquire upon the completion of the dam. In the wise words of Sudanese officials, the GERD is an instrument of regional integration. The GERD is for the Sudan what the High Aswan Dam is for Egypt.

In this context, I am now going out of my way to explain to the Council the absence of any threat caused by the GERD. However, we should not even have to litigate the benefits Egypt and the Sudan will acquire from the GERD to argue for our legitimate share from the Nile. All of us — the Nile riparian countries — are there to share both the bounty and the scarcity. None of us ought to stand thirsty watching the others drink. Through the GERD, Ethiopia is summoning this common sense to prevail in the Nile basin. Therefore, the Security Council should not be dragged into the GERD negotiations, in the expedient pursuit of domestic political objectives, for example.

If the Council consents to the path proffered by Egypt and the Sudan, it will certainly be entangled with resolving disputes on all transboundary rivers. Interestingly, other than one island sisterly country of ours, all members of the Security Council have transboundary watercourses. They have dealt with and continued to address differences bilaterally and through basin-wide efforts.

The GERD talks and the process we have undergone since 2011 has taught us a major lesson. Hopefully, this process will nudge us to work towards a regional mechanism on the Nile basin. In this regard, it would be regrettable for the Council to circumvent this hope by unhelpful precedent whereby Member States impose through the Council what they should acquire through good-faith negotiations. The Council should resist concerted efforts to turn it into an appellate body on transboundary-river negotiations.

Colonialism and colonial treaties thwarted Africa's ability in utilize its natural resources for the benefit of its peoples. The Nile basin countries have recognized

this problem and worked towards addressing it. In 1999, we established the Nile Basin Initiative, and in 2010, after 13 years of negotiations, we adopted the Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) on the Nile. In the Framework Agreement, which many Council members have financially and technically supported, the Nile basin countries agreed to share Nile water in an equitable and reasonable manner. We replaced the colonial and monopolistic claims with accepted principles of international law. This instrument is now awaiting two more ratifications before it can enter into force.

The insatiable demands of Egypt and, more recently, the Sudan are not about the moot issue of the GERD but about future development projects in Ethiopia and the other riparian countries. Without an effective CFA and a regional mechanism, similar issues will inevitably be brought to the Security Council. Today, it is Ethiopia's dam; tomorrow, it could come from any one of the Nile basin countries.

The Nile belongs to all the people of the Nile basin countries — all the half billion of us in the 11 riparian countries. There is water enough for all of us. In this regard, we urge our Egyptian and Sudanese brothers and sisters to understand that a resolution to the Nile issue will not come from the Security Council; it can only come from good-faith negotiations with due care for each other's well-being and development. Ethiopia looks forward to continuing the AU-led trilateral negotiations on the GERD. We have the solutions at hand, and we can herald good news to the world by concluding a mutually acceptable outcome.

Finally, allow me to respectfully request the Council to return this matter to the able and legitimate leadership of the African Union and to encourage Egypt and the Sudan to seriously and faithfully negotiate to reach a negotiated settlement on the first filling and annual operations of the GERD. We also request the Council to make this meeting the last of its deliberations on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. There is no subject matter as far from the mandate of the Council as this one.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.