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Introduction

This exclusive interview with **H.E. President Taye Atske Selassie Amde** of Ethiopia was conducted by **Dr. Mitslal Kifleyesus-Matschie**, Editor at *Ecopia Magazine*. The discussion centers on the significance of the Nile Basin, Ethiopia's vision for regional cooperation, and the role of the *Children of the Nile Initiative* in shaping a shared future.

Theme: "Unity in Diversity: One River, One Future"

Interviewer: Your Excellency, thank you for your support of the Children of the Nile Initiative. The theme of this gathering is "Unity in Diversity: One River, One Future." What is the significance of this conference for you?

H.E. President Taye Atske Selassie: This gathering is a unique opportunity to reflect on the Nile as more than a river—it is a living testimony to our shared past and a foundation for our collective future. For millennia, the Nile has linked communities through trade, faith,

knowledge, and family ties. From the Axumite Kingdom trading with Nubia and Egypt to pilgrims and scholars moving along these routes, our region has always been interconnected. This initiative reminds us that the challenges and opportunities of today are best addressed together, building on a foundation laid by our ancestors.

Interviewer: Ethiopia has historically been the source of the Blue Nile, and the GERD is a modern manifestation of that legacy. How does history guide your support for such projects?

H.E. President Taye Atske Selassie: Ethiopia's history teaches resilience and contribution. The Abay (አባይ) River or Blue Nile has nourished societies far beyond our highlands, supporting agriculture, settlement, and trade for thousands of years. The GERD is a continuation of this tradition in a modern context, aiming to provide energy, foster regional development, and encourage sustainable use of our shared resources.

All Nine Basin countries have historical contributors to human civilization by nourishing livelihood, culture and eco-system ongoing contributions of all Nile Basin countries. In Sudan, the engineering achievements at Meroe and the irrigation systems along the Blue and White Nile shaped agriculture and trade. In Egypt, the Nile Delta has supported large populations for millennia. Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have all historically utilized tributaries to support livelihoods and trade. South Sudan's communities have long relied on the White Nile for survival and cultural continuity. Each country has a legacy of stewardship, and the GERD is intended as a project that respects and complements these rivers histories rather than disrupts them.

Interviewer: Your Excellency, you have been deeply involved in Ethiopia's diplomatic engagement on the GERD, including at the United Nations and African Union. Could you elaborate on your role and perspective?

H.E. President Taye Atske Selassie: I have emphasized that the GERD is a development project designed for shared benefit. At the United Nations and other international forums, I presented Ethiopia's commitment to dialogue and cooperation, stressing that the dam is not a security threat but a tool for regional cooperation development.

Ethiopia has long had constructive engagement with all partners, aiming for agreements that ensure equitable water use while fostering energy security, economic growth, and resilience against climate variability. My role has been to advocate for this balanced approach, highlighting that the Nile is a shared resource, and our actions must promote mutual benefit.

Interviewer: Some countries have expressed concerns about water security and potential downstream impacts of the GERD. How do you respond to these fears?

H.E. President Taye Atske Selassie: It is understandable that such a significant project may raise concerns. Let me be clear: Ethiopia views the GERD as a development project, not a source of insecurity and conflict. The river belongs to all of us, and its sustainable management is a shared responsibility.

The antidote to concern/worry is transparency, dialogue, and cooperation. Ethiopia has consistently engaged in technical and diplomatic consultations with all Nile Basin countries through African Union-led frameworks, ensuring that information about water management, dam operations, and potential impacts is openly shared. We are committed to joint monitoring, data exchange, and collaborative planning, so that the benefits of the GERD—such as reliable electricity, regional development, and climate resilience—are maximized while risks are minimized.

I urge Eastern Nile countries neighboring countries to see the GERD not as a threat, but as an opportunity for partnership. By working together, we can turn concern into confidence and competition into collaboration. I am hopeful that our shared vision for sustainable

development will honor the needs of all Nile Basin peoples.



Interviewer: Your Excellency, could you share your vision for the Children of the Nile Initiative and how it can shape the future of the region?

H.E. President Taye Atske Selassie: My vision for the Children of the Nile Initiative is to empower the youth across the Nile Basin to become active contributors to regional cooperation and sustainable development. I see this initiative as a platform for nurturing talent, fostering innovation, and building networks among young leaders.

I hope the initiative will:

- Inspire youth to study and preserve the rich cultural and scientific heritage of the Nile Basin.
- Promote cross-border collaboration in science, technology, entrepreneurship, and the arts.
- Encourage young people to view the Nile not as a source of conflict but as a shared responsibility that unites us in pursuit of prosperity, peace, and environmental sustainability.

By creating opportunities for dialogue, mentorship, and joint projects, this initiative can cultivate the next generation of leaders

translate the promise of “Unity in Diversity” into tangible outcomes for all Nile Basin countries.

Interviewer: Your Excellency, the youth are the primary focus of this initiative. Do you also have a message for the mothers and families across the Nile Basin countries?

H.E. President Taye Atske Selassie: Certainly. To the mothers and families across the 11 Nile Basin countries: you are the foundation of our societies. Your dedication, wisdom, and care have nurtured generations who carry forward our shared history and values. You have preserved traditions, passed on knowledge, and instilled a sense of responsibility and respect for the river that sustains us all.

I encourage you to continue supporting and guiding the young people—the Children of the Nile—as they embark on this journey of collaboration and innovation. Your encouragement, mentorship, and belief in the potential of the next generation are critical. Together, families across Ethiopia, Egypt, Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Eritrea can ensure that the Nile continues to unite, nourish, and inspire.

Interviewer: Finally, what message do you have for the young people participating in this conference?

H.E. President Taye Atske Selassie: To the youth of the Nile Basin: you inherit a legacy of knowledge, culture, and resilience. Look at the scholarly traditions of Al-Azhar in Egypt, the monasteries and libraries of Ethiopia, the engineering achievements of Sudan, and the agricultural innovations across East Africa. These achievements demonstrate the power of collaboration across borders.

Use your talents in technology, science, art, and business not just for your own country, but for the entire Nile community. Reach out to innovators in Rwanda, entrepreneurs in Uganda, artists in Egypt, and peacebuilders in South Sudan. Treat each other as partners,

collaborators, and co-stewards of the river that has sustained us all.

This is a pivotal moment in history. The Nile has given life; now it is your turn to ensure its sustainable future. Through dialogue, innovation, and collaboration, you can realize the promise of unity, shared prosperity, and collective progress that the Nile has always symbolized.

