Hydro Politics Newsletter
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No peace without water, no water without peace

The UN estimates that at least one-quarter of the world's population will live in water-scarce regions by 2050.

Water deprivation is increasingly recognized as a political and security problem. Tensions resulting from the growing imbalance between global water demand and supply can escalate into conflict. Efforts to solve water-related conflicts and promote water cooperation for peace, termed "**water diplomacy" or "hydro-diplomacy,"** continue to be track one official negotiations dominated. Bu water problems are more complex and need also Track Two Diplomacy. Because it creates safe, flexible, low-pressure spaces where experts, academics, and civil society actors can talk even when governments cannot.

Existing International Water Law provides legal norms, principles, and institutions for expanded international water cooperation. However, more needs to be done to promote participatory decision-making—or "people's diplomacy"

Effective water diplomacy is increasingly urgent as changing climate and extreme weather events disrupt the management of the world's shared water resources. It requires that we expand our conception of who the relevant decision-makers are and that we promote meaningful participation of all key stakeholders.

Innovative Water Diplomacy refers to developing unconventional, technology-based, participatory, and multi-level diplomatic approaches to water management and transboundary waters. It removes water from conflict and provides mutual gain for all parties through technology, data and new cooperation models.

In short it brings integrating technology, data, community engagement, and new collaboration models into diplomacy to resolve water disputes. It includes WEF Nexus Integration, Climate-Resilient Agreements, adaptive allocation rules, Benefit-Sharing Models,

It is evident that we cannot solve 21st century water problems by 20th Century security concepts ,way of thinking as well as uneffective institutions

Dursun Yıldız -Director

Türkiye, Iraq sign financing mechanism to advance water cooperation projects

Turkish, Iraqi ministers sign mechanism enabling implementation of 2024 water agreement, opening door for Turkish companies to modernize Iraq's water infrastructure through oil-linked funding

Tugba Altun, Fatma Zehra Solmaz |02.11.2025

ANKARA / ISTANBUL

Türkiye and Iraq signed a "mechanism document" on Sunday for the financing of cooperation projects in the field of water as part of a broader framework agreement between the two countries.

According to Turkish diplomatic sources, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan was received by Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al Sudani during his official visit to Baghdad.

Following the meeting, Fidan and Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein signed the "Mechanism Document for the Financing of Projects Under the Framework Agreement on Water Cooperation Between the Government of the Republic of Türkiye and the Government of the Republic of Iraq."

Officials stated that the mechanism outlines regulations to ensure the implementation of the "Water Cooperation Framework Agreement," signed during Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to Baghdad in 2024.

.Under the mechanism, infrastructure modernization and construction projects aimed at the efficient, effective, and sustainable use of Iraq's water resources will be undertaken by Turkish companies, with financing to be provided through a system based on Iraqi oil sales.

Through this arrangement, Türkiye aims to enhance its contribution to improving Iraq's water infrastructure and increasing the efficiency of its water resource management.

The "Water Cooperation Framework Agreement" signed on April 22, 2024, and Sunday's Financing Mechanism document mark the beginning of a new strategic phase in economic and trade relations between the two countries. Turkish contracting firms are expected to gain easier access to the Iraqi market and secure new opportunities in strategic projects.

Considering the decline in water resources in the region due to global climate change and the resulting water stress also felt in Türkiye, long-term solutions through regional cooperation are viewed as critical.

Source : https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkiye-iraq-sign-financing-mechanism-to-advance-water-cooperation-projects/3733225

1 in 4 people globally still lack access to safe drinking water – WHO, UNICEF

To mark World Water Week 2025, new report highlights persistent inequalities, with vulnerable communities left behind.

25 August 2025

UNICEF/UNI486298/Dejongh

NEW YORK/GENEVA, 26 August 2025 – Despite progress over the last decade, billions of people around the world still lack access to essential water, sanitation, and hygiene services, putting them at risk of disease and deeper social exclusion.

A new report: *Progress on Household Drinking Water and Sanitation 2000–2024: special focus on inequalities* – launched by WHO and UNICEF during World Water Week 2025 – reveals that, while some progress has been made, major gaps persist. People living in low-income countries, fragile contexts, rural communities, children, and minority ethnic and indigenous groups face the greatest disparities.

Some key facts from the report:

- Despite gains since 2015, 1 in 4 – or 2.1 billion people globally – still lack access to safely managed drinking water*, including 106 million who drink directly from untreated surface sources.
- 3.4 billion people still lack safely managed sanitation, including 354 million who practice open defecation.
- 1.7 billion people still lack basic hygiene services at home, including 611 million without access to any facilities.
- People in least developed countries are more than twice as likely as people in other countries to lack basic drinking water and sanitation services, and more than three times as likely to lack basic hygiene..
- While there have been improvements for people living in rural areas, they still lag behind. Safely managed drinking water coverage rose from 50 per cent to 60 per cent between 2015 and 2024, and basic hygiene coverage from 52 per cent to 71 per cent. In contrast, drinking water and hygiene coverage in urban areas has stagnated.
- Adolescent girls aged 15–19 are less likely than adult women to participate in activities during menstruation, such as school, work and social pastimes.
- In most countries with available data, women and girls are primarily responsible for water collection, with many in sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Southern Asia spending more than 30 minutes per day collecting water.

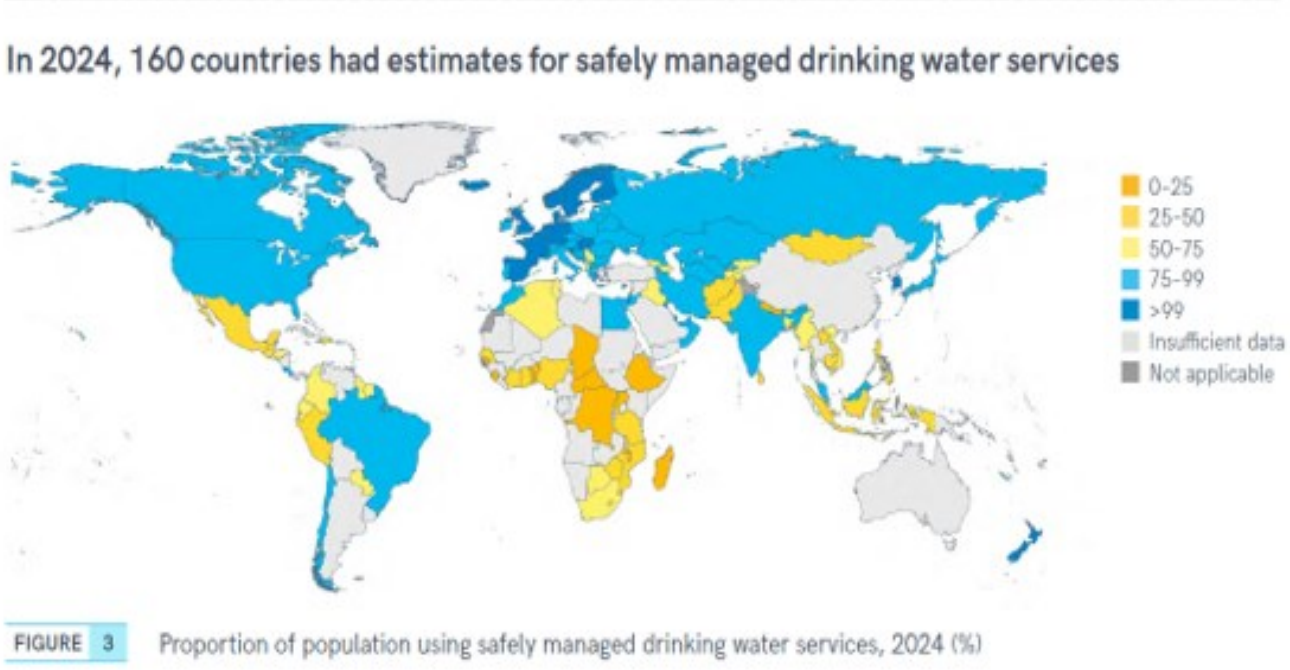


FIGURE 3 Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services, 2024 (%)

- As we approach the last five years of the Sustainable Development Goals period, achieving the 2030 targets for ending open defecation and universal access to basic water, sanitation and hygiene services will require acceleration, while universal coverage of safely managed services in this area appears increasingly out of reach.

2 out of 5 people still lacked safely managed sanitation

Between 2015 and 2024, 1.2 billion people gained access to safely managed sanitation services, with global coverage increasing from 48% to 58%. In rural areas, coverage rose from 36% to 49%, and in urban areas, from 59% to 66%. The number of people practising open defecation has dropped by 429 million and in urban areas it has been eliminated (<1%). However, as of 2024, 3.4 billion people still lack safely managed sanitation services, 1.9 billion have only basic services, 560 million have limited services, 555 million use unimproved facilities, and 354 million continue to practise open defecation. The estimates of safely managed services are available for 145 countries across all eight SDG regions.

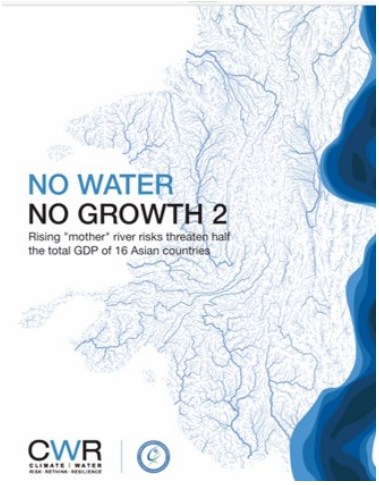
"Water, sanitation and hygiene are not privileges, they are basic human rights," said Dr Ruediger Krech, Director a.e, Environment, Climate Change and Health, World Health Organization. "We must accelerate action, especially for the most marginalized communities, if we are to keep our promise to reach the Sustainable Development Goals."

"When children lack access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene, their health, education, and futures are put at risk," said Cecilia Scharp, UNICEF Director of WASH. "These inequalities are especially stark for girls, who often bear the burden of water collection and face additional barriers during menstruation.

NEW REPORT!

No Water, No Growth 2

New report finds urgent need to prioritise rivers for growth as nearly 2bn people & over US$10trn of GDP are now at risk across Asia's 10 major river basins as water stress deepens & climate threats accelerate



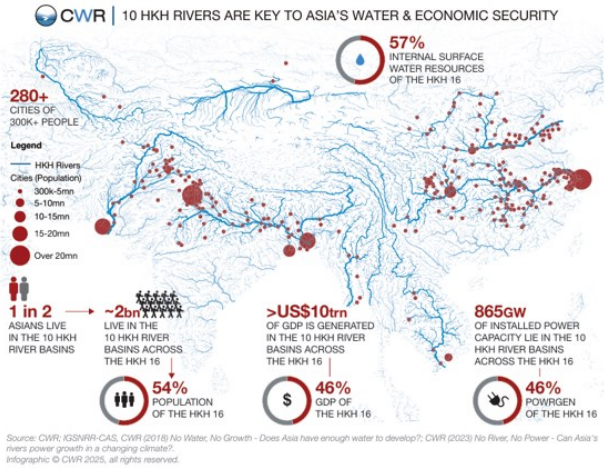
Hong Kong, 28th October 2025 – a new report "No Water, No Growth 2 – Rising "mother" river risks threaten half the total GDP of 16 Asian countries" by CWR and China's national research Institute of Geographic Sciences & Natural Resources, a part of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (IGSNRR-CAS), reveals that nearly 2bn people and US$10.3trn worth of GDP as well as 800GW+ of power assets across Asia's 10 "mother" rivers are at risk from escalating climate risks and deepening water stress.

As these rivers are key drivers of development, the report warns of threats to national economic, water, food & energy security for the 16 countries that rely on them – from China, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Bhutan, Nepal to Bangladesh. Given what's at stake, the report calls for urgent action to curate source-to-sea waternomic roadmaps for each river to ensure economic & financial resilience as well as water, energy & food security in this unprecedented era of rising climate & water risks.

Asia has grown tremendously in the last decade. But much of this growth has been driven by 10 "mother" rivers – the Amu Darya, Brahmaputra, Ganges, Indus, Irrawaddy, Mekong, Salween, Tarim, Yangtze & Yellow. "Today, almost 1 in 2 Asians rely on water from 10 rivers that flow from our Himalayan Water Towers.

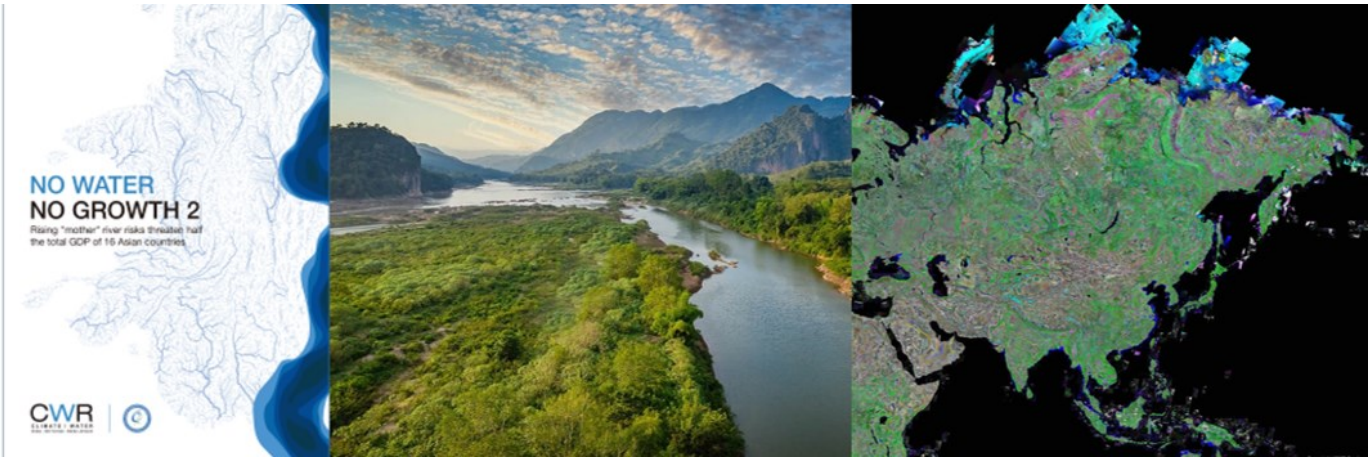
GDP generated in these river basins now account for almost half the total GDP of the 16 countries, up from a third in our earlier 2018 report" warned Debra Tan, the Director & Head of CWR. "As dependence will only rise with urbanisation & development, these 16 countries will face a difficult future if these rivers run dry.

This could happen sooner than we think as all key components of river flow from glacial melt, snowfall and monsoon patterns are already changing today," said Tan.



This report updates CWR's 2018 publication "No Water, No Growth – Does Asia have enough water to develop?" (NWNG1), a first-of-its-kind report to size the economies along the 10 rivers. This report catalysed global finance to start factoring in source-to-sea basin risks in sovereign credit ratings & investment decisions, and was cited in the IPCC report "Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability".

Indeed, the IPCC's Asia chapter did warn that "climate change will further compound multiple stresses caused due to rapid urbanisation, industrialisation and economic growth".



Transboundary issues must also be addressed, especially for the highly stressed transboundary rivers of the Indus, Ganges & Amu Darya said the report. Indeed, fears over the Indus pervade as India has put the Indus River Treaty on hold. However, the report notes that diverting water is easier said than done as huge infrastructure buildouts are needed, plus with Himachal Pradesh cloudbursts racking up US$35mn in damages this June, India will likely be dealing with too much water.

Given rising risks, cross-border cooperation is a must to reduce risk and build resilience the report said. Many are also worried over China's dams on the Mekong as well as the new 60GW dam on the Brahmaputra but the report notes that fears over these distract from the real worry of a future with too much water. "Only 3-10% of the Mekong & Brahmaputra are utilised so there should be plenty of water for everyone to develop. Also, projections show large upticks in water from glacier melt, rainfall & river flow to 2060 for both rivers. **So, we are likely to be dealing with too much rather than too little water … which ironically dams can help alleviate**" Dr Low cautioned.

Transboundary nature of some rivers lend complexity = cooperation is key especially in a changing climate…

- 8 of the 10 HKH Rivers are transboundary. As shown in the first three charts below, the shares of population, GDP & power assets by country vary for each river lending complexity. Decisions made by one country could affect others be they about agriculture, energy mix, economic/infrastructure development or water resource management. So cooperation on water sharing as well as energy policies & economic planning is also key.
- • It is also important to keep healthy usage rates of rivers. As per the next three charts below on water resources and water usage, it is evident that the share of water use between countries for each transboundary river do not match the share of surface water resources between countries. Indeed, water use shares by country per river generally reflect the population share. However, the river usage rates must also be considered. Clearly there is less water for growth on rivers that already use 40% or more of their resources and/or are over extracted. For more stressed rivers, such as the Indus, Ganges and Amu Darya, countries which share these rivers must ensure that they are using water more efficiently for their population, GDP, energy, food & water security

Our climate and rivers are changing,
So must we.

Now is the time for Asia
To put in place sensible waternomic policies
That protect our rivers for continued prosperity.

For rivers carry so much more than water,
They carry life.
Because of this,
We must not fail.

Water Crisis and Water Conflict Potential in the Horn Of Africa

Dursun Yıldız

Director

Hydropolitcs Academy-Türkiye

After the worst drought in 40 years, water insecurity poses a deadly risk to children in the Horn of Africa (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia).(Figure 1).

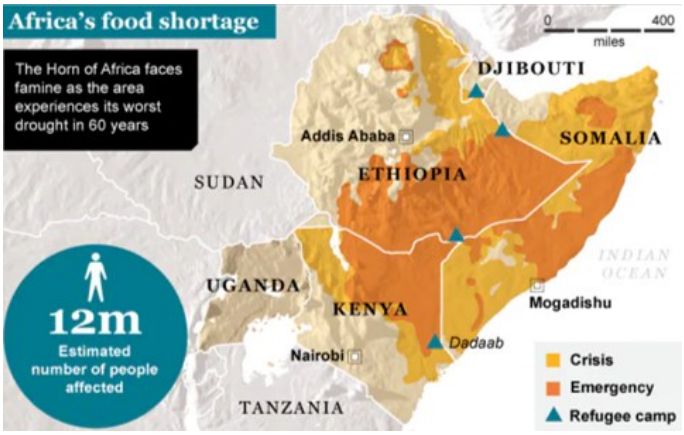


Figure 1. The Horn of Africa Countries.

Climate change is leading to increasingly unpredictable variations in temperature and rainfall patterns in the Horn of Africa, a trend that is only expected to intensify. While some areas may receive higher rainfall, much of the region will suffer from decreased rains. The average temperature increases are also projected to rise higher and faster than the global mean(1).

Decreased rainfall will cause lower levels of surface water and limit the replenishment of groundwater aquifers – two important sources of water for communities. These decreased water levels, in conjunction with poor sanitation and hygiene, give rise to deadly waterborne diseases such as cholera and acute watery diarrhoea. Increased temperatures cause more water to evaporate from land and water surfaces, leading to lower soil moisture and greater water losses from reservoirs.

This impacts agricultural production and the availability of water for household use. Intense heat can also damage water infrastructure and increase the risk of water-borne pathogens that thrive in warmer temperatures.

Too much water, in the form of extreme rainfall events, also threatens water supply, as floods damage infrastructure, pollute wells and dislodge pipelines. Low-lying wastewater treatment facilities are particularly at risk. In much of the Horn of Africa region, water scarcity has resulted in demand for water resources that exceeds the available supply. In short, there is not enough water to meet the growing needs of children and families, as well as agriculture, energy, industrial, and ecosystem needs

Growing Drought Crisis

After facing the worst drought in more than 40 years between 2021 and 2023, the Horn is now once again facing a growing drought crisis after failed rains in 2024 and 2025. This is leading to food and water shortages, as well as the potential loss of livestock and future harvests.

Kenya is facing a significant drought crisis, primarily due to the failure of seasonal rains since late 2024. The country's National Drought Management Authority has confirmed that 20 out of 23 counties in the arid and semi-arid lands are experiencing worsening drought conditions. (3).

In Somalia, poor rainfall, flooding and persistent conflict are driving 3.4 million people into high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) across much of the country. Between July and September 2025, around 624,000 people experienced emergency levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 4), while more than 2.8 million people experienced crisis levels (IPC Phase 3). (3).

The Somali Region in eastern Ethiopia has also experienced multiple consecutive poor rainfall seasons since 2021. In 2025, the start of the main pastoral rains (the "gu/genna" cycle) failed in lar-

This has resulted in low pasture and water availability, deteriorating livestock conditions.(3).

Recurring droughts

Drought has been a recurring issue in the Horn of Africa, with drought fuelling the 2011 famine in Somalia, in which over 260,000 people died. Since 2011, Somalia has had only one proper year of rainfall (in 2013) with all other years falling far short of the norm for one or both of the two rainy seasons per year.(3).

The 2021-23 drought was the worst in 60 years in Kenya and Somalia, following five failed rainy seasons. Some 23.5 million people were impacted, 13.2 million livestock died, and seven million children were acutely malnourished.

But since 2011 humanitarian assistance has increased significantly, and resilience and Early Warning Early Action approaches have also contributed to saving lives. This has meant that the impact of the droughts has lessened, and a declaration of famine has been averted, although in 2023 almost 400,000 people experienced famine conditions in Somalia.(3).

Water Crises in the Horn of Africa

The **Horn of Africa** faces one of the world's most severe and persistent **water crises**. This crisis is shaped by the interplay of **climate variability**, **hydrological stress**, **weak governance**, and **regional conflict dynamics**.

The Horn of Africa's water crisis is a multifaceted crisis exacerbated by the confluence of climate, population pressures, governance weaknesses, and transboundary tensions. A sustainable recovery for the region is possible through basin-scale planning, data-driven management, and climate-resilient policies.

A Way Forward

The region needs to consider water not merely as a "resource," but as a strategic lever for regional development and peace. Regional development projects must be developed in line with this approach.The following steps should be taken to help the region overcome the water crisis:

- Climate-resilient water infrastructure
- Groundwater mapping & monitoring
- Basin-scale cooperation
- Water-energy-food nexus planning
- Early-warning systems

Transboundary Hydropolitics in the Horn of Africa

The physical, socioeconomic, and political challenges in the Horn of Africa with regard to water resources are acute. Three-quarters of the people in the region live within river basins and over aquifers that are shared by two or more countries.

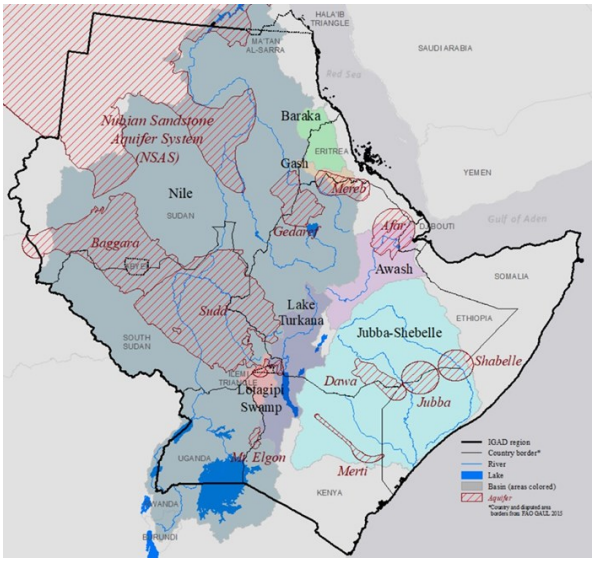


Figure 2. Map of the shared basins and aquifers in the project area / UNEP-DHI

Cross-border river basins and aquifers are entirely contained within the IGAD region (8 countries), as well as the Nile basin and the Nubian Sandstone Aquifer System, which extend beyond the region(4). (Fig.2)

The Horn of Africa—mainly Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, Djibouti, and indirectly Kenya and Sudan—is shaped by a complex set of transboundary hydropolitical dynamics. River basins in this region face both high climate vulnerability and a weak institutional framework, making water a geopolitical force.

The main transboundary rivers of the Horn of Africa are:

Juba–Shabelle Basin (Ethiopia–Somalia)

Awash Basin (Ethiopia → Djibouti, with partial impacts on Eritrea)

Omo–Turkana Basin (Ethiopia–Kenya)

Baro–Akobo–Sobat (Ethiopia → South Sudan → Nile)

These basins make water critical for both state power and livelihood security.

Transboundary hydropolitics in the Horn of Africa is a high-risk water-geopolitical arena shaped by asymmetrical power balances, institutional voids, climate uncertainty, and critical interdependence. Unless countries in the region develop cooperation mechanisms, water crises will continue to deepen in terms of both humanitarian and regional security.

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Where people live in harmony with nature

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Think Forward , Lead Forward

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