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PRESS RELEASE

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Nile Basin Initiative to commemorate 20 years of promoting cooperation on the River Nile

KIGALI, Rwanda - The Nile Basin Initiative will on February 22, 2019 mark 20 years since it was established to provide a platform for Nile Basin countries to work jointly in using and taking care of the shared water resources of the River Nile efficiently.

Addressing the media ahead of the celebrations to be held in Kigali, a representative of Rwanda's Minister of Environment, Francois Tetero, who is also Rwanda's member of the Nile Technical Advisory Committee, said the 20th anniversary is a major milestone.

"It offers an opportunity for both reflection on the successes and challenges of the last 20 years of Nile cooperation as well as consolidation of Member States' commitment to the Basin cooperation agenda, as laid out in NBI's 10-Year Strategy," he said.

He added that the Nile Council of Ministers (Nile-COM), in its 26th annual meeting held in August 2018 in Bujumbura, Burundi agreed to declare 2019 as 'The Year of the Nile Basin'.

"The council recognised that River Nile plays an integral part in achieving not only water security but also food and energy security as well as eradicating poverty for the people of the Nile Basin region. The Nile waters are key to achieving the regional development agenda and enabling regional integration," he explained.

The celebrations, jointly organised by Rwanda's Ministry of Environment and the NBI, will take place under the theme: NBI@20: Stronger Together.

“Twenty years of NBI is a time for us to celebrate commendable achievements: At least 84 joint investment projects with an accumulated investment volume of USD 6.5 billion have been prepared. These projects, like the Nile itself, span across national borders and play an integral part in achieving not only water security, but also food and energy security as well as eradicating poverty in the Nile Basin,” said Mr Tetero.

He added: “Through capacity building, generation of policies and knowledge, the NBI supports the countries and people of the Nile Basin to better manage their shared water resources. To date, 30,000 people have benefited from capacity building activities through the NBI while 10,000 Knowledge products produced and 16 strategies that provide policy directions for Member States on transboundary aspects, developed.”

On his part, the NBI Executive Director, Eng. Innocent Ntabana said: “By declaring 2019 as the Year of the Nile Basin, countries want to draw attention to the fact that all developments in the basin are linked to our shared waters. This is why we must put water at the heart of regional transformation.”

The 20th anniversary Nile Day celebrations will kick off with a brass band-led march. The day will also be marked by a ministerial panel discussion which will include members of the Nile Council of Ministers and some founders. The objective of the ministerial panel is to reflect on the last 20 years' journey of Nile cooperation, draw lessons on strategic issues and agree on the way forward for sustainable Nile cooperation.

The NBI 20th anniversary event is organised with support from the European Union, the Federal German government, World Bank, and CIWA

The Nile Basin region is undergoing rapid social, political, economic and environmental transformations. The Basin is facing a multitude of shared challenges which, like the Nile itself, span across borders. Challenges include growing demands for water, but as food and energy, which are also dependent on water. However, water variability keeps

increasing, and climate change is expected to increase the risks. This reality can no longer be ignored.

At the same time, the River Nile plays an integral part in achieving not only water security but also food and energy security as well as in eradicating poverty for the people of the Nile Basin region. Nile Basin countries must act together in order to adequately respond to these challenges and take advantage of the opportunities.

The Nile Basin Initiative is the only basin-wide institution providing a neutral platform to the 10 Member States, to discuss how to jointly take care of and utilise the shared Nile Basin water resources for the benefit of all and to address the common challenges such as food, water and energy security as well as the negative impacts of climate change, which no country can tackle alone.