



SPEECH BY
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BASINWIDE COOPERATION FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN
THE NILE & GLOBAL WATER PARTNERSHIP EASTERN
AFRICA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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(Check against delivery)

Swedish support

- Sweden has, a longstanding and strong commitment to and a close collaboration with Africa in water sector. The same applies to climate change. The Swedish Government has defined environment and climate change as one of three thematic priorities in the Swedish development cooperation. Environment and climate is also a priority sector in our strategy for regional development cooperation with Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Through Sweden's regional cooperation we have become a major partner to many of the important actors present here today. I would like to mention African Climate Policy Centre and its work for evidence based policy development, IUCN for its work in the Volta basin, the Global Water Partnership which has its secretariat in Stockholm, and the Nile Basin Initiative. Sweden is a long-time supporter to the Nile cooperation, through different projects and programmes. During the last 10 years we have seen impressive results from this cooperation.
- The Swedish support to the project discussed today on "Climate Change Induced Water Stress in the Nile River Basin" is a strategic contribution to increase the knowledge on the effects of climate change. This work should help governments to take informed decisions in order to enable their populations to better adapt to a changing climate and increasing occurrence of droughts and floods.
- Sweden's strong international engagement in environment started 40 years ago when Sweden organised the first UN conference about the human environment, in Stockholm in 1972. As a preparation for the Sustainable Development Conference that will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Sweden is organising the International conference "Stockholm + 40 Partnership Forum for Sustainable Development" in one month's time. The conference will create a platform for dialogue on sustainable innovation, sustainable production and sustainable consumption.
- The Swedish Minister for Environment, Ms Lena Ek, visited Nairobi last month, and in a meeting with Kenyan partners she shared the Swedish experiences on how to make a green economy a reality. She was also very happy to see how Kenya's work on waste management not only contributed to reduction of pollution in the Nairobi River, but also to the empowerment of local population, and especially benefited women.
- The Rio + 20 conference has the green economy as one of its central theme. Sweden's ambition is that the conference will deliver renewed and stronger political support for sustainable development at a global level. Under the theme of green economy in Rio Sweden wishes to stress the need for

structures for the development of equitable and sustainable management of transboundary water resources.

Water and green economy

- Water and water resource management are core building blocks of major economic sectors and has a tremendous potential as driver for economic growth, including energy generation, food production, fishery, environmental services, urban development and health. However, this potential remains largely unused.
- Moreover, in many of the world's poorest countries, there is often a strong correlation between rainfall variability and GDP performance. Recurrent droughts and floods have dramatic economic impacts with declines in annual GDP often exceeding 10%. Putting in place the appropriate institutional platforms as well as storage infrastructure to both mitigate water variability and to boost productive use of water would probably be an efficient way to increase growth and reduce poverty. As always, this has to be done in a socially, environmentally and economically sustainable manner.

Water and security

- One cannot but be alarmed by the extent of the earth's surface presently experiencing drought, and its recent impact in some of the continents poorest countries on the Horn of Africa.
- Water scarcity is among the biggest threats to agricultural production and global food security. But it is not just hunger and a struggle against the absence of nutrition, more and more studies have now demonstrated the link between drought and conflict. It stands to reason that when the traditional livelihood of a people is disrupted, such as by the absence of water, the destruction of livestock or crop failure, a remedy is sought by attacking those who appear to be less worse off. So the absence of rain has also increasingly become a matter for national and regional security.
- However, experience also shows that water management could be utilized to proactively increase stability in unstable regions and that shared water resources may provide an avenue for dialogue and cooperation between nations.

Need for cooperation

- It is obvious that the relative importance of sustainable water management for economic growth and peace and security is ever increasing with climate change and population growth. To turn the challenges posed by climate change and water scarcity into an opportunity for green growth will require strong commitment and leadership from national and regional level.
- The long-term focus has to be to create the basic preconditions for people in the region to secure their sustainable livelihoods in a situation with increasing climate variability. To increase resilience we have to take into account the different roles of women, children and men, and acknowledge that poverty and gender imbalances as causes of vulnerability. Women's political and economical participation is a condition to growth and development.
- The situation need to be approached in an integrated way, at all levels, to ensure the best and most efficient use of water resources in an environment with competing demands both among sectors and countries. This requires cooperation not only between countries and different parts of governments, but also with civil society, research institutions, and the private sector. We must also ensure synergies between regional and national plans and decisions.
- To conclude, I would like to emphasise that through the cooperation on the Nile important results have been achieved. The NBI is playing a crucial role in developing the regional cooperation, even in a situation when there are difficulties at political level related to the negotiations on the Cooperative Framework Agreement. These achievements have to be sustained and further built upon in the future collaboration.
- We have high hopes that this programme and the collaboration between UNEP and the Nile Basin Initiative will deliver new data and new knowledge. Hopefully, helping the Nile countries to take informed decision about the management and development of the Nile water resources. This, in order to benefit the people in the region and to contribute towards productive, peaceful and content lives.
