AFRICA INTELLIGENCE BRIEF — TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2026

No Permission Required

Washington offered to restart mediation between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan over the Nile. Ethiopia's water minister answered that his country needs nobody's permission to develop its rivers, and rejected joint management of the dam.

That is not a negotiating position. It is a statement that there is nothing to negotiate, delivered by the state holding the water.

Read in English, French, Arabic, Portuguese and Swahili, across the continent's largest outlets and our own Africa desk.

IN THIS ISSUE

EDITOR'S LEADER · 01

AN OFFER OF MEDIATION MEETS A REFUSAL TO MEDIATE

Whose River It Is

Mediation requires two parties who agree that something is in dispute. This week established that on the Nile there are not two such parties.

Massad Boulos, the American president's senior adviser on African affairs, said Washington is ready to resume mediation between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. He offered to facilitate talks and to provide technical support.

Ethiopia's water and energy minister, Habtamu Itefa, answered that his country does not need permission from anybody to develop its water resources. He rejected calls for joint management of the dam.

And he went further than the dam

Habtamu said Ethiopia built the dam without seeking permission and would do the same if it decided to develop other river basins. Addis Ababa is planning additional hydropower projects on the Blue Nile.

That is a sovereignty argument rather than a water argument, and it is the more difficult of the two to mediate. You can split a river; you cannot split a principle.

What each side is actually protecting

Egypt draws the large majority of its fresh water from the Nile and wants a legally binding agreement covering how the dam is filled and operated, particularly through droughts. That is a demand for a rulebook.

Ethiopia has an inaugurated dam with an official capacity of five thousand megawatts and a country short of electricity. Having built the asset, it has no obvious reason to accept constraints on running it.

> *Ethiopia is a sovereign country and would continue developing its water resources based on its national interests.*
>
> HABTAMU ITEFA, ETHIOPIAN WATER AND ENERGY MINISTER · WEEK OF 22 AUGUST 2026

Sudan sits in between, as usual

Khartoum has at times differed from Cairo, noting that regulated flows and imported electricity could benefit it. It has also raised concerns about the dam's safety and about how releases are coordinated.

That divergence is why a three-way agreement has never formed. Sudan is not simply a smaller Egypt, and treating it as one has defeated a decade of negotiators.

The offer is not new either

Washington hosted talks during the president's first term that produced no agreement, and he wrote to Cairo in January offering to restart mediation. Egypt and Sudan welcomed that offer and Ethiopia said little.

This week Ethiopia stopped saying little. That is the development, and it makes the American offer harder to accept than it was in January.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY · 02

TEN ITEMS, RANKED BY CONSEQUENCE

The Day At A Glance

Here is Tuesday's news, in order of consequence for Latin American readers. Every item is dated.

#	ITEM	WHY IT MATTERS
1	Ethiopia says it needs no permission to develop its rivers	The water and energy minister rejected calls for joint management of the dam. He said Ethiopia would act the same way in other basins.
2	Washington has offered to resume mediation	The president's senior adviser on African affairs said the United States would facilitate talks and provide technical support. The offer covers Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan.
3	Ethiopia is planning more Blue Nile hydropower	Further projects are being advanced on the same river. The dispute therefore extends beyond the existing dam.
4	Egypt wants a legally binding agreement	Cairo draws the large majority of its fresh water from the Nile. Its demand centres on how the dam is operated during droughts.
5	Sudan's position differs from Egypt's	Khartoum has noted potential benefits from regulated flows and electricity imports. It has also raised safety and coordination concerns.
6	Previous mediation has repeatedly failed	Washington hosted talks in the president's first term without agreement. A letter to Cairo in January reopened the offer.
7	Ghana's currency came under renewed pressure	The cedi traded near 11.00 to the dollar against 10.90 a week earlier. Demand at the central bank's auction reached 399 million dollars against 125 million allocated.
8	Uganda's central bank held its rate at 9.75%	Inflation has remained contained. It is one of the few settled monetary positions on the continent.
9	A South Africa and Nigeria citizenship case was postponed to 2027	The Adetshina matter has been pushed back again. It has been running through the courts for over a year.
10	Liberia's former vice president has been arrested	The arrest has triggered a political confrontation. It is the sharpest domestic political development in West Africa this week.

THE NUMBERS AT A GLANCE · AFRICA · TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2026

ETHIOPIA Permission required **None** the minister's position	**ETHIOPIA** Dam capacity **5,000MW** official figure	**ETHIOPIA** Further dams **Planned** on the Blue Nile	**EGYPT** Nile dependence **Most** of its fresh water
SUDAN Position **Differs** benefits and safety	**UNITED STATES** Mediation **Offered** Boulos, 19 August	**GHANA** Cedi **11.00** from 10.90 a week earlier	**GHANA** Auction bids **$399m** against $125m allocated

OUR SIMPLE HEALTH CHECK · TEN AFRICAN ECONOMIES

How The Countries Are Doing

Our own reading of ten African states across five dimensions, scored one to five. This is a judgement, not a forecast, and it is not financial advice.

	POLITICS	BUDGET	MONEY	MARKETS	OUTSIDE	WHAT WE SEE
Ethiopia **Addis Ababa**	4	4	4	3	5	Rejected joint management of the dam and asserted it needs no permission to develop other river basins.
Egypt **Cairo**	4	4	4	3	5	Draws most of its fresh water from the Nile and wants a binding rulebook it cannot compel anyone to sign.
Sudan **Khartoum**	5	5	5	4	5	Positioned between the two, weighing regulated flows and electricity imports against dam safety concerns.
Ghana **Accra**	3	5	5	3	4	The cedi near 11.00 to the dollar with auction demand at more than three times the amount allocated.
Uganda **Kampala**	4	3	2	3	3	The central bank held at 9.75% with inflation contained, one of the continent's steadier positions.
Nigeria **Abuja**	4	5	4	3	4	Has drawn about 1.5 billion dollars of a five billion dollar Abu Dhabi facility whose terms remain unexplained.
Kenya **Nairobi**	4	5	4	3	4	Banks hold about seventeen billion dollars of government debt, and a state contractor faces a five-year debarment.
South Africa **Pretoria**	3	4	3	3	3	A citizenship case with Nigeria postponed to 2027, extending a dispute already more than a year old.
Liberia **Monrovia**	5	4	4	3	3	The arrest of a former vice president has triggered a political confrontation.
Libya **Tripoli and Tunis**	5	4	4	4	5	Rival delegations initialled an election text the United Nations mission disputes, with no resolution since.

How to read the colours: 1 = calm, 2 = fairly good, 3 = mixed, 4 = some strain, 5 = serious strain. Updated Tuesday, August 25, 2026.

DEEP DIVE · THE NILE · 04

AN ASSET WITHOUT AN OPERATING AGREEMENT

A Dam With No Rulebook

Part One · What Actually Happened

The dam is built, inaugurated and running, with an official capacity of five thousand megawatts. What does not exist is any agreement on how it should be operated.

For most of the period since the reservoir began filling, that has not mattered. Rainfall has been consistent and downstream flows have not been materially affected, so the absence of a rulebook has cost nobody anything.

The problem is structural rather than current. A drought is the situation the rulebook exists for, and it is precisely the situation in which no party will want to be bound by one they did not sign.

Egypt's demand is therefore not unreasonable and Ethiopia's refusal is not irrational. Cairo wants certainty about the worst year; Addis Ababa wants discretion in exactly that year.

This week's development narrows the room further. A minister saying his country needs no permission, and would build again elsewhere on the same river, removes the ambiguity that made mediation possible.

Sudan remains the variable. Its interest in regulated flows and cheap electricity is genuine, and any agreement that forms will probably form between Khartoum and Addis Ababa first.

Part Two · Three Ways This Can Go

Possibility A · No agreement and no crisis · 50%

Rainfall holds, flows continue, and the absence of a rulebook stays theoretical for another year. This has been the outcome every year so far and remains the base case.

Possibility B · Technical cooperation without a treaty · 30%

Data sharing and release coordination are agreed at official level while sovereignty is left untouched. Sudan is the most likely first partner, and it is the realistic version of success.

Possibility C · A drought forces the question · 20%

A dry year arrives, releases are constricted, and the dispute becomes operational rather than legal. This is the branch every previous mediator has been trying to prevent.

OUTCOME	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	WHAT IT MEANS FROM LATIN AMERICA
No agreement, no crisis	Flows continue and the rulebook stays unwritten.	Nile stability holds by weather rather than by design, which is not the same as being safe.
Technical cooperation	Data sharing and release coordination without a treaty.	A model for transboundary rivers where sovereignty makes a treaty impossible.
A drought forces it	Constricted releases turn law into operations.	Serious disruption in one of the world's most populous river basins, with grain import consequences reaching this hemisphere.

Chances are Rio Times Intelligence Desk estimates and sum to one hundred. They are a way of ordering possibilities, not financial advice.

EIGHT THINGS, WITH OUR OWN VIEW

Eight Things We Are Watching

Eight things we are watching, with our own view on each. These are opinions from the Rio Times Intelligence Desk and not financial advice.

WHAT	WHEN	OUR VIEW
Ethiopia's next projects	Months	Further Blue Nile hydropower is planned. Each new project makes an agreement on the first one harder.
Whether Sudan splits from Egypt	Weeks	Khartoum's interest in regulated flows and cheap power differs from Cairo's. Any deal probably starts there.
Whether the American offer is taken up	Weeks	Egypt and Sudan welcomed the January version. Ethiopia has now answered it directly for the first time.
Rainfall	Seasonal	The absence of a rulebook has cost nothing because the rains have held. That is the whole of the current arrangement.
Ghana's currency	Weekly	Auction demand at more than three times the allocation, with the cedi at 11.00 from 10.90.
Liberia	Days	The arrest of a former vice president has opened a political confrontation with no obvious off-ramp.
The South Africa and Nigeria citizenship case	To 2027	Postponement of this length is itself a decision about how the dispute will be handled.
Libya's initialled text	Weeks	Still disputed by the United Nations mission and unresolved since the weekend.

POWER PLAYERS · 06

WHO IS DECIDING THIS WEEK

Five People Shaping The News

Five figures whose decisions this week shape what follows. We characterise stances and choices, not private motives.

Habtamu Itefa · Water and Energy Minister, Ethiopia

Said Ethiopia needs no permission to develop its water resources and rejected joint management of the dam. He extended the principle to other river basins.

Massad Boulos · Senior adviser on African affairs to the American president

Said Washington is ready to facilitate talks between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan and to provide technical support.

Abdel Fattah El-Sisi · President of Egypt

Has welcomed American mediation and continues to seek a legally binding agreement on filling and operation, particularly during droughts.

Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan · Sudanese leader

Backed the mediation offer while Khartoum weighs regulated flows and electricity imports against dam safety concerns.

The Bank of Ghana · Accra

Faces auction demand of 399 million dollars against 125 million allocated, with the cedi at 11.00 to the dollar.

DAILY BRIEFING · 07

WHAT HAPPENED WHERE

The Day, Country By Country

What happened where, across the continent, on Tuesday 25 August 2026.

ETHIOPIA

Water and Energy Minister Habtamu Itefa said Ethiopia does not need permission from any country to develop its water resources, and rejected calls for joint management of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. He said Ethiopia built the dam without seeking permission and would do the same in other basins.

Ethiopia is advancing plans for additional hydropower projects on the Blue Nile. The dam has an official capacity of five thousand megawatts.

THE UNITED STATES AND EGYPT

Massad Boulos, senior adviser to the American president on African affairs, said Washington is ready to resume mediation between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan and to provide technical support.

Egypt draws the large majority of its fresh water from the Nile and has repeatedly sought a legally binding agreement on how the dam is filled and operated during droughts.

SUDAN

Khartoum's position has at times differed from Cairo's, noting potential benefits from regulated water flows and electricity imports. It has also raised concerns about the dam's safety and about coordination of releases.

That divergence is the main reason a three-way agreement has never formed despite almost a decade of talks.

GHANA AND UGANDA

The cedi came under renewed pressure, trading near 11.00 to the dollar against 10.90 a week earlier, as corporate demand for foreign currency outpaced supply. Bids at the central bank's latest auction reached 399 million dollars against an allocation of 125 million.

Uganda's central bank held its policy rate at 9.75% with inflation contained.

WEST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

Liberia's former vice president has been arrested, triggering a political confrontation. A South African citizenship case involving a Nigerian-born woman was postponed to 2027.

Nigeria has drawn about 1.5 billion dollars of its five billion dollar Abu Dhabi facility, whose terms remain unexplained.

LATIN AMERICA AND AFRICA

The Nile dispute has an exact counterpart in this hemisphere. Itaipu, on the Paraná, is jointly owned and jointly operated by Brazil and Paraguay under a treaty signed before a single turbine was installed.

That is the difference. The rulebook came before the dam in South America, and in East Africa the dam came first and the rulebook has still not arrived.

CORPORATE PIPELINE · 08

DEALS, SECTORS AND DATES

Pipeline, Sectors, And The Calendar

Deals, sectors and dates across the continent over the next month.

WHAT	WHO	WHERE IT STANDS
Nile mediation	United States, Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan	Offered by Washington; Ethiopia has rejected joint management of the dam.
Further Blue Nile hydropower	Ethiopia	Additional projects being advanced on the same river.
Foreign exchange auctions	Bank of Ghana	Bids of 399 million dollars against 125 million allocated.
Abu Dhabi facility	Nigeria	About 1.5 billion dollars drawn of a five billion dollar line, terms unexplained.
Election agreement	Libya	Initialled in Tunis and disputed by the United Nations mission.

Sector Watch · Four Things to Track

Water and power

A five thousand megawatt asset operating without any agreement on how it is run. The largest unpriced risk on the continent.

Currencies

Ghanaian auction demand at more than three times the allocation is the clearest sign of dollar scarcity in West Africa.

Sovereign borrowing

Nigeria has drawn under a third of a facility it will not describe. Partial drawing is itself information.

Political risk

An arrest in Monrovia and a case postponed to 2027 in Pretoria, both slow-burning and both unresolved.

Calendar · Next 30 Days

DATE	WHAT
27 August	Bank of Ghana foreign exchange auction results.
23 September	Morocco votes, with online candidacy filing already open.
Late September	Nigerian bank half-year results, delayed pending regulatory approval.
December	South Sudan's scheduled election.
2027	The postponed South African citizenship hearing.

BOTTOM LINE · SOURCES · 09

WHAT THE DAY ADDS UP TO

What Tuesday Tells Us

An offer to mediate was answered by a statement that there is nothing to mediate.

Ethiopia's position is that a sovereign state does not require permission to build on its own rivers, that it did not ask before and will not ask again. Everything follows from that, including the refusal of joint management.

Egypt's position is equally coherent. A country drawing most of its fresh water from one river wants written rules about the year the rains fail.

Neither is bluffing and neither has an obvious concession available, which is why a decade of mediation has produced nothing. The arrangement currently holding the Nile together is the weather.

For Latin American readers the contrast is instructive rather than flattering. Itaipu works because Brazil and Paraguay wrote the treaty before they poured the concrete, and the Nile is the same problem attempted in the opposite order.

	DETAIL
CORRECTIONS	Five errors in our 23 and 24 August editions, identified against the desk's published versions. **Lamu**: Dangote has offered East African governments 30% of the planned Kenyan refinery, Kenya's tenth costing about 500 million dollars. This is Kenyan public money buying into a Nigerian private project, not Nigerian capital building in Kenya as we wrote on 23 August. **Minembwe**: the first inspection followed the Doha framework agreement of 15 November 2025, a gap of nine months, not four as stated on 24 August. **Namibia**: the local-content policy was approved by Cabinet and not gazetted; we wrote that it had been gazetted. **Nigeria**: about 1.5 billion dollars has been drawn of the five billion dollar facility; we implied the full amount. **Kenya debarment**: the World Bank exclusion runs for a minimum of five years with release conditional on compliance, not to a fixed date of June 2031.
PRIMARY	Statements by Ethiopia's Water and Energy Minister to The Pulse of Africa. Remarks by Massad Boulos reported by Egypt Independent via Addis Standard. Bank of Ghana auction results via Reuters.
REPORTING	Addis Standard, The Eastleigh Voice, allAfrica, Reuters via CNBC Africa, The National, and the Rio Times Africa desk · 19-25 August 2026.
LANGUAGES	English, French, Arabic, Portuguese and Swahili.
VERIFICATION NOTE	The Ethiopian minister's remarks were given in an interview with a state media outlet and are reported at that level. The American mediation offer is attributed to a presidential adviser and reported via a second outlet; no State Department statement has been published. Dam capacity of five thousand megawatts is the official figure and sustained output has not been independently confirmed.
EXCLUDED	No sport. Where a country appeared in our 23 or 24 August editions, it is included here only on new facts or as a correction.
SKIPPED	No fresh item cleared the threshold from Algeria, Tunisia or the Sahel states; North Africa is represented by Egypt, Ethiopia's counterpart position and Libya.

Compiled by the Rio Times Intelligence Desk from major outlets in the region's main languages. editor@riotimesonline.com · riotimesonline.com ·