

THE SIGNIFICANCES OF THE GRAND ETHIOPIAN RENAISSANCE

DAM¹

. . . among the concerns we factored in when we made the decision to build the Nile Dam with our own resources, was to avoid any negative consequences for our neighbors and indeed to offer positive benefits for all of them. I would dare to say that nothing can provide a better testimony of our deepest commitment to forge a lasting partnership between all the Nile Basin riparian countries than the building of (GERD). On this occasion, therefore, we, the peoples of Ethiopia, call upon all the peoples of the Nile Basin to turn over to a new page of cooperation and solidarity. As we in Ethiopia build this Dam with the aim of eradicating poverty, let it be known to all that it will also stand as an expression of our commitment to the benefit of all the countries of the Nile Basin.²

1. GENERATING FOREIGN EARNING AND ACCELERATING THE PACE OF THE ECONOMIC GROWTH

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance dam will have an interwoven effect on Ethiopia economy. Some studies indicated that **a unit percent increase in energy supply** could lead to an increase in the **economic growth at least by one percent**. Besides, the availability of energy supply facilitates the application of modern technology, transform the agricultural sector and for bringing structural change in the industrial sector. Earnings from energy marketing diversifies export earnings of the country and reduces the shortage of foreign reserve. According to a study from Addis Ababa

¹*Wuhibegezer Ferede and Dereje Tekelemariam, 2014*

²Speech addressed by Late Prime Minister Meles at the official commencement of the GERD project in 02 April 2011 at Guba: accessed at <http://grandmillenniumdam.net/the-dam-speech>

University, GERD could generate around one Billion USD in a year³ that would be a very helpful income for Ethiopia in light of decreasing the trade balance deficit and in accelerating the pace of the war on poverty.

The GERD is also expected to create a reservoir area of about 1,680km² and 15m depth which adds a new opportunity for **the fishery sector of the nation**. Furthermore, the dam ends with an establishment of a water reservoir that will be a **buffer zone for the expanding Sahara desert** and a useful corridor for wild life.

In the short run, the project creates an employment opportunity for about 7,500 citizens and in the long run, it is expected to have mega employment and further trickledown benefits in the economy.

2. UNCHAIN OUR MIND FROM ‘POVERTY OF THINKING’

Creating sense of possibility of doing other forms of projects and technological transfer is the other fundamental contribution of GERD project. In this regard, GERD is the beginning not the end of the projects which Ethiopia deserves to construct to sustain the momentum of change. In order to achieve its long term goal of being regional energy supplier, Ethiopia initiated its 25-year Master Plan for Building Hydroelectric Dams along its 12 river basins.⁴ Therefore, the experience

³Yilma Sileshi, 2013

⁴http://www.huffingtonpost.com/daniel-nisman/chinas-african-water-scra_b_2248874.html

gained from the GERD will be harnessed for the completion of the forthcoming energy generating projects.

3. REINSTITUTING THE NEW ETHIOPIAN SELF

The implication of construction of the GERD is not merely process of arresting water for producing ample energy rather it's the signal for the reinstating of the new Ethiopian self which had been relegated in the dustbin of history. It's very important to regain the lost self and to unchain our mind from 'poverty of thinking'. The new glorified self of Ethiopia will reign to the change agents and the generation to come.

It's very critical also in the establishment of new ideational power by consolidating the sense of the invincibility of Ethiopians. The invisible lions, who had chased out series of aggressors including Egypt, had been defeated with an enemy embedded in self-thinking. Therefore GERD will serve as a seal of all the battles the country had ever fought. It's more remarkable than the battle of Adwa where by Ethiopia has experienced military victories but economic defeat all together. As in the heroic move during the battle of Adwa, the current invincibility of Ethiopians should be expressed in harnessing all the penny we have at hand to GERD so that it will

culminate being an emblem of our national pride. Hence, instead of concentrating on short-term difficulties, it's important to envision the prospect of hope ahead for mobilizing the local resource for we couldn't uplift ourselves with a free lunch. Forgoing subsidiary motives is mandatory.

4. FERMENTING THE TIDE OF MULTICULTURAL ETHIOPIAN NATIONALISM

At the conclusion of the Aswan High Dam Site in 1964, Nasser in his speech intended for stringing up Egyptian nationalism, he stated as *"here are joined the political, social, national and military battles of the Egyptian people, welded together like the gigantic mass of rock that has blocked the course of the ancient Nile. Its waters now spill into the largest lake shaped by human kind and which will be an everlasting source of prosperity."*⁵ Thus, the High Dam was deeply entrenched in the overall Egyptian political psyche and hence it's referred as agent for "a birth of a **psychological state**."⁶

⁵Waterbury, 1979:98

⁶Ibid:116

In a similar fashion, GERD could serve for fermenting the tide of multicultural Ethiopian nationalism. Hence uninterrupted and very aggressive awareness creation for boosting the Ethiopian national solidarity needs to be undertaken. This is a very important tool for mobilizing and awakening the peoples of Ethiopian and strengthening their determination to protect their unique identity and national interest. The government has to stir up strong sense of Ethiopian Nationalism embedded in the Nile so that the road towards the establishment of multicultural, multilingual, multi religious but united and prosperous Ethiopia as its indicated in the very preamble of the FDRE constitution could be ephemeral.

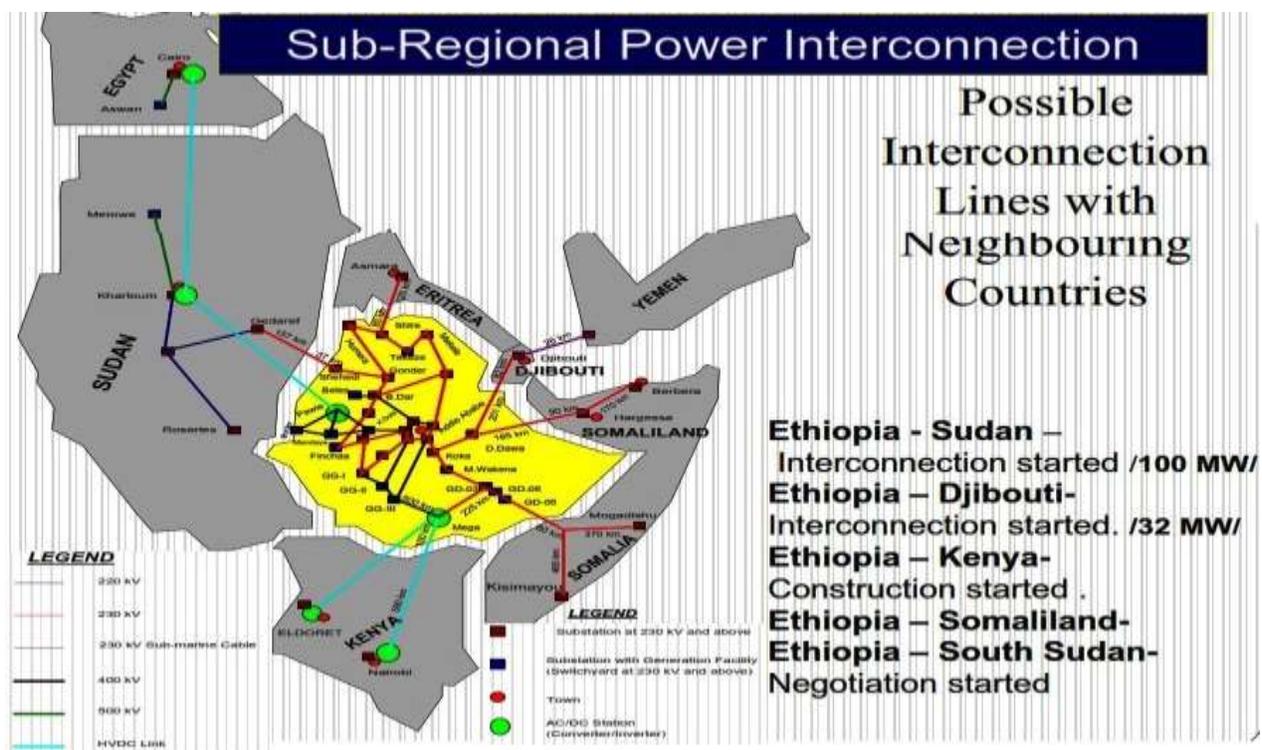
5. REDUCING CARBON EMISSION

It is evident that hydropower provides a clean energy and by doing so countries which invest in such energy sources are contributing towards the mitigation of climatic shocks. Ethiopia is an exemplar growing economy in Africa which is striving for meeting its national goal of achieving economic growth with a net zero carbon release by the year 2025.

6. ACCELERATING REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

Above all, GERD promotes the sub regional power interconnection for stimulating the regional economy. Ethiopia is gearing up to export large amounts of clean power across East Africa in the coming years.

Ethiopia is a member of east African power pool⁷ which aims at connecting the power grids of at least nine countries including Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and Djibouti. It may also be extended to northern and southern Africa. Its contributing its best in sharing its renewable energy to the rest of the countries in the pool.



Source: *Ministry of Mines and Energy, 2013*

⁷<http://www.eappool.org/>

