

# UN 2023 Water Conference. Proposal for Side Event - Ethiopia

**Session Title:** Climate Resilient Groundwater as catalyst for sustainable development in Africa's borderlands –a shared SDG agenda

**Member State partners:** Government of Ethiopia and Government of The Netherlands

**Technical partners:** World Bank Group, UNDP, UNICEF, CIFF



Friday 24th March: 9:30-10:45am Room No. HQ156

## Key messages:

### SITUATION

- The Horn of Africa is the Water Tower of Africa but is consistently facing severe droughts following the worst performing rains in 73 years and five successive failed rainy seasons. 36 million people are affected.
- The worst affected in the drought are the 40 million people IDPs, refugees and host community populations residing in borderlands areas of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. Less than 10% of this population has access to drinking water and water for agro-pastoralism.
- The Horn of Africa is effected by the East African Paradox which is a shifting from long and short rains towards increased dry periods

### SOLUTION

- Transboundary aquifers have been identified in the Horn of Africa. To assess, develop and manage There is an estimated 8.5 million km<sup>3</sup> of deep groundwater that still has not be classified. This additional groundwater storage is of strategic importance, as it will provide the potential to provide water security in times of droughts.
- The long term sustainability of these aquifers is being studied by IGAD, World Bank Group and UNDP looking at demand and supply factors. To assess, develop and manage the combined groundwater resources of the IGAD region sustainably, there is a need for GaFa (Groundwater Access Facility). This Facility complements the existing regional IGAD Platform for GroundWater Collaboration that brings together in a common regional framework the numerous investments in knowledge, capacity and regional integration, at local, national and regional level, that will be necessary over a prolonged period to ensure the sustainable and equitable development[1] of the regions groundwater resources
- Wisewater Management solutions and development of climate resilient water and sanitation service delivery systems that combine these aquifers with nature based solutions such as sand dams and half moons can provide alternative sustainable response to the changing rainfall patterns in the 2015/16 drought and provides water for domestic and agro-pastoralist livelihoods.

## Expected actions coming from the meeting:

This side event calls on partners for a GaFa (Groundwater Access Facility) by investment in pre-feasibility analysis and project pipeline development in the Horn of Africas borderlands. The phased approach will focus initially on Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia and include a scoping study for the GaFa led by a TWG (technical working group) and the development of financing structure and modalities for the Groundwater Access Facility.

Dedicated investments are being made in these borderlands areas by IGAD and Members states with support from the World Bank Group Groundwater for Climate Resilience (HoAGW4CR) special programme, UNDP Africa Borderlands Centre (ABC) and UNICEF Country teams. These investments identify, develop, and distribute climate resilient groundwater for agro-pastoralism and domestic use in selected borderland locations in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia.

## Short Session Outline

The potential of Africa's borderlands – regions close to international land borders - remains vastly untapped. With an estimated 270 million inhabitants, transforming lives in borderland communities has the potential to accelerate Africa's development trajectory.

Investments in borderland communities will be central to achieving the Agenda 2030 while ensuring no one is left behind. However, despite many Africans living in border regions, development efforts and resources focus primarily on cities, large urban areas, and national interiors.

A new large-scale study by the UNDP Africa Borderlands Centre – focused on agro- pastoralist communities in Africa's borderlands has found a limited availability of public services. Many communities, especially those in semi-arid regions, reported a negative outlook and raised concerns about growing malnutrition and food insecurity, exacerbated by the impact of climate change, drought and sometimes flood.

While development interventions and investments are limited, borderland regions have received significant humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian assistance has, however, been unable to transform Africa's borderland regions meaningfully. There is a critical need to scale up catalytic development interventions and investments to enhance the resilience of borderland communities and provide sustainable socio-economic opportunities. A central element for accelerating development and resilience in Africa's borderland regions is improved access to groundwater.

Globally, Sub-Saharan Africa is the region most off track in achieving SDG 6, with borderland regions in Africa particularly at risk of being left behind. Demographic growth combined with increased migration patterns is placing increasing strain on the “borderlands” areas of countries. The current estimates indicate that 1 in 3 Africans lack access to water which is 400 million people. More than 50% of these live in borderlands areas which are prone to insecurity, are affected by the effects of Climate Change and have limited human capital and economic opportunities.

The World Bank Group, KfW and the UNDP Borderlands Centre for Africa have dedicated programmes to address the needs of these borderlands communities. Partnering with IGAD and other Regional Economic Commissions (RECs) combined with Member States (Government of Ethiopia and TBC), these multilateral institutions have identified “water” as a driver of displacement, conflict and insecurity in many of the borderlands communities. Recent work by the World Bank Group highlighted that political marginalization has resulted in the majority of borderlands communities having to cross national borders for water access for human, social, economic development and livelihoods.

A working group with key sector partners, including governments, external support agencies and civil society organizations is proposed to move this agenda forward. A side event at the UN 2023 Water Conference is proposed to gather support from additional partners and to build momentum around the importance of addressing borderlands water needs by improving understanding of sustainable solutions at national and sub-national levels, and development of commitments towards sustainability from Member States and sector partners.

The side event will discuss case studies and lessons learned highlighting the catalytic nature of water for accelerating development in Africa’s borderland regions, while discussing opportunities for scale-up and enhancing sustainability of existing initiatives. The side event will discuss potential roles for Member States, Development Partners, UN System, Civil Society and Private Sector in increasing investments and programmes on water in Africa’s borderland regions.

## Tentative Agenda:

| Time             | Topic   |
|------------------|---|
| 9:30-9:35        | <p><b>Moderator:</b> H.E Ambassador Asfaw Dingamo – State Minster, Ministry of Water and Energy/Abera Endeshaw – Senior Advisor to the Minster, MoWE</p> <p><b>Welcome:</b> Government of Ethiopia – H.E. Dr Eng Habtamu Itefa, Minister of Water and Energy</p>  |
| 9:35-9:55        | <p><b>Keynote speeches</b></p> <p>Boutheina Guerhazi – World Bank Director for Regional Integration for Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and North Africa<br/>           Ahunna Eziakonwa-Onochie – UNDP ASG – Director Africa<br/>           Catherine Russel – Executive Director UNICEF</p>  |
| 9:55 -10:30<br>– | <p><b>Panel Discussion: Groundwater in the Horn of Africa – financing and innovation</b></p> <p>Moderated by UNICEF</p> <p><b>Panelists:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ሃ Catherine Russel – Executive Director UNICEF</li> <li>ሃ H.E. Minister - Government of Somalia (Confirmed)</li> <li>ሃ Dr Abraham Asmare, Regional Director - Childrens Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF)</li> <li>ሃ H.E. Minister – Government of Kenya TBC</li> </ul> <p>Reflections from the floor: EIB, WFP, EU-JRC</p> |
| 10:30-10:45      | <p>Closing Remarks - Government of Netherlands – H.E. Minister</p> <p>Commitments - Government of Ethiopia – H.E Madam President, Sahilework Zewdie, FDRE</p>   |