



# GimBMUN 2026

African Union  
Study Guide

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African Union – **Study Guide**

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## INTRODUCTION

### Introduction of the chairs

Welcome delegates! My name is Nika, I am very excited to be you chair this conference. I am from Slovenia and I am as of right now a student in the IB diploma programme. I have always felt that it is both crucial and helpful to be caught up in the happenings of today so I am glad to see you join another conference that will hopefully expand your knowledge, reason, and thinking. This committee will explore one of Africa's more important and complex challenges today, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). Delegates should represent their country's interests and work to find realistic solutions that prevent conflict, ensure water security, and as always promote regional cooperation. This study guide provides hopefully some helpful insights to get you started so you can prepare for your debate. As chair, I encourage you to think critically, try to connect what you know and find out as we go on, you might have better solutions that you think. Remember that in the end the worst that can happen is you learn something new so don't be afraid to step out and share your voice. I wish you the best of luck and look forward to beginning our sessions!

Hello delegates! My name is Jana and it is a privilege for me to be your co-chair for this African Union committee. I come from Montenegro and I am currently an IB student with a strong interest in international law and diplomacy. I am thrilled to be co-chairing this committee where we will address regional cooperation and security challenges. I'm particularly interested in our topic, The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD): Water Security, Organized Crime, and the Rise of Drug Trafficking in the Nile Basin, because it combines issues of international negotiation, sustainable development, and the unforeseen consequences that instability can have, like the expansion of organized crime. This agenda, in my opinion, will truly push us all to consider the connections between different problems and the ways in which collaboration might resolve disputes. In my free time I like to travel, experience different cultures, and hang out with friends. I've always found that MUN allows me to blend my passion of meeting new people, my curiosity about the world, and my academic goals. I'm very excited to hear your thoughts, see innovative solutions, and make this committee a fun and effective place. I look forward to an engaging debate and wish you all the best of luck during our sessions!

### Introduction to the committee

The African Union (AU) is the principal intergovernmental organization on the African continent, established in 2002 as the successor to the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Today it is composed of 55 member states and is guided by the vision of creating “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena.” The AU is tasked with addressing a wide range of political, economic, and security challenges, and its mandate reflects the interconnected nature of development and stability across Africa.

In accordance with Agenda 2063, the Union seeks to foster political and economic integration, safeguard human rights and democratic values, strengthen the rule of law, and advance sustainable development. Through its Peace and Security Council, which has emerged as a crucial tool for conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and post-conflict reconstruction, the AU plays a major role in maintaining peace and security on the continent. The Executive Council, which is made up of foreign ministers, formulates recommendations and coordinates policy, although the Assembly of Heads of State and Government has the majority of the AU's decision making authority. Meanwhile, the Pan-African Parliament represents the Union's efforts to encourage African individuals to participate directly in making decisions. The African Union has become more and more involved in settling regional conflicts and advocating for African interests internationally in recent years. Many of the Union's top issues are highlighted in the committee's agenda, "The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD): Water Security, Organized Crime, and the Rise of Drug Trafficking in the Nile Basin." The GERD highlights how resource instability and unsolved conflicts can foster the growth of organized criminal and drug trafficking organizations.

The African Union is in a position to handle these issues because it is the continental organization in charge of peace, unity, and collaboration. Delegates will speak on behalf of AU member states in this committee as they discuss this matter. Finding answers that both protect national interests and further the shared goal of an Africa that is safe and united will be the challenge.

### [Introduction to the topic](#)

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) is regarded as one of Africa's most ambitious and contentious development projects (Crisis group). The largest hydroelectric dam on the continent, GERD is situated on Ethiopia's Blue Nile and is intended to produce more than 6,000 megawatts of electricity. The dam is a source of pride for Ethiopia and a necessary step in the country's growth, electrification, and poverty alleviation. GERD has been positioned as a game-changing project that may turn Ethiopia into a regional energy exporter, as around 60 million Ethiopians lack consistent access to electricity (Group).

However, GERD is a major issue for Egypt and Sudan, two downstream neighbors. More than 90% of Egypt's aquaculture needs are met by the Blue Nile(Wikipedia), which provides the great majority of the Nile's water. Tens of millions of people in the Nile Valley rely on agriculture for their livelihoods, and Egyptian officials have warned that the dam's quick filling or poor management could jeopardize food security(Ahram online, AP news). Sudan has taken a more nuanced approach, with concerns about dam safety and long-term water supplies still unanswered even if controlled river flows and electricity imports could help the nation. Since Ethiopia announced the project in 2011, negotiations have stretched over a decade with the involvement of the African Union, the United States, and the World Bank (AU Communiqué 2020). Yet, no legally binding agreement on filling schedules or dam operations has been reached. Ethiopia has already begun filling the reservoir unilaterally(Ahram online), which has heightened tensions with Egypt and Sudan and raised fears of escalation. Beyond the current conflict, GERD draws attention to other significant issues facing the Nile Basin. Governments in the region are already under tremendous strain due to the region's fast population expansion, unpredictable climate, and unstable political environment. These pressures, when coupled with water insecurity, have the potential to erode institutions and provide opportunities for organized crime. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), heroin and cocaine are progressively passing through Eastern Africa on their way to Europe and the Middle East(UNODC East African initiative), making the region a rising center for drug trafficking. Trafficking networks frequently take advantage of weak regimes, poor diplomatic relations, and open borders. (Raineri and Strazzari).

GERD is therefore a regional security issue as well as a water management issue. Failure to cooperate over the Nile might have repercussions that go beyond power and agriculture, including the growth of organized crime and the expansion of drug trafficking networks throughout the basin(UNODC, Global Initiative). Delegates will consequently need to strike a balance between development, stability, and international collaboration as this committee considers GERD as a resource conflict as well as a larger security issue.

## **The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam: water security, organised crime, and the rise of drug trafficking in the Nile basin**

### History of the topic

The GERD began construction in April 2011, after having been announced by late PM Meles Zanawi, but its story did not begin there. Starting with the 1929 Agreement, signed between Great Britain (representing its colonies) and Egypt, which gave Egypt the power to veto enabling it to approve the construction over any upstream projects that would affect its water share and allocated it 48 billion cubic meters of Nile water per year, while Sudan received merely 4 billion.

Following Sudan's independence, the 1959 Bilateral Agreement between Egypt and Sudan reinforced the 1929 allocations and increased Sudan's share to 18.5 billion cubic meters and Egypt's to 55.5 billion, effectively claiming nearly all the Nile's average annual flow and ignoring the water rights of other nine riparian states. (Wikipedia)

Through history, Ethiopia contributed approximately 86% of Nile's flow of water, but was unable to finance major hydropower projects. The period between the 1990s and 2010s saw the country's growing resolve to challenge the status quo. In 1999, The Nile Basin Initiative, launched by all riparian states sought to foster cooperation and develop any potential project sustainably. While the initiative was positive on paper, it brought out division between upstream states and Egypt (Egypt demanded security over water, such as a very specific minimum amount of water being passed through the Nile each year, while other states were seeking equitable utilization) (How).

In 2011, Ethiopia set the plan in action and finished the dam in 2025 after 14 years of round the clock work (Al Jazeera). During the latter stages of development, it faced many difficulties, such as failed negotiations with the African Union, the US, and the UN security council. Ethiopia did not come to an agreement over how much water would be released during multi-year droughts, which have been becoming more common in recent years. (How)

Ethiopia began filling the reservoir in 2020 and has proceeded unilaterally, causing acute anxiety in Cairo and Khartoum. The political instability and securitization of the Nile dispute have created governance vacuums and redirected state resources. As noted in a UNODC report, the Nile Basin has become a major transit route for drug trafficking, particularly Captagon and cannabis, moving from the Horn of Africa towards North Africa and Europe (UNODC Eastern Africa - Human Trafficking). The intense focus on the interstate water conflict has diverted attention and law enforcement capacity from monitoring and securing borders against these transnational criminal networks. Additionally, the economic pressures created by regional instability can make illicit economies more attractive to local populations (Raineri and Strazzari).

### Current situation

The GERD was formally opened on the 9th of September 2025 by Ethiopia after years of tension piling up between River Nile basin nations and Ethiopias to do so. (Al Jazeera) The continuous water conflict with Ethiopia is seen as an existential dilemma by Egypt and Sudan, which are downstream from the dam and also changes the regional power dynamics. (Khaled and Musambi)

With a capacity of over 5,150 MW and a reservoir of roughly 74 billion cubic meters, the dam is now Africa's largest hydroelectric project. There are plans to export excess electricity to surrounding countries (such as Kenya, Tanzania, and Djibouti) and several turbines are already operating, generating electricity domestically. (Al Jazeera)

The GERD has been a mission for a while and has been raising becoming a situation in crisis as it remains unresolved despite years of negotiations. Ethiopia has completed filling the dam's reservoir and is steadily expanding electricity production, presenting it as a triumph of national independence. Ethiopia insists that it will not sign any binding treaty restricting its right to use the Blue Nile but remains open to general AU-facilitated cooperation (Communiqué of the 2nd Extraordinary African Union (AU) Bureau). In contrast, Egypt views the GERD as an existential threat. With 97% of its freshwater coming from the Nile, Egypt continues to demand a legally binding agreement on how Ethiopia fills and operates the dam(Wikipedia). Egyptian leaders have repeatedly warned that all options remain on the table hinting at possible military measures if negotiations fail(Al Jazeera). Sudan sits between these two positions: it recognizes the GERD's potential to stabilize water flow and provide cheap electricity but fears uncoordinated releases could damage Sudanese dams and worsen floods, as seen in past years.

The African Union has tried to mediate, but progress has been slow, as Ethiopia resists external pressure while Egypt pushes for international involvement from the United States, European Union, and Gulf states (Communiqué of the 2nd Extraordinary African Union (AU) Bureau). Meanwhile, organized crime and trafficking complicate the situation. (Syvertsen) Reports from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) highlight how instability along the Nile and borders in Sudan, South Sudan, and the Sahel have created opportunities for gangs and militias to smuggle cannabis, hashish, and synthetic drugs (UNODC Eastern Africa - Human Trafficking). In Egypt, security forces have clashed with armed groups using the Nile islands for trafficking (United Nations). This combination of conflict between the states over water and members exploiting instability makes the current situation more unstable than ever (Raineri and Strazzari).

## Block positions

### **Ethiopia**

Ethiopia holds the GERD as a symbol of national pride, sovereignty, and growth, seeing it as a national and continental win. (Al Jazeera) The dam is critical to its plan of pulling millions out of poverty and providing electricity not only domestically but also throughout East Africa. (How) Sudan has criticized the colonial era treaties that granted Egypt and Sudan the majority of Nile waters, claiming that they were signed without the input of upstream countries and hence discriminatory (Wikipedia). Ethiopian politicians emphasise that 85% of the Nile's flow originates in the Ethiopian highlands, giving them a moral right to benefit from it. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has said that "the GERD harms no one; it benefits all," depicting Ethiopia as working for African development (Jazeera). However, Ethiopia's hesitation to sign a binding agreement and its independent filling of the reservoir have fuelled claims that it is defying international law and endangering regional security.

### **Egypt**

Egypt has long opposed to the GERD as Egypt relies on the Nile for about 97% of its freshwater, making it essential for drinking water, agriculture, and industry. As a result, it considers any disruption in the Nile's flow to be a direct threat to its survival. Cairo criticises Ethiopia's independent activities, claiming that the GERD violates Egypt's "historic rights," which were recognised in previous Nile accords. Egypt's primary demand is a legally binding arrangement outlining how Ethiopia will fill and operate the dam, especially during drought years. Egyptian leaders, notably President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, have frequently implied that

military action is not ruled out if negotiations fail. Egypt also sees the GERD dilemma as a regional security issue, warning that water-related instability could spark wider conflict. (Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam)

### **Sudan**

Sudan holds one of the most contentious stances in the GERD debate. On one hand, it stands to gain significantly as the dam could regulate the Nile's flow, minimise seasonal flooding, and supply inexpensive electricity (Jazeera). On the other hand, Sudan is concerned that poor coordination or unexpected water releases would destroy its own dams, particularly the Roseires Dam, and exacerbate flooding, as has been recorded in recent years. Sudan is particularly concerned about the dam's safety, as a collapse would destroy the population along the Blue Nile (Wikipedia). Politically, Sudan alternates between siding with Egypt and Ethiopia based on its current needs, making its position less predictable than any of its neighbours. For the time being, the member state advocates for a binding tripartite agreement while remaining cautious not to entirely align with Egypt in order to avoid losing the potential economic benefits of the GERD (How).

### **South Sudan**

South Sudan is caught in the middle, both geographically and politically. It has close ties with Sudan and shares concerns about flooding, water management, and displacement (Khaled and Musambi). Meanwhile it also relies heavily on Ethiopian investment and diplomatic mediation in its own civil conflicts. Leans slightly toward Ethiopia's development agenda while calling for more cooperation between all Nile states (Communiqué of the 2nd Extraordinary African Union Bureau).

### **Uganda**

Uganda strongly supports Ethiopia's right to build and operate the GERD. President Museveni has often argued that the Nile should be seen as a tool for shared development, rather than a contest for resources (Al Jazeera). It has invested in its own hydropower projects, such as the Karuma Dam, and sees Ethiopia as a key partner in building an East African energy market (How). Uganda believes that upstream nations must not be held hostage by outdated colonial agreements that prevent them from developing their resources (Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam).

### **Kenya**

While Kenya is not a Nile Basin country, it tends to align with Ethiopia because of its economic ties, electricity trade, and shared regional priorities (Jazeera). Kenya emphasizes the importance of African states being able to independently manage their natural

resources, especially free from colonial restrictions or outside interference (Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam). Kenya also views the GERD as part of a broader East African push for sustainable energy, which helps the region reduce its dependence on fossil fuels (How).

### **Tanzania**

Tanzania supports Ethiopia's broader argument of equitable water use. Having built the Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project on the Rufiji River, Tanzania relates closely to Ethiopia's vision of large-scale hydroelectric development. Tanzanian policymakers often argue that rivers should be seen as great sources for progress for the continent, and that Egypt's insistence on maintaining historic rights is unfair to upstream states, who need growth and development too (Ahram Online, "GERD Timeline").

### **Rwanda & Burundi**

Both Rwanda and Burundi support Ethiopia's call for equitable water sharing. These countries argue that all riparian states should have the right to benefit from the Nile Basin, not just the downstream countries. Rwanda often links the GERD debate to sustainable development, pointing out that renewable energy projects like dams can reduce reliance on coal and oil. Burundi, though smaller in influence, shares the same frustration with Egypt's dominance over Nile resources (Ahram Online, "GERD Timeline").

### **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**

The DRC is not directly dependent on the Nile but strongly supports Ethiopia's stance. The DRC itself has ambitions to build the Grand Inga Dam, which could one day power much of Africa, so it sees GERD as a precedent for African countries taking charge of their resources for a better future. For example, the DRC also views hydroelectric development as a way to fight poverty and stabilize fragile states (Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam).

### **Djibouti & Somalia**

Both countries depend heavily on Ethiopia for trade, electricity, and security cooperation. Their arguments will focus on solidarity with Ethiopia and the importance of African unity in resisting external pressure from Egypt's allies (Communiqué of the 2nd Extraordinary African Union Bureau).

### **South Africa**

South Africa often steps in as a mediator in AU conflicts. It has no direct stake in Nile waters, but as one of Africa's largest economies, it pushes for diplomacy and regional stability. South Africa's position is that threats of war or unilateral action must be avoided at all costs,

and that only AU-led negotiations can deliver a fair solution. It often stresses that water should be recognized as both a human right and a tool for cooperation, not conflict (UNGA).

### **Nigeria**

Nigeria is not a Nile state, but as Africa's most populous country and a leader in the AU, it has influence. Nigeria does not usually take sides in the GERD dispute, but it strongly emphasizes the security dimension: if the Nile Basin becomes unstable, criminal groups, traffickers, and armed actors in the wider region could exploit the chaos. Nigeria will use this topic to link water security with the fight against organized crime, reflecting its own struggles with smuggling and trafficking networks (Raineri and Strazzari).

### **Eritrea**

Eritrea's relationship with Ethiopia is complicated, marked by decades of rivalry and recent fragile peace. Eritrea may use the GERD debate to quietly undermine Ethiopia, framing unilateral dam building as risky and destabilizing. However, it is unlikely to openly ally with Egypt, as that could worsen tensions with its own neighbors. Eritrea's position may therefore be one of "cautious neutrality," but with undertones critical of Ethiopia (Ahran Online, "GERD Timeline").

### **Mauritius, Seychelles, Comoros, São Tomé and Príncipe, Cape Verde (Island States)**

These small island nations are not directly involved in Nile politics, but they often highlight climate change, rising sea levels, and water scarcity as their main priorities. ("Water and Sanitation") Have been concerned with the threat of human rights, wanting to make sure that most definitely stays in tact and compromises are made. (UNGA)

### **Chad, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso (Sahel States)**

These countries face daily struggles with smuggling, trafficking, and armed groups that exploit weak state control over borders. They argue that instability in the Nile Basin will make these problems worse, as frontiers in Sudan and South Sudan are already being used for weapons and drug routes. The Sahel states are less concerned with the technicalities of water treaties, but they will insist that AU cooperation on security and crime must be part of any Nile solution. ("Increased Attacks against Community Leaders").

### **Ghana, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire (West African States)**

Like the Sahel, West Africa does not depend on the Nile, but it suffers from cocaine trafficking (on a large scale) moving through its ports and cities. These states will use the Nile debate to broaden the conversation, warning that organized crime is a continental

problem linked to weak governance and corruption. AU frameworks that link water disputes with law enforcement cooperation seems like an appropriate choice (Global Initiative).

### **Central African Republic (CAR)**

The CAR is politically unstable and heavily influenced by outside powers, particularly Russia. While it may not take a strong stance on GERD itself, instability around the Nile has a spillover effect across borders, empowering militias and smugglers (UNODC Eastern Africa – Human Trafficking).

## **PAST UN ACTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS**

Although the GERD crisis is primarily debated within the African Union (AU) and among Nile Basin states, the United Nations and related bodies have taken notice and intervened at various points. Documents can be found in the bibliography.

### **UN Security Council Meetings (2020–2021)**

In July 2020 and July 2021, the UNSC held open debates on the GERD after Egypt and Sudan requested intervention. While the Council did not issue a binding resolution, members encouraged AU-led negotiations. Some members, like the U.S. and France, backed Egypt's call for a binding deal, while China and Russia emphasized non-interference.

### **African Union Mediation Efforts (2020–present)**

The AU has hosted multiple negotiation rounds between Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia. Former AU Chairperson Cyril Ramaphosa (South Africa) in 2020 initiated trilateral talks under the AU's umbrella. These talks continue under subsequent AU leadership but have produced limited progress.

### **Nile Basin Initiative (1999–present)**

A regional intergovernmental partnership launched in 1999 to promote cooperative development of the Nile Basin. Ethiopia and upstream countries see it as a step toward equitable water use, while Egypt remains cautious, fearing it undermines its historic rights.

### **UN General Assembly & Human Rights Council**

While no resolution specifically addresses GERD, UN agencies have repeatedly reaffirmed that water is a human right (UNGA Resolution 64/292, 2010). This principle influences AU and UN debates on how water access should be protected from conflict.

### **UNODC Reports on Drug Trafficking in Africa**

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime has linked instability in Sudan, Libya, and the Sahel to trafficking routes that exploit rivers and borders. While not directly about GERD, these reports highlight the security risks surrounding Nile Basin instability.

(UN)

## SUMMARY AND ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

### Summary

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) represents one of Africa's most ambitious development projects and one of its most pressing sources of regional tension. Ethiopia views the dam as essential for electricity generation, economic growth, and national pride, while Egypt and Sudan see it as a direct threat to their water security and agricultural stability. Despite years of the African Union leading negotiations and limited UN involvement, no binding agreement has been reached on the filling and operation of the dam. The situation has escalated further with the rise of organized crime and drug trafficking networks that exploit instability along the Nile, particularly in Sudan and border regions. This makes GERD not only a development and environmental issue but also a political, security, and human rights challenge. For the African Union and the wider international community, the GERD crisis is a test of whether regional cooperation can overcome nationalist interests and prevent future conflict.

### Useful links and further reading

UN Security Council Debate (2020, S/2020/722 summary): [UN Press Release->Security Council Considers Dispute over Nile Dam](#)

UN Security Council Debate (2021, S/2021/739 summary): [UN Press Release->Security Council Urges Continuation of African Union-Led Talks](#)

UN General Assembly Resolution 64/292 (2010): [The Human Right to Water and Sanitation](#)

African Union official page on GERD negotiations: [AU Peace and Security Council Communiqués](#)

BBC Coverage of GERD Dispute: [BBC News – Ethiopia's Grand Renaissance Dam](#)

## KEY TERMS

**GERD** (Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam): Ethiopia's mega-dam on the Blue Nile, with a reservoir capacity of 74 billion cubic meters.

**Transboundary Water:** Water resources, like rivers or lakes, shared by multiple countries.

**Water Security:** The reliable availability of an acceptable quantity and quality of water for health, livelihoods, and production.

**Hydropolitics:** The interplay of water resource management and international politics.

**Drug Trafficking:** The global illicit trade involving the cultivation, manufacture, distribution, and sale of substances subject to drug prohibition laws.

**African Union Mediation:** The AU's role as the lead body in facilitating negotiations between Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan.

**Unilateral Action:** A decision taken by one state without the agreement of others, such as Ethiopia's decision to begin filling GERD.

## Guiding Questions

### National Interests & Priorities

1. What is my country's main priority regarding the Nile — water security, economic development, energy, or humanitarian concerns?
2. Should my country prioritize sovereignty over shared water, or regional cooperation?
3. How does my country interpret historical treaties (e.g., 1929 & 1959 Nile agreements) vs. modern equitable water use principles?

4. How do climate change and environmental factors affect my country's water security and negotiating position?

### **Negotiation & Mediation**

5. How far is my country willing to compromise to maintain peace in the Nile Basin?
6. Should my country advocate for African Union-led mediation, UN involvement, or bilateral negotiations?
7. Which countries could be my allies, and which are likely to oppose my position?
8. How can preambulatory clauses be phrased to encourage cooperation rather than assign blame?

### **Conflict, Security & Organized Crime**

9. Could my country face security threats if the dam's operations cause flooding or drought?
10. How might organized crime or drug trafficking be worsened by instability in the Nile Basin?
11. What early warning systems or diplomatic mechanisms can prevent unilateral actions from escalating into conflict?

### **Humanitarian & Legal Considerations**

12. How can my country ensure citizens' access to water and uphold human rights while negotiating transboundary water use?
13. How can the UNGA human right to water (Resolution 64/292) be used to justify my country's position?
14. Should the resolution include specific measures to address humanitarian impacts (e.g., access to clean water, flood mitigation)?

### **Resolution & Clause-Building**

15. What specific actions does my country want included in a resolution (e.g., joint Nile monitoring, filling schedules, mediation)?
16. Should the resolution call for binding agreements, voluntary cooperation, or phased implementation?
17. Which agencies or organizations (AU, UNEP, UNDP) should be tasked with oversight or monitoring?

18. Are there technical or operational compromises (water release plans, dam safety measures, renewable energy sharing) that could satisfy all parties?
19. How can the resolution balance development rights, water security, and human rights in a way all sides can accept?
20. What mechanisms should be included for monitoring, reporting, and enforcing compliance over time?

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