Egypt Returns to the Security Council on the GERD Inauguration: Rejecting Ethiopian Unilateralism

Mahmoud Wafai
International watercourses | Sep 9, 2025

On 9 September 2025, Egypt addressed a letter to the President of the Security Council concerning the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), in which it characterized Ethiopia's conduct as a blatant case of unilateral action **that constitutes a continuing violation of international law.** The letter was circulated as an official document of the Security Council under the agenda item "Peace and Security in Africa".

In its communication, Egypt reaffirmed its long-standing position rejecting unilateral actions affecting shared watercourses and emphasized that **Ethiopia's purported inauguration of the dam constitutes a breach of its obligations under both customary and conventional international law, including the 2015 Declaration of Principles on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam,** which requires the conclusion of a legally binding agreement on the filling and operation of the dam prior to its commencement. **Egypt further rejected Ethiopia's reliance on a doctrine of absolute territorial sovereignty and emphasized that its conduct seeks to impose a *fait accompli* through unilateral measures inconsistent with the legal framework governing shared watercourses.**.

Moreover, Egypt stressed that Ethiopia's conduct has already resulted in, and continues to risk causing, significant harm to downstream States, describing such risks as "existential" to Egypt and Sudan. In that context, **Egypt recalled that the International Court of Justice in its Climate Change Advisory Opinion (23 July 2025) affirmed that the obligation to prevent significant harm applies fully where the risk of future significant harm exists, assessed on the basis of both "the probability or foreseeability of the occurrence of harm and its severity or magnitude".** Accordingly, Egypt argued that the assessment of Ethiopia's conduct must consider not only harm already incurred but also the potential long-term risks arising from its unilateral activities.

Finally, **Egypt framed the dispute within a broader context, warning that Ethiopia's actions jeopardize regional and international stability and reiterating that, having exhausted all amicable means, it retains the right to take appropriate measures to safeguard its existential interests in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations .** In this regard, Egypt urged the Security Council to assume its responsibilities by ensuring that Ethiopia ceases its

unlawful unilateral practices in the Nile basin.

This communication forms part of a consistent pattern of recourse by Egypt to the Security Council in relation to the GERD dispute. Egypt's position has been repeatedly articulated in prior correspondence, including letters including letters S/2020/355, S/2020/566, S/2020/617, S/2021/354, S/2021/565, S/2021/607, S/2021/627, S/2022/134, S/2022/586, S/2022/587, S/2023/664 and S/2024/646, through which Egypt has continuously raised concerns regarding Ethiopia's unilateral conduct and its implications for regional and international peace and security.

Printed from EGYPIL.com