

# Water security dominates Nile states summit

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**KIGALI.** The fifth Nile Basin Development Forum, a biennial policy assembly of the 10 countries sharing the River Nile catchment area, opened yesterday in Rwanda with a plateful of agenda including Egypt's self-suspension from the cooperative framework from the new cooperative framework which has paralysed furtherance of any meaningful discussions.

Also high on the agenda is the issue of water security, with each country's demand for water growing steadily due to high population growth and urbanisation, amidst more distressing challenges like climate change.

The 10 countries use the river varyingly for irrigation (agriculture), hydro-electric dams, trade, transport and other economic needs but in Uganda, the river mainly runs hydropower dams that generate an estimated 695 megawatts (MWs) according to ministry of Energy.

However, the government's National Development Plan (NDP) outlines future [government's] plans to fast track generation to a capacity of 41,738Mw—50 per cent or more from hydro—which means more dams.

Construction of the 600Mw Karuma and 183Mw Isimba dams is ongoing while the government is at the same nursing ambitions to soon embark on the 840Mw Ayago dam.

President Museveni, who is most fascinated by these projects which he often argues are the stepping stone to Uganda becoming a Middle class economy not far from now, believes that in fact only dams can save the river because then once cheaper electricity will be available people will stop either cutting trees or encroaching on the river's catchment.

Meanwhile, the other countries also have similar projects in the pipeline. Ethiopia, whose Blue Nile stretching from Lake Tana generates close to 80 per cent of the water consumed by Egypt which solely relies on the Nile, is currently contemplating how to flood its multi-billion dollar 6,000Mw Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam without hurting the latter.