

*Review*

# Water and politics in Africa: The need for regional cooperation

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**This paper examines the need for regional cooperation in water resources management in Africa. The earth is a water planet made up of 70% water, but the crucial fact is that freshwater constitutes only 3%, 99% of which is locked in polar icecaps, glaciers and far too deep underground, leaving humanity with only 0.3% with which to quench its ever increasing thirsts. At the country level, extreme variability exists in the availability of total renewable water resources. It ranges from 10 m<sup>3</sup> in Kuwait to 100,000 m<sup>3</sup> in Canada. Also, there is high variability in time within the year for water availability. The 2 major extremes, namely: water poor and water rich countries include Brazil, Russia, etc., which are generally water rich, while Israel, Jordan, etc., are usually the water poor. In the water poor nations, water scarcity has reached 'stress' level; although the absolute level of water is said to remain the same, the globe is indisputably facing a growing level of water scarcity. Africa has about 60 international rivers, with a comparatively few international agreements on the use of water courses. Some of these are: Congo basin – 5 agreements; Incomati – 6; Limpopo – 2; Niger – 10; Nile – 19; comparatively, Europe has only 71 international river basins but with about 200 agreements. The world environment has been greatly plundered and many negative consequences are now emerging. This has created more water resource problems across the world with Africa as one of the worst hit. Water is gaining strategic importance across the world. Many conflicts are emerging due to water resources. Many water conflicts hotspots now dot the world, with several of such in Africa. It is saddening that Africa with many international rivers, has no serious water use agreements. The only way out of the present crises is for African countries to emerge with strong efforts at cooperation for sustainable water resource management.**

**Key words:** Regional co-operation, resources management, fresh water.

## INTRODUCTION

Water, the only resource that is found in the 3 states of matter, remains one of the most precious resources on earth. It is of interest to a variety of people, possibly because of its numerous usages. The wide range of usage is a function of its characteristics such as, its melting point of 0°C and boiling point of 100°C; its high latent heat of vaporization and specific heat, its thermal conductivity. Also, water is a universal solvent and it has anomalous temperature behaviour.

The earth is largely a water planet; consisting of about

70% of water. It has 1,700 km<sup>3</sup> in rivers and canals, 3,600 km<sup>3</sup> in moors, 120,000 km<sup>3</sup> in lakes, 5000 km<sup>3</sup> in reservoirs and 65,000 km<sup>3</sup> in groundwater. Despite this quantity of water, water resources of the earth are largely characterized by gross inequality in terms of distribution. For example, according to Brooks (2002), China has 22% of world population and it accounts for 7% of the world renewable freshwater. Canada has 0.5% of world population and it has 9% of the world's renewable freshwater. It was discovered that 10 countries hold more than ½ of the world freshwater. More importantly, areas of high population density of Middle East, South Asia and North Africa, have low water resources.

Further to these is the fact that, across the world, there

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are 260 rivers crossing 145 international boundaries. Also, 40% of the world populations live on river basins shared by 2 or more countries, suggesting that as much as 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the world population may be under threats from upstream neighbours. Some of the flash points in Africa are the Nile basin, Niger basin, Congo basin, South Africa, Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe, apart from some others which are found within nations.

## **AFRICA HYDROLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS AND THE CHALLENGE: THE NEED FOR COOPERATION**

Africa has 60 international rivers (Wolf, 1999), some of which include: Zambezi (Zambia and Zimbabwe), the Niger River (Guinea, Mali, Niger and Nigeria), Nile (with 10 riparian states); further, Rivers Congo, Limpopo, Niger, Ogoone, Okavango, Orange, Senegal, Volta and Zambezi are shared by four or more countries. River Nile alone is shared by 10 riparian states of Burundi, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. More importantly, in Africa, every country has at least one international river, indeed, 41 countries have two or more, 15 have five or more, and Guinea has 14 international rivers, while Ivory Coast and Mozambique have 9. This is further complicated by the fact that at least 34 rivers are shared by two countries, 28 by three, etc. These suggest a risk of water conflicts in many parts of Africa; it also calls for a regional cooperation in managing river basins in Africa (Kitissou, 2007).

Across the world, the numbers of international basins vary. For example, Asia has 53, Europe 71, North America 39 and South America has 38 international basins. Coupled with the 60 international basins in Africa, there are 261 international basins in the world. Africa has 62% of her land surface under international basins; altogether, international basins cover 45.3% of the land surface of the earth (Wolf, 1999).

Meanwhile, several interests need to be balanced in Africa. For example, international boundaries in Africa are colonial in origin. International boundaries were fixed sometimes arbitrarily by the various colonial fathers namely: Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain. In most instances, the boundaries fixed by colonial fathers were done without consultation with the indigenes but were often executed mainly for economic reasons. This is still an issue in many parts of Africa. The political crisis in Nigeria is a fall out of this, the crises between Nigeria and Cameroun, so also the crises in Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea, etc.

In comparison to Europe, where 71 international rivers are shared, there exist about 200 water based agreements. In Africa, there are at least 34 rivers shared by two countries, 28 by three, etc., and about 60 international basins exist, although the total numbers of water agreement are still few. Indeed, hydrological networks tie

all African nations together. Little wonder Sadoff et al. (2003) concluded that Africa's hydrology alone is a solid basis for an African Union.

## **Water and environment**

The quantity and quality of water at a place vary both temporally and spatially. The earth has been tagged a water planet. For example, a picture of the earth from space looks bluish. However, of the quantity of water on the earth, freshwater constitutes only 3%, 99% of which is locked in polar icecaps, glaciers and far too deep underground, leaving humanity with only 0.3% with which to quench its ever increasing thirsts! At the country level, extreme variability exists in the availability of total renewable water resources. It ranges from 10 m<sup>3</sup> in Kuwait to 100,000 m<sup>3</sup> in Canada, Iceland, Gabon, etc. Also, there are 33 countries depending on other countries for over 50% of their renewable water resources (<http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/005/Y4473E/y4473ed8.htm>).

Some 6,000 children die every day from diseases associated with lack of access to safe drinking water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene. The average distance that women in Africa and Asia walk to collect water is six kilometer. Tens of millions of children cannot go to school as they must fetch water every day. Dropout rates for adolescent girls, who even make it that far, skyrocket once they hit puberty as there are no private sanitation facilities at their schools. 80% of diseases in the developing world are caused by contaminated water. The average person in the developing world uses 2.64 gallons of water a day, in United Kingdom, he uses 35.66 gallons of water per day, while in United States, he uses between 100 and 175 gallons every day. More than 40 million h are wasted each year in Africa alone from women and children gathering water. In 1998, 308,000 people died from war in Africa, but more than two million (six times as many) died from diarrheal disease. It is estimated that 5.3 billion people, two-thirds of the world's population, will suffer from water shortages by 2025. Half of the world's 500 major rivers are seriously depleted or polluted. There are more than 300,000 contaminated groundwater sites in the United States. The water we drink today is the same water the dinosaurs drank - there is no new water.

Furthermore, Gleick (2002) reported that about 826 million people suffered chronic hunger. More than 1 billion people lacked access to clean drinking water while another 2.5 billion did not have adequate sanitation. Preventable water related diseases kill 10,000 to 20,000 children a day. More than half of all deaths from natural catastrophes are caused by floods. Across the world, there are 10,000 cubic kilometers of water behind dams. This is five times the volume of water in all the rivers in the World. This in weight, according to geophysics, can trigger earthquake; indeed, several reservoirs had

induced seismic activities. Methane is now a problem within the tropical reservoir as it is now been aggravated by global warming.

Out of the 1.4 billion people who have difficulties in accessing drinkable water, 450 million are in Africa. Service level of water per capital in Africa, particularly in rural areas, may be as low as 10 L. Average for Europe is 300 L, and America, 600 L.

Africa, despite the population size, consumes only 4.7% of world water, Europe consumes 9.2% and America consumes 19%. Also, nearly 200 million people live in Africa's water stressed countries. By 2025, as many as 230 million Africans will be living in countries facing water scarcity and 460 million will be living in water stressed countries (Fakenmark, 1981). In addition, Adakari and Yoshitani (2009) reported that between 2000 and 2006, 2,163 died from water related disasters, killing more than 290, 000 people, affecting 1.5 billion people, and causing \$ 422 billion damages. Dooge (2000) also reported that on the average, about 22 flood disasters are expected per year, which also annually affected 15,400,000 people.

Further, as at 2000, 77% of Latin America lived within cities and about 41% of African population also lived in cities. Much of the water flowing into cities is wasted through tap leak, old pipes, pipe rust, etc. Asian Development Bank calculated that most of Asians large cities lose about ½ of their water, through leakages and pipe rust. Many old cities depend on deep wells. For examples, in Beijing; China, water table is falling five feet a year. California has 1,200 dams; it is the leading state of water diversion schemes from lakes and rivers. In Los Angeles area, water is diverted from far away Colorado several hundreds of kilometers away (Elliott, 1999).

The problem is not only that of water distribution alone but also that of water management. Sustainable water management will only be achieved through international cooperation.

## **SELECTED CASE STUDIES OF HYDROPOLITICS IN AFRICA AND ACROSS THE WORLD**

### **The Nile basin**

The Nile basin is a potentially hot spot, consisting of 10 riparian states which include Burundi, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Ethiopia, with the ousting of Mengustu in 1991, focused on water distribution. Hence, Ethiopia, an upstream state, has since become more active in challenging the 1959 Water Agreement as it favoured Egypt and Sudan. Ethiopia's challenge to the 1959 Agreement dates back to the times of its negotiation 1956/1957; the 1957 aide memoire still stands out as the most vociferous diplomatic action the country has ever taken on issues of the Nile waters. Ethiopia and Egypt have therefore been under threat of

military options in resolving their water conflict (Darwidi, 1994). Sudan also threatened to back-out of the 1959 water agreement, particularly in August 1995. The amount of water flowing into Egypt has significantly reduced. The Nile is noted for its erratic nature of its flow; some years it almost dries out; at other times, the deluge threatens Sudan and Egypt.

### **South Africa**

In Southern Africa, South Africa, Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe are water challenged. They are potentially limited in their pursuit of natural development. For example, their neighbours have more water than what they need at their present stages of development. Hence, these neighbours can generate possible interest from these states which appeared stronger.

Museinwa (2004) has also discussed hydropolitics within Zimbabwe with Bulawayo as a case study; particularly after independence in 1980, he observed that despite the fact that there were no restrictive and racialized access to water, independence did not bring increased water security to the inhabitants of Bulawayo. There were many cases of man-made scarcities, as politically motivated water crises were experienced in 1982 to 1984 and 1986/1987 in Bulawayo, as the then government of the day was out to punish the Bulawayo City Council. In this region, the likely danger spots are Okavango (between Botswana and Namibia), and the Zambezi (between Zambia and Zimbabwe).

### **Niger basin**

The Niger basin is a potentially hot spot. The riparian states are Guinea, Mali, Niger and Nigeria. Nigeria is at the receiving end, it is a downstream country. It is the most developed of these nations; it has her 2 largest hydro power plants directly on the Niger. Nigeria is currently developing River Niger for commercial navigation, and fisheries. Two of the riparian nations namely Mali and Niger are semi arid countries that have food crises problem due to low rainfall. Indeed, Niger is worst hit. These two nations are at the risk of developing irrigation for food security. Irrigation is a large consumer of water. The construction and operations of these dams will have serious consequences on Nigeria's economic well being.

### **Middle East and North Africa Countries (MENA)**

The Middle East region has 5% of the total world population, and 0.9% of global water resource (World Bank, 1996). The number of water stress countries in this region is progressively increasing. In 1955, they were just Bahrain, Jordan and Kuwait. In 1990, they increased to 11, to include, Algeria, Israel, Occupied Territories, Qatar,

Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. It is expected by projection that by 2025, seven nations would have been added to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Libya, Morocco, Oman and Syria.

Water in this region is mainly from three sources namely: the River Tigris and Euphrates, Nile and River Jordan. These nations relied almost entirely on these rivers. Several conflicts have ensued in this region. For example : Turkey and Syria - over Rivers Tigris and Euphrates, Jordan River Basin within Israel, the Palestine authorities and Jordan, Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia over River Nile, Syria and Israel etc. Several bi-lateral agreements have equally been made. Three factors have complicated the problem. They are: increasing population, the population of the Middle East of 423 million as at 2000; problem of domestic pollution and the expanding agriculture and growing industrial initiatives. These factors have reduced per capita water availability in the Middle East to possibly the worst across the globe (Shapland, 1997).

## Others

### *Afghanistan*

The notorious Afghanistan war has also been found to be partly initiated due to scarcity of water resources. This condition is worsened by climate change. For example, the war has been found to be more intense in the South and Southwest regions of Helmand and Kandahar. The war has been accused to be solely due to extremism, nationalism, tribalism, etc. Indeed, if the war were to be due to these problems, it ought to be intense throughout the nation. Geography of this war suggests that it is intense in the poorest water resource regions.

A cursory insight into the history of Afghanistan showed that the Afghan War is complex, dynamic and nuanced. In the South, River Helmand is seriously threatened by severe deforestation, desertification, crop yield have declined, per capita production has also dropped. Less water means less food and less food lead to starvation; and starvation will easily trigger off conflict.

In addition to other reasons, the problems of desertification complicated widespread grazing, problems of soil erosion and degradation, problems of uncontrolled extraction of water resources and deforestation. For example, in Paktya, Khost and Paktika, about 50 to 70% of the forest are lost. Further, Kandahar, Helmand and Nimroz have severely deteriorated dramatically in the last 20 years; they will become increasingly difficult to support human population. Mean annual rainfall has been dropping (Green, 2009).

### *Mekong basin*

Mekong is a transnational and trans-boundary basin. The countries in this basin are: China, Laos, Thailand,

Cambodia, and Vietnam. The Mekong basin has vast hydroelectric potential and capacity to store water for irrigation schemes. Tension ensued in the region, particularly with China economic transformation and emergence as a global political-economic power. China has constructed two large-scale hydroelectric dams on the Lancang River in Yunan province (Mekong upstream) in 1990. This consequently reduced downstream flow. Recently, China negotiated an agreement with Lao, Thailand and Nyanmar governments outside the official intergovernmental framework, to blast rapids which could have been used for hydro electric power for navigation improvement along the mainstream of Mekong in Thailand and Lao (Oasawa et al., 2003; Sneddon and Fox, 2006). This may later culminate in future crises.

## Instances of water related conflicts across the world

1. There have been struggles since 1950s between Israel, Jordan, and Syria over control of water resources.
2. The six day War in 1967 which was partly caused by the plan by Jordan to divert Jordan River for its use. The war increased Israel access to water by 50%.
3. The 'water for tanks' strategy where Israel would export tanks and air force technology to Turkey and import water in exchange to be delivered by tankers; where 50 million m<sup>3</sup> of water is to be sourced annually. Turkey is into this with Cyprus.
4. The 1990/1991 Gulf war, Iraq destroyed much of Kuwait desalination capacity and also poisoned Kuwait water.
5. In the 1998 to 2000 Kosovo conflicts, dams and hydroelectricity facilities were bombed and wells were poisoned.
6. During the 1988 Angola-Namibia war, Cuban and Angolan forces attacked the Calueque Dam in Angola, threatened supply of water to Namibia and also destroyed the Owaniboland pipeline.
7. In 1990, South African Government cut water supply to Wesselton Township.
8. In 1998, the Inga Dam in the Democratic Republic of Congo was attacked by Rebels.
9. In 1999, Zambia terrorist bomb cuts the supply of water to Lusaka.
10. In recent times, climate induced tensions and conflicts over shared water courses have been documented in the Lower Komadugu -Yobe in Nigeria, between Mauritania and Senegal, and also between Ghana and Burkina Faso over suspicion and controversies over the causes of energy crises. The same is also the case between Niger and Nigeria over the construction of Kandadji dam upstream of river Niger in Niger. Another case in point is the conflict between Cameroon and Nigeria on Lake Chad over contact on receding waters (Niassé, 2005).

These are a pointer that water resources and indeed

water courses could be a point of target during national and international conflicts. This further justifies the need for international cooperation in managing water resources in Africa as this will further foster unity in the African union.

### **THE UNITED NATION WATER CONVENTION: ATTEMPT AT INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN WATER COURSE USAGE**

The need for modern international water law is borne out of the need for an articulate and broad based water law. Prior to this convention, the world water courses were guided by highly contradictory and complex rules, which range from ancient to modern rules. The convention is an amalgamation of sets of rules and bi-lateral agreements developed from early civilizations through the industrial revolution. This has led to sets of incongruities of trans-boundary water law (Anonymous, 1927; Teclaff, 1985; Lien, 1995).

As reported by Eckstein (2002), the attempt to bring uniformity, to international water law, prompted the International Law Association (ILA) to develop the Helsinki Rules in 1966. It was drafted as a comprehensive code for the use of trans-boundary drainage basins. The Helsinki rules later gave way for the UN water courses convention. The draft articles took nearly 25 years to prepare. The UN convention is intended to be a framework agreement, flexible, and open to a degree of interpretation designed to accommodate the development of more specific bilateral and multilateral agreements related to the use, management and preservation of trans-boundary water resources. The convention is to take into account the problem affecting many international water courses such as pollution, special needs of developing countries, etc.

However, this convention has been highly criticized by countries such as India and Ethiopia that the aim of the convention had been deviated from being a framework agreement only as it has dabbled into conflict resolution. Further, China, Rwanda and Turkey had criticized the convention for its inability to contain language referring to states sovereignty over water courses located within their territory.

Evidences point to the fact that states have various misgivings about several of the provisions of the convention. For example, only 12 states out of the 35 have ratified the treaty. 103 countries voted in favour of the convention against 27 states which abstained, 33 states were absent, while 3 countries that were absent later signified their intention (Nigeria, Fiji and Belgium) to vote in its favour. Burundi, China and Turkey voted against it, these states are upper riparian states. For examples, China which controls the headwaters of Mekong has been heavily criticized for his Three Georges Dam project; Turkey up stream Tigris and Euphrates has been criticized in the downstream, for developing dams.

Burundi is in the headwaters of Nile. Out of the 166 states recorded in the chronicles of the convention, 57 do not share freshwater resources with other states, 35 of them are island nations, and 22 are non-riparian states (Eckstein, 2002). The voting showed that lower riparian countries, rich countries and arid countries support it. Hence, states in the lower courses favoured the convention as against states in the upper courses.

### **Need for regional cooperation in Africa**

According to Sadoff et al. (2003), Africa hydrology can be a base for African union. The natural inequality in the world pattern of distribution of water is further worsened by various other factors. These factors are presently sending red signals particularly on the need for prompt actions towards global cooperation and most particularly within the region of African.

### ***Increasing population***

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the World Population was about 1.9 billion, it was 2.5 billion in 1950, in 1980 it rose to 4.4 billion, by 2000 it was 6 billion, and by 2025, it would be about 8.3 billion. Population is increasing by 200,000 people per day in the less developed nations of the world. Population growth in Africa doubles the global rate.

### ***Increasingly economic development***

Exponential relationship exists between water use and rate of economic development. Holdgates (1982) reported that 7 to 10% of the average annual runoff in all rivers of the world was withdrawn in 1980. This increased to 12 to 17% in year 2000. Industries accounts for 20% of total world withdrawals. Industries such as pulp, sugar, fertilizer, petrochemicals are water users.

### ***Agricultural development***

The challenges of climate change, increasing world population, and food security, have necessitated improvement in water use in agricultural sector. About 70% of the world available freshwater is used in agricultural sector. In year 2000, 80% of the total water demand was used in the sector.

### ***Increasing urbanization and agglomeration***

According to UNESCO, in 1975, World cities demanded 3,968 km<sup>3</sup> of water per year; this is expected to move to 7,500 km<sup>3</sup> per year in 2015 AD. Eighty nations, comprising 40% of world population are now suffering from serious water shortage due to urbanization. As at

year 2000, 47% of the world populations were urban dwellers. By 2015, the 10 largest cities in the world will be in Asia, Latin, America and Africa. Lagos will be part of them. Indeed, by 2015 AD, 80% of urban residents may be in the developing countries.

### ***Climatic change***

Drought is experienced all over the world. Intense drought has been experienced in Africa since the medieval age (Vershuren et al., 2000). Gomme and Petrassi (1996) have reported that Africa has a long history of rainfall fluctuation; severe drought has been experienced in North, East and West Africa. Sule (1992) reported low annual yield of River Niger, which has affected operations in Kainji reservoir.

### ***Improvement in standard of living***

This began in the advent of political independence from colonial masters, the end of apartheid regime in southern African region, coupled with the advent of peace in greater part of Africa. More importantly, in the last few years, effort at democratization is becoming popular. The efforts at international economic cooperation, particularly championed by African Union, have in no small measure fostered economic development. These have culminated in improved standard of living. Improvement in standard of living has brought greater pressure on the use of water courses.

These discussion calls for actions in order to further downsize existing political tensions in every parts of Africa. Indeed, Kitissou (2006) opined that instead of trying to construct state systems in abstraction, region states should rather be conceived based on trans-boundary water resources. This suggests the river basin approach to development; whereby development of the region will be approached from the perspective of river basin development (Faniran, 1977). This approach has proved to yield wonderful results as national development strategy across the world.

### ***The way forward***

The global water scarcity problem is that of management and availability in terms of physical distribution. This has led to various water conflicts in many parts of the world, particularly in countries that have the potential of being water stressed. For example, it has been projected that between 2 to 7 billion people will face water scarcity by 2050; hence, in the absence of a new approach to water course management more water crises will be generated in the years to come. Hence, in view of the fact that water distribution today is a highly contentious political issue,

there is a need for a new strategic architecture which normalizes growing water conflicts, with a view to creating alliance systems that is hinged on mutual benefit in every part of the world particularly in Africa. The following are some steps to take:

1. Resolve disputes over water: There is a need to resolve all outstanding water conflicts in every parts of the world. It will be difficult without resolving these crises to move beyond the current level. In view of the complex issues that brought about this convention. The issues of contentions across the world need to be urgently resolved. This is better done by bilateral agreements.
2. Integration of water into regional strategic cooperation: There is a need for a solid political framework on water issues in riparian states. This is very important particularly between upstream and downstream states. This should be done with memorandum of understanding (MoU). This MoU should be broad based. This is important as it will restore confidence among the different groups. Berman and Wihbey (1999) suggest that such agreement could include military coordination, mutual defense agreement over regional water supplies, commencement of joint research and development, information sharing on environment conditions among others.
3. Domestic water initiatives: In view of the increasing strategic importance of water, there is need for more efforts particularly in the area of research and development for sustainable watershed management with a view to improving domestic water supply particularly in the water scarce nations. There is need to explore innovations in water technologies, there should be initiation of water harvesting strategies possibly through construction of micro dams to collect rainfall and storm runoff. In many poor or less developed nations million of cubic meters of water is allowed to waste. Seasonally, only for such nations to be dare need of water in another half of the year. This approach was proposed to improve water supplies in Jordan, Israel and Palestine by as much as 5%. Indeed, Libiszewski (1995) and Turton (1999) have proposed the development of virtual water technology for water scarce nations, virtual water entails processing of grains and foodstuffs to release trapped water for agriculture. This technology was discovered to be more efficient compared to desalinization.
4. Systems rehabilitation: The current systems of water supply and distribution in between and within riparian nations in Africa are currently inefficient. It has been discovered that millions cubic meters of water is wasted through pipe burst and pipe rust in many poor nations. Further, Beschorner (1992) reported that water networks in Jordan and the Occupied Territories currently lose up to 55% of the carried water as a result of leakage from old and damaged piping. Rehabilitation will no doubt improve capacities.
5. Need for data collection: there is serious data problem

particularly in the poor riparian nations of Africa. Little information exists on the water resources in the South. For example, in many sub-Sahara nations, there is virtually no information on both surface and ground water resources. These resources are unmapped and not monitored. Hence, there is virtually no information on the water resources potential. This will hamper multinational cooperation.

6. Need for a new world water convention: The UN Water course Convention took 25 years to prepare. It was drafted to articulate different issues bordering on the use of international streams. This law was designed to serve as a framework for specific bilateral and regional agreements resulting from the use, management and preservation of trans-boundary water resources. It was designed to help prevent and resolve conflict over international water resources, and also promote sustainable development and the protection of global water supplies. This laudable convention though, was signed by a section of the world, particularly by the poor and downstream nations. Many nations were not signatories; some were either absent or completely abstained. Many of the signatories are mainly Island nations or countries without serious international or trans-boundary Rivers.

## CONCLUSION

The earth is a water planet, comprising 70% of water. Water is largely unequally distributed as few nations have the largest share of water. The pattern of water distribution has therefore caused political crises and several wars have been fought because of water. Further, there exist over 300 international rivers in the World. This position is replicated in Africa. Africa has 70 international rivers, shared by several nations, and therefore, Africa is exposed to several conflicts caused by the pattern of water distribution. The locational pattern of rivers is further complicated by the interest of colonial fathers namely: Belgium, Britain, France, Germany and Italy. Despite this, less than five water agreements exist in Africa; while Europe with about 200 water based agreements, have only 4 international rivers.

Indeed, some African countries were not signatories to the international water use convention; many were absent including Nigeria; while some abstained. However, the position of African nation is expected in view of several problems of poor technology, poor data, poverty etc. However, there is a need for Africa nations to cooperate in water use in view of its peculiar challenges of increasing population, urbanization, agricultural development and food security, increasing economic development and challenges of climate changes.

This paper call for an urgent action, particularly on the use of water courses in Africa. This is necessary for the desired economic growth, and development, it will douse existing political tension, checkmate poverty, hunger and starvation which are all notorious features all over Africa.

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