

# Hydropower

**By Sanday Chongo Kabange**

Continued economic developments across the continent have necessitated the need to expedite the implementation of a massive hydro power project by the African Union (AU).

The project dubbed 'Hydropower 2020' is an initiative of the African Union that seeks to increase power generation capacity for Africa and enhance socio-economic development across the continent.

Studies have shown that Africa has enormous potential for hydropower development because of its adequate water resources both perennial and non-perennial which needs to be harnessed for socio-economic development.

However, lack of financial support and ever-increasing infrastructure developments in Africa have inhibited the continent's ability to exploit these vast natural resources.

It is for this reason that through the financial support of the European Union (EU), the AU has commenced the upgrading of the continent's power generation capacity, in order to meet growing demand for electricity and clean energy.

The EU has offered to finance the project, with an initial financial support of 10 million Euros. The Hydropower 2020 project will target identified sites in different parts of the continent.

AU Commission chairman Jean Ping has indicated that remarkable progress has been made towards the Hydropower 2020 project.

Ping told the 14th AU Summit currently underway in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Abba that

"I would like to point out that the Hydropower 2020 of which the European Union has promised to finance to the tune of 10 million euro is currently underway. Let me salute the World Bank for accepting to facilitate the final implementation of these regional projects of which once completed they will enhance development on our continent," Ping said.

Feasibility studies for setting up hydropower stations are being carried out at Inga dam in Democratic Republic of Congo, Gilgel Gibe in East Africa, OMVG in West Africa and Kafue Gorge Lower in southern Africa.

Africa has 14 per cent of the world's population but only 4 per cent of the global energy. Majority of Africans live in rural areas using traditional

biomass for cooking. Though Africa has enormous potential for hydropower development, financial constraints have always come in its way.

According to the 2008 Ministerial Conference on Water for Agriculture and Energy in Africa, the total installed capacity is 21 000MW, 90 per cent of which are concentrated in eight countries namely Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Gabon, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Zambia, Madagascar and Mozambique.

Currently, Africa's installed hydropower capacity is about 20.3GW with a total generation from hydro plant of about 76 000 GWh/year. Comparison with the gross theoretical hydropower potential of 4 000, 000 indicates that the current production of hydropower in Africa is about 20 per cent of the total potential.

Technically feasible hydropower potential of Africa is around 1 750TWh which is about 12 per cent of the global capacity. Only 5 percent of this technically feasible potential is exploited. Hydropower potential of the continent is estimated around 100 000 MW, the bulk of which can be found in the INGA in the Congo basin.

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