

The ‘Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam’

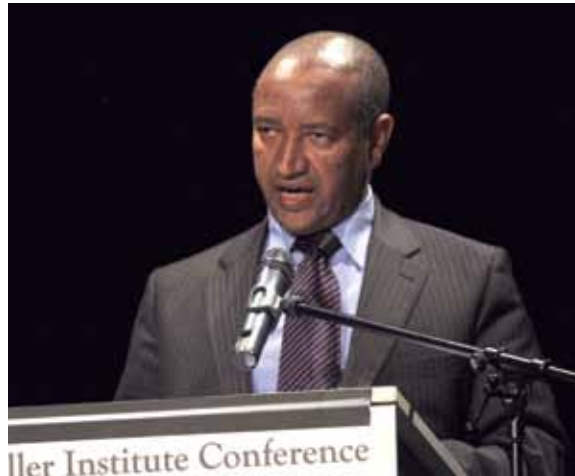
Mulugeta Zewdie Michael, Consul General of Ethiopia in Frankfurt, Germany, addressed the Schiller Institute Conference on Nov. 25.

I thank the organizers who created an opportunity for me to present here, in the framework of big projects that could change the status of the world economy, to give as an example, the “Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam” project.

Before that, I just want to give you some background, of why we came to the conclusion of constructing the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the Nile River.

Ethiopia is the source of the Blue Nile, which, together with the White Nile, goes into the Nile to Egypt. Now, it is obvious that this kind of waterway, which has an international course, has to be regulated in an agreement among all riparian countries. However, there were two agreements, among only three countries between 1951 and 1957, and these were between Sudan and Egypt, and the third country was a British colony, as usual.

Now, this has to be changed. It should not be changed to the detriment of Egypt or other countries, but it should be changed, in a framework of



Mulugeta Zewdi Michael, Consul General of Ethiopia, addresses the Schiller Institute conference: “There can be no turning back from the grandest of all projects, namely, to pull Ethiopia out of the quagmire of poverty.”

FIGURE 1
The White Nile and Blue Nile Rivers



using all the resources available, equitably and justifiably.

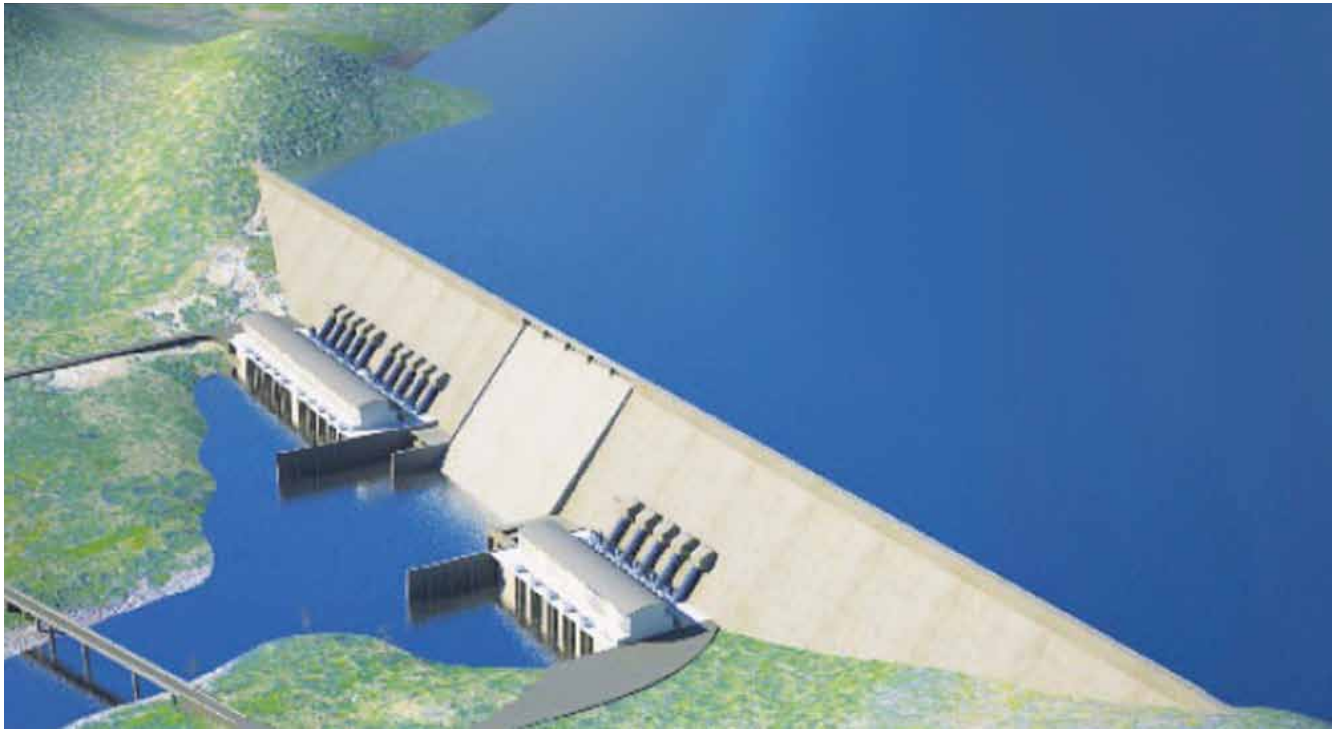
So, in this framework, we have been negotiating, for the last 10 years, under the auspice of the Nile Basin Initiative. All 10 riparian countries of the Nile were negotiating for the last 10 years, in order to arrive at a result, that will satisfy all of them.

What we have reached, after 10 years of negotiating, is that there will be a Nile Basin Commission, whose headquarters will be in Uganda, which is going to oversee projects among these 10 riparian countries. And that is what we were looking for. Not to use all the resources for ourselves only, and then to let the others be driven into poverty, but to use it equitably, justifiably, among all of us, and to bring harmony among the African nations.

So, this is the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. The decision to build the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam is a central element in our country’s ambitious growth and transformation plan.

A Third-Millennium ‘Renaissance’

Now, why do we call it “Renaissance”? We now find ourselves in the Third Millennium. It is believed, and it is also in the history books of the world, that in the First Millennium, Ethiopia was among the decision-makers in the world. It was a bread-basket; whereas, when we come to the Second Millennium, it is public knowledge where Ethiopia has found itself: poverty, hunger, famine, to the point that the *Oxford Dictionary* just changed its entry, some two or three weeks ago, such that if you



The Renaissance Dam will create opportunities for all those who have been “committed to the eradication of poverty in Ethiopia, and a world of cooperation among the countries of the Nile Basin and the Horn of Africa.”

try to find the meaning of the word “famine” in the *Oxford Dictionary*, you will find written, as an example, Ethiopia.

So, now, this history should be changed, categorically. Ethiopia cannot see, forever, its population facing hunger, famine, and war. But, there is a solution in its own hands. This was one of the solutions.

This Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, we believe, will also bring Ethiopia again into the position where it was in the First Millennium—a renaissance of Ethiopia. It will help mobilize the necessary resources, to unlock economic development, by exporting power to the neighboring countries, and demonstrate the government’s commitment to strengthen cooperation and equitable utilization by all the riparian Nile states, and the benefits that will accrue to all of them.

As the late Prime Minister Meles [Zenawi] has indicated, Sudan and Egypt have much to gain from owning the projects, and from co-owning the projects. Now, that is what we are looking for.

According to the late prime minister, the solution was to finance the project, 50% by Ethiopia, 30% by Egypt, 20% by Sudan. Why? Because, as my colleague

Aiman Rsheed knows, Egypt and Sudan, even though they utilize the Nile River, at the same time, they face also some problems. What are the problems? Egypt is, for example, losing to the deserts, some 10 billion cubic meters of water. It is not used by Egypt; it just evaporates. And then, Egypt’s dams also have their water decreasing from time to time, because of soil [deposits], when the dams are more and more filled by soil, and then start having less and less water.

Sudan: Every rainy season—there are three months of rainy season in Ethiopia—within these three months, Sudan suffers from floods. The water is flowing too high on the Nile; the capital city of Khartoum becomes flooded every year.

Building this Ethiopian Grand Renaissance Dam, on the site where it is now chosen to be, will solve the problem of Egypt, the problem of Sudan, and it will also be useful for Ethiopia, which will bring it again back to normal. That’s why it is suggested that it has to be co-owned, by three countries, co-financed by three of them, and used under the principle of equitable and justifiable use of international water courses.

The message that this project sends, is very clear: There can be no turning back from the grandest of all

projects, namely, to pull Ethiopia out of the quagmire of poverty. Equally, this will create opportunities for all those who have been reluctant to participate in the past; to think again, and become involved in this monument to the peoples of Ethiopia, and to their lasting commitment to the eradication of poverty in Ethiopia, and a world of cooperation among the countries of the Nile Basin and the Horn of Africa.

Hydroelectric Power

Ethiopia's long-term potential for exploitable energy is estimated at about 60,000 MW, with hydro-power providing 45,000 MW; geothermal, 10,000 MW; and wind and other energy sources, some 5,000 MW. However, of the 45,000 MW hydropower potential, Ethiopia has so far used only 2,000 MW. Now, you can imagine the potential that could have, to bring us out of poverty in Ethiopia.

In the meantime, to fill the needs of the current plans, for the next five years, it has been necessary to initiate a number of energy developments, one of which is the Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.

Before this dam, there was another one, which we have seen also in the past presentation, the Gilgel Gibe III Dam, which generates some 1,870 MW, which is now under attack by the so-called environmentalists, the green politicians, especially what you call "Survival International." It is anybody's guess who would be financing this NGO to attack Ethiopia over the use of its own water.

The objectives of this project are to generate electric power. This Renaissance Dam will generate, when it is finished, some 6,000 MW of hydroelectric power. When all the projects that are now in the pipeline are finished, we will accomplish the production of some 10,000 MW of electricity. The potential is higher, but even within this limit, 10,000 MW, we believe that we will not only use it ourselves, but electricity can be exported to the neighboring countries, far into Egypt; and it can go, over the next years, across the Mediterranean. And we have, we believe, the potential of exporting hydroelectric power, including across the Mediterranean Sea, and to other southern European countries.


Now, you can see that a country having a huge potential to develop, could not develop. Why is this? And this is, I think, within the framework of what we are discussing: I think, things are not working correctly, and that has to be changed. One way of changing ourselves, from the Ethiopian side, is going in this way, for

example, concentrating on big projects, that could benefit not only Ethiopia, but the whole of Africa, as we have witnessed with the past presentation by my colleague Aiman Rsheed, which is also to the benefit of all African nations.

The other point that I want to stress here, is: We do not believe, and we have also witnessed it here, basically, that the markets could be left to decide themselves. We don't believe in that. We believe that it has to be regulated. The states have to have also a balanced hand to regulate the markets, and it is in that framework that we have been working for the last 20 years now.

A New Ethiopia

It is public knowledge, what Ethiopia looked like some 20 years ago, and what it looks like now. We speak about a new Ethiopia, now, on the basis of the economic policy we have followed. We have accomplished, for example, that Ethiopia has registered, for the last eight years, consecutively, an average of 11% economic growth. And we believe that such projects, again, will bring us into a bright future, where we can save also the next generation.



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