

Editorial

Obsolete 'Historical rights'

In what could be said a continuation of its centuries-old madness, Egypt is engaged in manipulative fantasies of the colonial era Nile agreement. Sugarcoated them as historical rights, Cairo is toiling and leaving no stone unturned to keep the obsolete yet unfair colonial accords alive.

Egypt's lopsided position is putting a barrier to regional cooperation in the Nile Rivers. For other Nile riparian countries, Egypt's claims of irrelevant historical rights are nothing but historical injustice. These inappropriate historical rights are contradicting with the values of the 21st-century notion of common resource management and the principle of a win-win approach.

For centuries, Egypt emboldened by its paymasters has been unfairly benefiting from the common resources unchallenged and undisputed. While the country has been using the Nile in monopoly, other member countries including Ethiopia that is origin of the River have been bystanders languishing in darkness.

Setting a practical example, Ethiopia has been leading efforts to ensure fair and equitable utilization of the longest river in the world. In 2011, Ethiopia launched the construction of the Abbay Dam which has a multitude of regional benefits. Side by side, the country also invited downstream countries for negotiation to address any concerns and create mutual understanding. Over the years, there have been headways that can be seen as breakthroughs. The inking of the Declarations of Principles and Memorandum of Understandings are savvy instances.

Though the Abbay Dam is a national and sovereign project solely funded and constructed by Ethiopians, the country has been doing its level best not only to bring the downstream countries on board but also to find a common ground where the three countries would be able to benefit from the colossal dam. In spite of the positive trends, Egypt remained a stumbling block hindering efforts to reach in mutual agreements on outstanding issues over the Abbay Dam.

In contradiction, Egypt has been dragging its feet in terms of setting new initiatives and digging on its heels to maintain the status quo of injustice. The country's acts are a sharp contrast to Ethiopia's amicable and genuine approach. Ethiopia over the years went to Washington, Cairo, and Khartoum to negotiate with the downstream countries, an indication of the country's unshakable stance to resolve disputes or concerns through diplomacy and peaceful means. However, the country's gestures went largely unreciprocated by Egypt. This week, Egypt continued in its usual propaganda and ill-advised acts hindering renewed talks on the Abbay Dam.

Egypt should stop unfounded propaganda and media campaigns as the differences with respect to the dam can only be resolved through negotiation, so said the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) Negotiation Team leader Ambassador Sileshi Bekele (PhD).

The team leader and Ethiopia's Ambassador to the United States briefed the media following the conclusion of the fourth round of negotiations on the GERD. The entire negotiation process has been progressive despite some divergence, Sileshi said. Therefore, the team leader has asked the downstream countries to return to the negotiation table. According to him, the dam is a great blessing for the downstream countries as it releases more water from the reservoir during drought. If there is a drought, it will release some water from the dam reservoir.

Ethiopia has no intention to use Nile water alone as an upstream country, adding "We have pushed for a dream together to bring regional integration."

Ethiopia has not taken a rigid position and the country will reinforce efforts to have development on the Nile River without harming the countries and ensure transparency in the negotiation. Egypt, in contrast, maintained a colonial era mentality and erected roadblocks against efforts toward convergence.

Ethiopia has been willing to enhance confidence and build trust among the three countries from the get-go. But, it should be clear that the country has the right to utilize the waters of the Nile on the principle of no harm. And the last couple of years are solid testimonies in the regard.

Opinion

AfCFTA - an opportunity to pursue climate policies

BY STAFF REPORTER

"As we strive to harness the potential of the AfCFTA, it is essential that we do so in a manner that safeguards our natural ecosystem, promotes renewable energy and mitigates the impact of climate change" Mr. Claver Gatete, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission of for Africa (ECA) has said in remarks made on his behalf by Melaku Desta, Coordinator of the ECA's Africa Trade Policy Centre (ATPC) at a COP 28 side event themed: "Africa's Trade and Green Transition: A Continentally Coordinated Approach."

Mr. Desta said ECA and Centre d'Etudes Prospectives et d'Informations Internationales (CEPII) conducted a study - Greening the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement's Implementation - with a view to shedding light on important findings regarding the implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement and parallel adoption of climate policies. It examines how the implementation of AfCFTA agreement can be aligned with green principles, renewable practices and low carbon strategies.

"The study was conducted against the backdrop of a growing need to consider the impact on the environment as the continent moves towards greater economic integration and take proactive measures to mitigate any negative consequences."

"Africa is being negatively impacted by climate change despite contributing a small amount to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Currently, Africa accounts for approximately 7% of total global GHG emissions from carbon dioxide and other gasses. GHG emissions in Africa are forecasted to grow faster over the next decades than in other parts of the world, although starting from a relatively low level currently," said Mr. Desta, adding that as per the study, emissions could rise to nearly 12% by 2045 based on current trends. If large emitting countries implement policies to transition to clean energy, Africa's economic costs to export goods to those countries could increase.

The AfCFTA creates opportunities for the continent to industrialize and transform through increased trade and as stressed at the session, the AfCFTA stands as a beacon of hope for fostering intra-African trade, economic integration and shared prosperity."

There are concerns, however, that it could add pressure to climate change through increased manufacturing and transportation use, among others. Analysis shows intra-African trade could be 35% higher in 2045 with AfCFTA agreement in place, as compared to without AfCFTA. About two-thirds of the absolute intra-African trade gains would benefit industrial sectors supporting economic transformation. Supporting this increased trade will require major investments in transportation

infrastructure to meet the AfCFTA needs which would be well over 2 million trucks, 100,000 rail cars, 150 vessels and 250 aircraft.

Presenting the key findings, Simon Mevel, Economic Affairs Office at the ECA said they analyzed the impact of implementing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement on Africa's GHG emissions. They also assessed implications of pursuing climate policies like Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and carbon pricing in parallel with AfCFTA Agreement's implementation.

The Key Findings of the study are: Implementing AfCFTA can boost intra-African trade by 35% in 2045 while increasing GHG emissions less than 1%, compared to no AfCFTA or climate policies, AfCFTA and Africa's climate objectives are compatible. Adopting climate policies with AfCFTA could reduce GHG emissions by 25% while still increasing intra-African trade by 31-34% (depending on climate policy considered). Pricing carbon in Africa seems to be an effective and efficient mechanism to help African countries meeting their climate objectives defined under their NDCs, and Climate policies can also help accelerate Africa's renewable energy transition. Pursuing climate policies with AfCFTA could increase Africa's renewable energy use 5-12% in 2045 compared to no AfCFTA or climate policies.

The analysis further showed continental coordination on climate policies through carbon pricing produces better outcomes than uncoordinated approaches like existing NDCs. This suggests African countries can provide an effective African-driven response to address climate change by working together.

The main objective of this research is to help stakeholders - member States and green investors better understand the expected impacts of adopting climate policies in Africa and how those interact with the AfCFTA.

Panelists included Ms. Faten Aggad, Advisor, climate diplomacy and multilateralism, who suggested a phased approach could be considered for carbon pricing in Africa.

Mr. Rashid Kaukab, Senior Specialist, Trade and Sustainable Development, International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) said that the poverty and employment impacts of climate policies shouldn't be overlooked, while Mr. Babajide Sodipo, Senior Manager, Export Development Advisory, Afreximbank, emphasized the need for innovating financing mechanisms for the success of Africa's energy transition.

Participants attending the side event acknowledged the conversation is "a timely reminder of the need to find a balance between trade and climate for the benefit of Africa's future."

Editor's Note: The views entertained in this article do not necessarily reflect the stance of The Ethiopian Herald



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