



United Nations  
Economic Commission for Africa

## **Concept Note**

**High Level Conference on “*Transboundary Natural Resources Disputes in Africa: Policies, Institutions and Management Experiences*”**

**12 – 13 July 2018**

**Nairobi, Kenya**

## **Introduction & Background**

Africa is endowed with considerable natural resources both renewable and non-renewable, where only a fraction of these resources are put to use. Therefore, natural resources can potentially be major contributors to economic growth and poverty reduction. At a larger synthesis, natural resources can be a curse or a blessing depending on the governance and management arrangements adopted by the respective countries.

Intra state conflicts over natural resources are well-documented and have dominated much of the academic and policy debate on the root causes of conflict in Africa. However, little attention has been given to current and potential inter-state conflicts over transboundary resources. It is worthwhile noting that competition over and scramble for natural resources between the industrialized and industrializing countries created an incentive for the control of these resources by national and international players. As African countries have embarked on the path of structural economic transformation and industrialization, their demand for natural resources including non-renewables will also increase. One of the consequences of increased demand for natural resources is that it can potentially lead to the re-emergence of old boundary disputes or the emergence of new conflicts over transboundary renewable and non-renewable resources.

To be sure, as the demand for commodities and natural resources increases, so is competition between states over transboundary natural resources for local use, national development and export increases. For example, the evolution of the Democratic Republic of Congo conflict from national to regional conflict engulfing the Great Lakes region is testimony to postulate that intra-state disputes can develop into inter-state conflicts. The 2012 war and protracted conflicts between Sudan and South Sudan (a year after it has gained independence from Sudan) over the oil rich Abyei region is a war over transboundary resources.

The current ongoing dispute between Ghana and Ivory Coast over old maritime border disputes as Ghana began oil exploration and production in Jubilee Field in the Atlantic Ocean is another relevant example of these types of transboundary discords, related to natural resources. Similarly, Somalia took Kenya to the International Court of Justice over oil and gas rich maritime borders. The conflict over the maritime border between the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Angola began when the DRC government contested Angola's request to extend the length of its continental shelf by more than 200 miles at stake are billions of barrels of oil. The long-standing dispute between the Nile Basin countries, or Nigeria Niger perpetual flare of tensions over damming Niger River for hydroelectric power are cases in point. These are only a few examples of active transboundary disputes over natural resources, which are found in other parts of the continent, where border disputes will erupt once high value natural resources are discovered.

### **I. Rationale**

As part of ECA's new strategic direction in facilitating the transformative development of Africa, the Capacity Development Division (CDD) has been tasked with this landmark assignment of preparing a series of regional studies on conflict, as part of its mandate to provide a focused and coherent capacity development support to build and strengthen the capabilities of member states and Pan-African institutions to achieve sustainable development. The

Governance and Human Security Cluster of ECA's budding Capacity Development Division (CDD) was charged with the responsibility to execute this very important assignment, within the framework of the Division's mandate to provide focused and coherent capacity development support to member states and Pan-African institutions such as the African Union.

The proposed High Level Policy Dialogue aims to enable Member States to identify with the proposed policy options in the policy paper, recognize gaps in current practices and hone in on the core elements of such policies that are pertinent to their efforts to prevent and manage conflict as well as post conflict reconstruction. Policy dialogues constitute one of six capacities avail evidence-based knowledge where the ECA contributes to informed debates leading to the advancements of peace and security, regional integration and structural transformation. The overall objective within this knowledge-policy framework is to articulate well-targeted policy options based on ground-breaking research and evidences.

In achieving the objectives of its broad conflict and development research programmes, the ECA has decided to organize a High level policy Dialogue on *Transboundary Natural Resources Disputes in Africa: Policies, Institutions and Management Experiences by launching its publication*. It is hoped that this High-Level Policy Dialogue create an opportunity for RECs and countries to the knowledge contained in the Reports and exchange experience pertaining to their own strategies and policy responses to the nexus between conflict and development.

## II. Objectives

The proposed High Level Policy Dialogue aims to enable key stakeholders and member states to fully appreciate the findings of this study. More specifically, the objectives of the High level are as follows:

- Enable High Level Policy Makers to exchange country and cross-country policy experiences and lessons learned;
- Map the magnitude and patterns of conflict-sensitive transboundary resources;
- Analyze and explain the current policies and practices pertaining to the management of transboundary resources; and
- Draw up conclusions and recommendations relevant to the prevention and management of conflicts over transboundary resources.
- Facilitate the exchange of views and country experiences (successes, challenges and lessons) in the design and implementation of policies on the impact and cost of conflict on development within and outside of Africa;
- Inform the potential for undertaking tailored context-specific and cross-country advisory services based on the outcome of the discussions; and
- Serve as a platform for rebuilding a Pan-African network at the most senior policy and technical levels on conflict and development

### **III. Structure of Dialogue**

The deliberations and discussions during the High Level Policy Dialogue will be structured around the substance of the findings of the study. It adopts interactive sessions allowing for an engaged and critically constructive discussions on the findings of the studies and the experiences of the stakeholders. This Dialogue will be co-hosted by the Foreign Service Institute of Kenya Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

### **IV. Participants**

The participants at this High Level Policy Dialogue, include representatives from member states, staff members of AU commission, Special envoys, members of the Peace and Security Council of the Africa Union, as well as select numbers of experts, academia, think tanks, research institutions, UN agencies and development partners.

### **V. Dates and Venue**

The High Level Dialogue will be held on **12 and 13 July 2018** in Nairobi, Kenya.

### **VI. Contact Persons/Addresses**

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