

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0468/09
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to the Commission

Subject: Regional management of the Nile

There have been discussions on the regional management of the Nile for decades, without result. In particular Egypt and Sudan refuse to approve a new protocol because they fear that they will have to manage with less water. The countries upstream have been asking for a new protocol for years; these countries are Kenya, Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, Egypt, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda.

Experts in the field fear that these countries will not be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals without a new, fair protocol that allows for the possibility of setting up large-scale irrigation schemes. At present the water consumption of the countries upstream is restricted by a colonial agreement that was negotiated by the British, which gives Egypt the power to manage the flow at certain key points. According to environmentalists the draft agreement would help protect the Nile Basin ecosystem and sustainable use of water from the Nile. In the last three years, water levels in Lake Victoria, one of the most important sources of the Nile, have fallen by 2.5 metres.

Without the agreement, there may be major conflicts because of water shortages. Does the Commission think that, in the framework of its relations with the countries in question, it has any possibility of breaking the deadlock in the talks on the new protocol and facilitating a breakthrough?