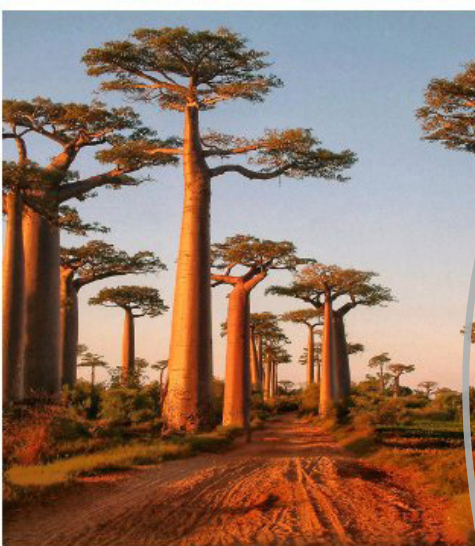
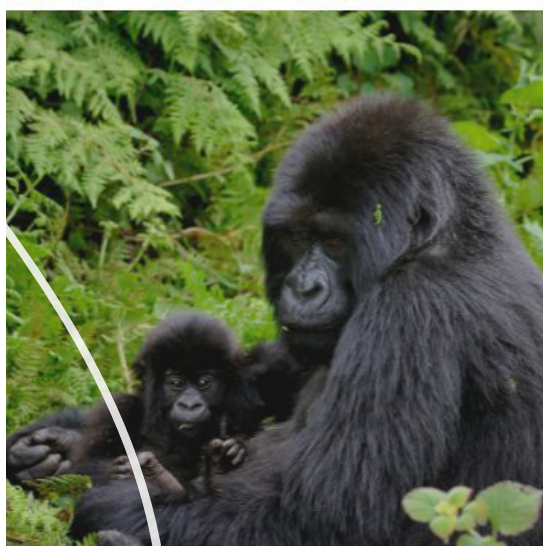
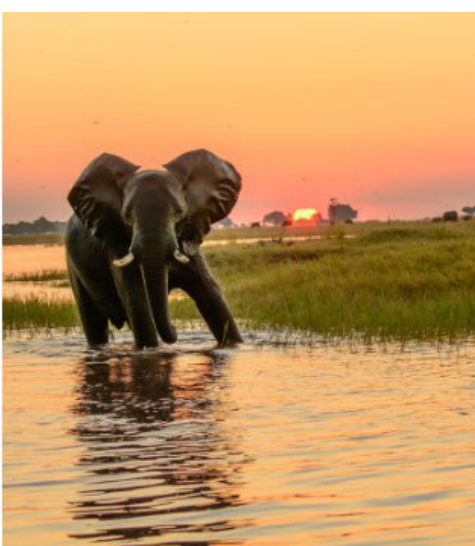
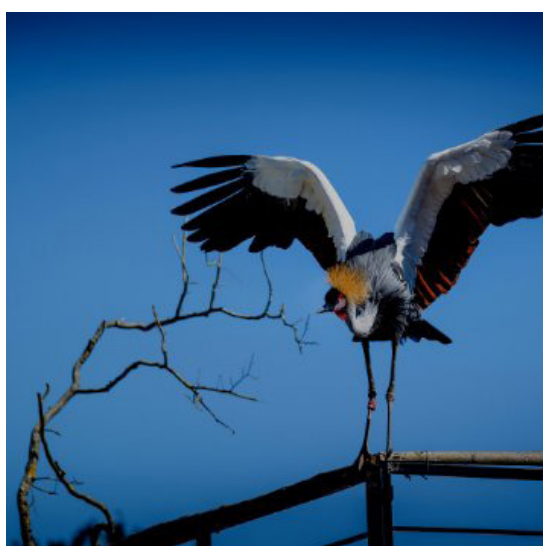


# 2023 World Days

## Retrospective to stimulate prospective thinking

Towards a more resilient Africa



# 2023 World Days

**Retrospective to stimulate prospective  
thinking**

Towards a more resilient Africa





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Collection

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## Contributions

This collection was carried out under the supervision of Mr. Nabil Ben Khatra, Executive Secretary of the Sahara and Sahel Observatory, and the direction of Mr. Mourad Briki, Director of the Watch and Prospective & Capacity Building Department.

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- Mr. Mourad Briki: page 34

# Preface

During the year 2023, the Sahara and Sahel Observatory experts developed thematic articles linked to the world days of interest for Africa and had them disseminated on the Organization website and social networks.

This collection was designed to make sure these articles are widely spread and to produce an annual report covering a wide range of environmental subjects. This initiative is part of a long-term approach. It is perfectly aligned with the missions of the Organization and addresses the four thematic axes of its 2030 strategy, namely Water, Earth, Climate and Biodiversity.

As indicated by its title, this retrospective aims to trigger prospective brainstorming in order to preserve the environment of Africa.

The articles aim to present, analyze and enlighten readers on environmental issues related to the African context, to popularize the different subjects discussed and to issue recommendations. The texts are no less than a combination of relevant and accessible information. Written in a light and sometimes entertaining style, the articles aim to inspire engagement and to strengthen awareness among the general public and stakeholders regarding the questions raised by the World Days. Each content tells the importance of the issues related to the theme of the Day, while integrating current events as well as examples and statistics specific to the African continent.

The ultimate purpose of this collection is to provide a positive prospect based on a better understanding of the situation in the continent.

We hope that the year 2024 will be marked by significant progress and promising potential, offering opportunities for development and stronger synergies and collaborations to serve the Africa we want.

*For better “Days”...*

**Mourad BRIKI**

Director of the Watch and Prospective  
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# World Wetlands Day: “It is time for wetland restoration”




The OSS restates its commitment to the enhancement and restoration of ecosystems in Africa. The World Wetlands Day is celebrated on February 2 of every year, in commemoration of the adoption of the Ramsar Convention (1971). In addition to the descriptive inventory that it draws up of the wetlands fauna and flora, this convention calls for mobilization with a view to having the wetlands preserved, given the leading role they play in the cycle of water. The Wuhan declaration, adopted in November 2022 at the end of COP14 of the Ramsar Convention, highlighted the immediate need of implementing and undertaking all the necessary actions for the wetlands preservation and restoration. Considered to be the richest ecosystems on the planet in terms of biodiversity, wetlands play a crucial role in achieving a number of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and provide highly valuable ecosystem services related to food and water security and disaster risk protection. They are also an important tourist hotspot, and generate significant incomes for local economies. Wetlands are also very useful for the survival of our ecosystems and in the fight against climate change. They represent an important reserve of carbon for the planet that would help keep global warming below 2°C by 2100. Even if wetlands provide high-value ecosystem services for humanity, they are still being degraded under the effects of anthropogenic pressure, including intensive agriculture, irrigation, water withdrawal, urbanization, industrial development and pollution.

**The OSS restates its commitment to the enhancement and restoration of ecosystems in Africa.**





In 50 years, the surface of wetlands has decreased by 35% all over the world, a rate 3 times higher than that of deforestation. If no conservation measures are taken, such deterioration would affect nearly 60% of these areas by 2050. And here comes the need for monitoring tools that would play a decisive role in the maintenance and restoration of wetlands. Ecosystem Natural Capital Accounting (ENCA) is one such tool. It has the ability to assess the potential benefits of ecosystem restoration programs, including wetlands. It also makes it possible to operationally make up for the lack of quantification of ecosystems and help meet international requirements and concerns of taking into account biodiversity and ecosystem services in national planning processes. The AfriKENCA initiative, launched by the OSS in collaboration with the different partners of the Copernicea project, is part of this ecosystem restoration dynamic and aims to establish a national and regional network for sharing and exchanging information and data that are useful and necessary for the ENCA, in six French-speaking countries (Burkina Faso, Guinea -Conakry, Morocco, Niger, Senegal and Tunisia). The initiative would then provide the countries with their own operational and self-sustained mechanism for Ecosystem Natural Capital Accounting (ENCA). Committed to a better ENCA-based quantification of ecosystems, the OSS and its partners contribute to the identification of the best solutions and to the response to the international community call for action launched in 2023 for the protection and restoration of wetlands. The OSS is taking the World Wetlands Day on the theme «It is time to wetland restoration», to release the video produced under the Copernicea project that focuses on Ecosystem Natural Capital Accounting in Africa. It aims to enable decision-makers and the civil society to better understand the ENCA concept and to grasp the relevance and the benefits of establishing it for the restoration of ecosystems, and the wetlands in particular.



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# World Wildlife Day 2023: “Partnerships for Wildlife”



I am mother africa, believed to be the birthplace of humanity and the ultimate home for some of the world's most iconic wildlife! Lions, giraffes, gorillas ... well, the list goes on.

My wildlife forms a key part of my identity and plays a vital role for my ecological and economic sustainability. On this world wildlife day, i wish, you humans, can acknowledge my true value, spread awareness about my unique wildlife and work together to have it preserved.

## Now, let me tell you about myself!

### **The African wildlife is unique!**

Africa is marvelously rich with an exceptional wildlife that developed unique strategies to adapt and survive in such a harsh environment.

Africa is also home to a quarter of the global biodiversity and a panoply of various ecosystems including mangroves, deserts, tropical forests, savannahs, and even mountain glaciers. This biome diversity gave rise to a great number of endemic species: 4,539 freshwater species (IUCN), 1,400 bird species (Birdlife international), and the famous , etc. The Grauer's gorilla, located in the Kahuzi-Biega National Park (KBNP) in Congo, is one of the most endemic and critically endangered species of the animal kingdom.

### **The Global wildlife as a Pillar to humanity**

Wildlife is not only admirable for photographs; it is one of the most important pillars to humanity's survival. According to IPBES's assessment report on the sustainable use of wild species, 1 in 5 people depend on wildlife for income and food. Besides, it represents an essential part of our ecosystem, stabilizes the environment and keeps soil erosion and degradation drivers under control.

### **The African wildlife is the ultimate guardian of local communities**

The lives and livelihoods of our African ancestors have always been linked to wildlife that was such a spiritual and cultural inspiration to them. They showed respect to every single animal like the leopard representing greatness, ferocity and courage. Not only that, wildlife helps combat soil degradation and tackle climate change, and most of all, it is a patron for Africa's economic growth and sustainability.



# Want to know how? Let's get into details!

## **Wildlife contributes to land preservation in Africa.**

Animals reduce soil erosion by keeping the vegetation balance. In fact, primates, elephants and antelopes play an important role in seed dispersal, the maintain of local vegetation, the natural control of pests and the prevention of overgrazing. Thus, their conservation prevents deforestation and soil degradation and keeps a high level of biodiversity.

**Wildlife helps tackle climate change.** By keeping healthy habitats such as forests, wildlife contributes to vegetation increase and high levels of carbon sequestration. As revealed by “The role of large wild animals in climate change mitigation and adaptation” article that appeared in the “current biology” journal, large animals are a key contributor to climate change mitigation as they change the fire regime and cool the earth's surface by reflecting more solar radiation.

## **Wildlife is a patron for Africa's economic growth**

Wildlife provides many opportunities for economic growth in Africa through different sectors such as ecotourism, agriculture, carbon market, non-timber forest products and animal products. According to the “State of the Wildlife Economy in Africa” report, the wildlife safari industry in Africa is estimated at between USD 12.4 billion (direct) and USD 42.9 billion (total). Furthermore, in 2019 travel and tourism in Africa made a 7.1% contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and created 24.6 million jobs (WTTC, 2020). Nevertheless, maintaining sustainable and inclusive wildlife economies is a key condition to align wildlife conservation with the economic development in Africa and the prosperity of local communities.

## **Why is preserving the African wildlife urgent? What needs to be done?**

Africa's rich wildlife lies under significant pressure with the increasing losses of species and habitats. According to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), over 6,400 animals and 3,100 plants in Africa are at risk of extinction. This threat is mainly driven by a combination of human-induced factors such as poaching, illegal trade, the human-wildlife conflict and habitat loss. Those threats exacerbated by climate change impacts such as resource extraction, deforestation and droughts. The two-year drought in Kenya that wiped out 2% of the world's rarest zebra species (The Grevy Zebra) and increased elephant deaths, is a living proof of the threats on the African wildlife.

“Now that I, mother Africa, told you mostly everything that you might question, let me add one last thing. On this World Wildlife Day under the theme “Partnerships for Wildlife Conservation” and within 8 years left to meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals, I need you to acknowledge that it is more than urgent to reconsider the consequences of your activities and work together towards the restoration of my wildlife, populations and habitats.

To do so, here's some of the recommendations that will guide you through your journey of wild conservation”:

- Develop more projects to create income opportunities through conservation and work with local communities in order to reduce human-wildlife conflict.
- Enhance close partnerships with protected areas authorities
- Work on the introduction and encouragement of using climate-smart agriculture and sustainable energy alternatives
- Regulate transhumance and livestock around protected areas
- Encourage the use of new technologies to monitor wildlife in protected areas such as the establishment of early warning systems and the deployment of drones and other connected IT systems
- Work on the restoration of degraded national parks such as Garamba National Park (Congo – Kinshasa), Kahuzi-Biéga National Park (Congo) and Manovo-Gounda St Floris National Park (Central African Republic), all designated as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO and assessed as «critical” (IUCN)

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# International day of forests:

## “Forests and health”



March 21

On this International Day of Forests, even though the world is still hit hard by the pandemics, several actors think of the human health – forests duo, hence this year's International Day of Forests theme «Forests and health». On this occasion, the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) takes the path of the jungle and the forest to remind that these ecosystems are one of the pillars of our existence and our well-being.

### **Forests have so much to give to our health.**

**First**, thanks to the oxygen they produce, the lungs of the Earth allow us to breathe and act as natural carbon sinks, which means they improve the quality of the air we inhale. They purify our water, protect our soil and provide us with vital food and medicine. They preserve the ecosystems and provide a great deal of ecosystem products and services, including the firewood we use for cooking. In addition to the beneficial effects they have on human mental health (many people have a profound spiritual relationship with forests), they play an important socio-economic role in supporting the livelihoods of local communities by providing income generating activities to some 2.5 billion people worldwide.

### **However, poorly managed forests can put our health at risks.**

**Malaria**, the African trypanosomiasis, the Lyme disease, HIV and Ebola virus are some of the diseases associated with forests. Other less-known infective agents linked to forests are constantly identified, and most new infectious diseases are related to habitat loss due to changes in forest areas and expansion of the populations on the cost of forests.





**But, forest health can be particularly fragile.**

Facing the challenges of deforestation, pollution, diseases, invasive species and even fires, forests are increasingly degraded and threatened, just like the plants and animals they home. 178 million hectares of forest which is roughly the area of Libya have been lost since 1990, this is one of the many frightening figures relating to forests. With 3.9 million hectares of forest loss, Africa, home to the Congo Basin forest, the world's second-largest primary tropical forest, shows the highest net annual rate of forest loss in 2010–2020. Today, global warming adds to the difficulties ahead of forests and therefore hinders their health, vitality and sustainability.

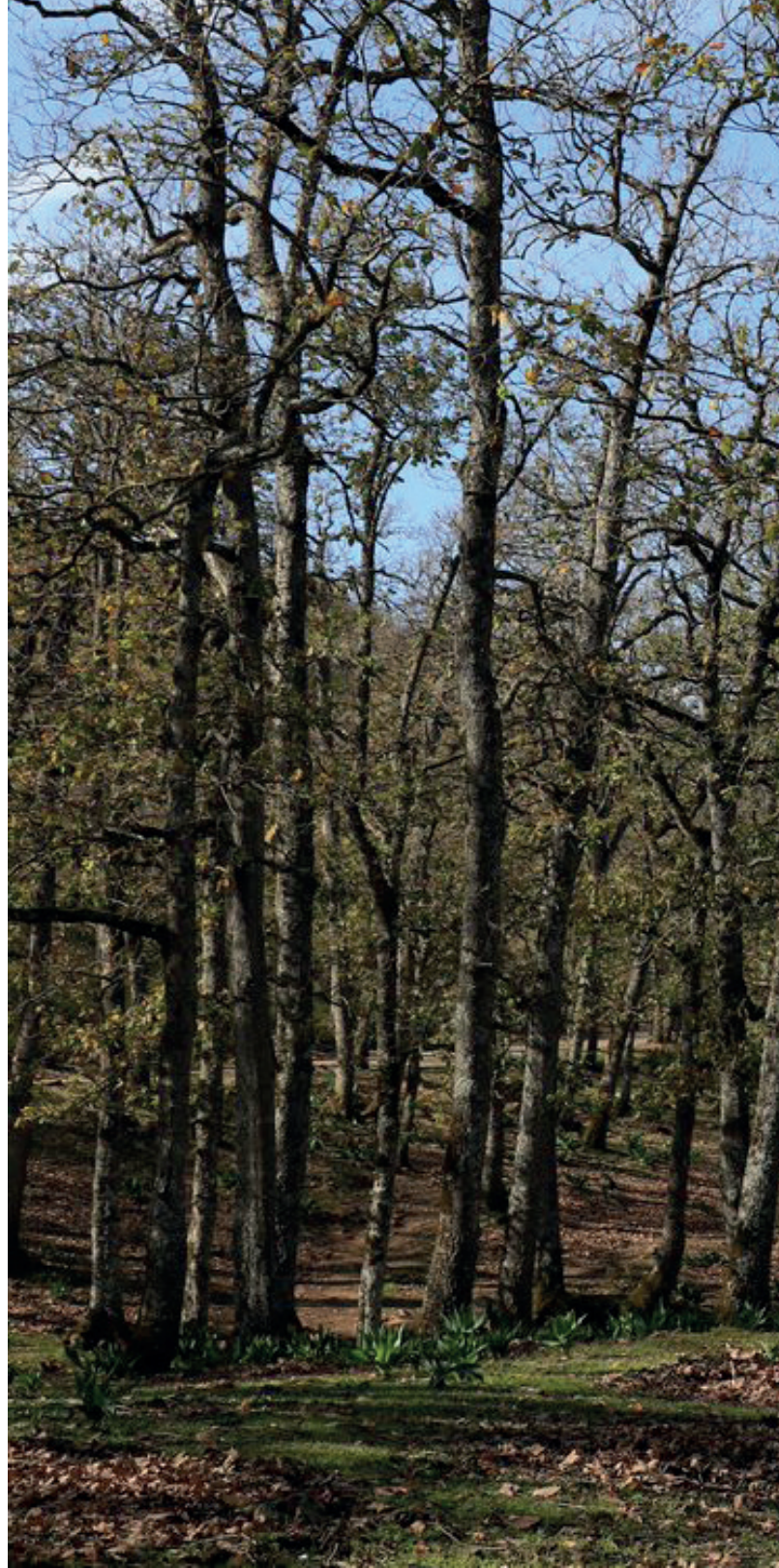
**The clock is ticking, we must act now to preserve our forests and, therefore, our health.** Intensive forest management contributes to maintaining human health, by reducing the risk of future pandemics, maintaining food security, eliminating poverty, preserving global biodiversity and hope for a better world. Today, conservationists are on the search for more inclusive policies for the exploitation of forests. They seek the expertise of local communities and indigenous peoples who can help protect them, not to mention the support of political decision-makers, who can be a source of inspiration and assistance in the development of policies and programs for the conservation of the forests anywhere in this world. But above all, we do have the key to safeguard these precious ecosystems and, moreover, to preserve our health.

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*“If one day the forests came to disappear, man would only have his family tree to mourn.”*  
*[Albert Einstein]*





# World water day: “Accelerating change”



March 22

The World Water Day is celebrated on March 22 of every year since 1993. It emphasizes the importance of freshwater resources, raises awareness among decision-makers on the situation of access to drinking water for the populations, the most vulnerable in particular. Besides, this day aims to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) : clean water and sanitation, for all by 2030.

The 2023 theme : “Accelerating change to solve the water and sanitation crisis” corresponds to the United Nations 2023 Water Conference which will be held in New York on March 22-24. It will bring together all the water sector key players and will aim to establish new partnerships and make commitments that should lead to more concrete and more urgent actions to achieve SDG 6.6.

Two billion people on Earth do not have access to drinking water. Even if there are some inequalities between the sub-regions and the countries, the situation is still alarming in Africa where the average water availability is only about 210 m<sup>3</sup>/inhabitant/year compared to 512 m<sup>3</sup>/inhabitant /year worldwide. This is partly explained by the weak potential for the development of water resources. The water stress situation is really noticeable and very worrying for the future because, according to the World Meteorological Organization “State of the Climate in Africa 2021” report, 4 out of 5 African countries will no longer have sustainably managed water resources by 2030 if no action is undertaken.





Moreover, the continent is prone to the climate change effects which are exacerbating the already delicate water stress situation in several countries, and most of the African countries do not have enough capacity to implement integrated and sustainable water resources management. Very often times, the countries do not adopt coordinated strategies in managing the shared water resources of the continent. It is therefore more than urgent to take measures at all social, political and institutional levels to overcome water stress and ensure water security for all communities.

In this regard, the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS), with the support of its member countries and other partners, has been actively working for three decades for the sustainable management of natural resources, the water resources in particular. The various OSS efforts contribute to the improvement of water availability, to the water supply of the populations, to the sustainable management and protection of water resources in its area of action to maintain peace and food security. It has brought a change in the management of water resources and particularly shared trans-boundary groundwater, namely : the North Western Sahara Aquifer System (NWSAS) and the Iullemeden-Taoudéni/Tanezrouft Aquifer System (ITTAS) through the establishment of consultation frameworks managed by the countries, capacity building in terms of good practices, the improvement and sharing of knowledge on the Integrated Water Resources Management as well as their Information Systems.

The OSS has also provided support to the countries in improving the availability of water resources in a climate change context through specific proposals for the development of alternative resources such as the use of unconventional water (treated wastewater, sea water desalination, etc.).

At this critical stage and through its 2021-2030 strategy, the OSS is committed to reinforcing and boosting its actions in its area of intervention through the mobilization of funds for the benefit of the countries to improve access to water, knowledge sharing, the dissemination of good practices and the preservation of natural resources



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# Endangered Species Day :

## “Endangered african species have something to say, we need to listen”



May 11



Unable to describe its distress or voice its pain, having no more power to convey its hurting and express its misery, nature, through its fauna and flora, suffers in silence. The few lines you are about to read aim to impersonate endangered species, give them the chance to speak up and hear their repressed cries.

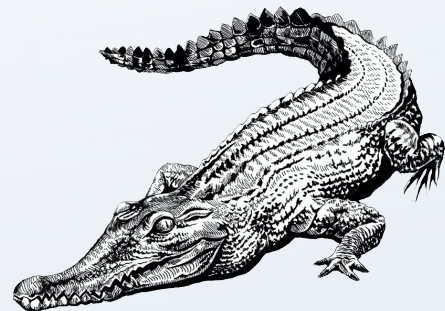
The idea is to highlight the importance of protecting endangered species and to raise public awareness on how frail they have become, by choosing native species highly threatened with extinction in Africa, based on the Red List of Threatened Species of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), top reference and indicator, making it possible to keep a permanent watch over the state and evolution of biodiversity on Earth.

**Black Rhino** : “Hi there, it is the black rhino speaking. The scientists have given me the *Diceros bicornis* scientific name. You’ve probably heard of me for I’m one of the “Big Five” group, but this has caused me a lot of problems. Did you know that I am classified as Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red List, that I currently live in Southern and East Africa and that my West African subspecies has disappeared ? Today, the black rhino population is down to 3,142 mature individuals. Do you know why ? The answer is plain to see. Because of the poaching that never ended for our horns and for the clearing of our habitat for agriculture”.





**Slender-snouted Crocodile** :“I am a crocodile named *Mecistops cataphractus*. I live in West Africa, my presence is uncertain in several countries and I officially disappeared from Chad. Also rated as Critically Endangered, there are countless of pressures lying upon me. Commercial hunting for skin and meat, prey depletion, residential and commercial development, agriculture and aquaculture, energy production and mining exploitation, dam construction, pollution and climate change impacts, are all forces that we have to face. One thing is for sure : we are not just weeping crocodile tears here”.



**Atlas Cedar** : “*Cedrus atlantica*, majestic tree. I am actually from the Atlas, a mountain chain in North Africa. In my natural area, I feature in the IUCN Endangered Species list. Our population is highly fragmented and is continuously declining. Our forests have been exploited for wood for a very long time. Illegal logging added to overgrazing and repeated burning are major drivers of our destruction. In the areas closest to the Saharan desert, droughts are really, really hard to bear. I always thought that I was a crowned prince and considered myself a precious plant heritage. Why all this harm ? Answer my question”.

“We speak in the name of all threatened and endangered species and call upon the human species sharing this Earth to give us the special attention we deserve”.

It is no secret that the extinct and disappearing fauna and flora species will irreversibly modify the food chains and disturb the ecological development and that they will undoubtedly impair the fundamental role that biodiversity plays in the ecological balance of our planet.

To all *Homo sapiens*, biodiversity on Earth is on the verge of a 6<sup>th</sup> mass extinction. It is thus vital to look back at the situation for a brighter image of tomorrow and take the necessary conservation measures at all scales.

Let us make the unsaid, said ...

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# International day for biological diversity: “From agreement to action : re-building biodiversity”



The climate disruption the world is currently witnessing and the resulting natural disasters are partly consecutive to the loss of biodiversity. At the opening of the 15th Conference of the Parties (CoP15) of the Kunming-Montreal Convention on Biological Diversity, in Canada - December 2022, the Secretary General of the United Nations declared : “Today, a third of all land is degraded, this makes it even harder to feed the growing populations”.

The collapse of biodiversity is the result of the careless and we might say criminal behavior of man, who heads for his own fall. Indeed, through the anarchic exploitation of natural resources, human activity is degrading forests, agricultural land, rivers, lakes and oceans, that used to live the perfect healthy life. As a result, the survival of a huge-deal of species of plants, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish and invertebrates is put in danger. According to the IPBES report (2019) one million animal and plant species are threatened with extinction because of the disappearance of their natural habitats. It is therefore necessary to take appropriate measures to preserve biodiversity for the survival of humanity. We, present generations, have the responsibility to meet this unprecedented environmental challenge and to get things right by halting the harm that we have made.

Several agreements on biological diversity have been signed with supporting measures. However, there is no doubt that these measures are not binding enough and the funding they made it possible to raise fall dramatically short of what is needed. No global biodiversity targets have been met (UNDP, 2022).

The historic Kunming-Montreal Framework, adopted at the end of CoP15, is a global call to restore and protect biodiversity through 23 global goals. The «30X30» initiative is one of these goals that was adopted to designate and thus protect at least 30% of terrestrial and marine ecosystems in the world by 2030.





From agreement to action means that our speeches and decisions will now have to be supported by facts and funding to match the ambitions, in order to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Nature-based solutions are still underfunded (UNEP, 2022). Concrete actions up to the challenges of climate change, specific extinction risks and the extent of land degradation shall be taken for a significant restoration of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Global decision makers are urged to take consistent action for the survival of humanity and the protection of the earth.

Africa, least contributor to this climate change is the continent hit most by its consequences. It is high time we concretely supported African ecosystem restoration initiatives in order to improve their capacity to absorb carbon dioxide and reduce global warming.

The Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS), through its mission and experience in the coordinated and sustainable management of natural resources in Africa, supports and implements several sub-regional and national projects for the biological diversity preservation. As part of its 2030 strategy, the OSS made the commitment of providing its partner countries with knowledge and methods for assessing biodiversity and adapted ecosystem services. This assessment is part of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity Vision 2050 “Living in harmony with nature” and allows a better valuation, as well as actions to monitor the flora and fauna. Working on the achievement of this goal, the OSS makes an indirect contribution to strengthening food production, improving ecosystem services and, consequently, limiting population migrations. The AfriKENCA initiative, launched by the OSS in collaboration with the various partners of the Copernicea project should, in the long term, provide the countries with their own and independent operational mechanism for Ecosystemic Natural Capital Accounting (ENCA). Accredited as a Regional Implementation Agency by the Adaptation Fund and the Green Climate Fund, the OSS is a major channel and contributor to the conservation of biological diversity in Africa.



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# World africa day: “Africa | A deeply changing continent”



## We are committed to serving Africa.

Celebrating Africa is working every day to find answers to the challenges it faces, while preserving its wealth, its identity and culture.

The Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) takes the Africa Day to join the efforts of the African community by restating its commitment to the sustainable development and prosperity of our continent.

Africa's challenges are a matter of concern to us all. We all have to put our energy, our knowledge and our power of action to come up with a coordinated, achievable and rapid response.

Today, our continent is heavily impacted by the effects of climate change. Droughts, limited access to drinking water, desertification, coastal erosion, deforestation and serious threats to health and food security have sounded alarm bells that are echoed by reports from all corners of the world.

Making the commitment to serve Africa is paying attention to the needs of the continent, developing realistic approaches, implementing real actions and bringing together multiple and comprehensive expertise, with the objective of reaching a tangible and positive change and making sure that people come first in each of our initiatives.

Being committed is developing networks and having them consolidated, providing a space for discussion and sharing and making a contribution to global efforts for the mobilization of resources and expertise. The action we take for climate, biodiversity, the management of natural resources and land will come to fruition only with the partnerships that we build in each of the countries in our area of intervention.

Being committed is also producing knowledge, by bringing together the most advanced know-how of each discipline, so that useful and reliable works are produced, high-level platforms of expertise are created and scientists, researchers and decision-makers take advantage of such knowledge, for more effective and purposeful decisions.

The OSS has spent every day of the last 30 years trying to achieve the commitments we take for the benefit of Africa.

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**The OSS has spent every day of the last 30 years trying to achieve the commitments we take for the benefit of Africa.**



# World environment day: “Solutions to plastic pollution”



June 5




## **Close your eyes, here you are face-to-face with nature.**

A vast green landscape stretching as far as the eye can see in front of you. Streams, glistening in the sunlight, meander gracefully through the valley. A sea adorned with crystalline waves and filled with sparkling marine life. Majestic trees standing proud, offering their benevolent shade, their leaves dancing to the rhythm of a gentle breeze. Birds filling the air with their melodious songs, adding a living symphony to this visual symphony. Wind carrying the thrilling scents of flowers floating in the air. Mountains looming in the background, accentuating the peaceful beauty of the place. Inhabitants living in harmony with nature.

This enchanting landscape calls for contemplation and a deep connection with nature. It's a true haven of peace, where natural beauty awakens the senses and soothes the soul.

**Open your eyes now (time to stop dreaming!).** You'll marvel at the sight of a landscape where plastic reigns supreme, and where bright green fields are covered with a shimmering carpet of plastic bags, bottles and colorful garbage that stretches as far as the eye can see, lending the scene an unreal beauty. Streams everywhere are adorned with cheerful multicolored plugs, absorbing the residues of industrial civilization. The sea, bearing mountains of garbage, abandoned nets and fragments of all kinds, offers a striking vision of our impact on the marine ecosystem. Fish move around the packaging, mistaking these objects for new forms of artificial habitat, and feeding down to their innards on micro-plastic. Sea turtles delight in plastic bags, mistaking them for delicious jellyfish. Trees bear delicate garlands formed by tangled bags, a sign of the close union between nature and the plastic industry. Birds fly side by side with plastic bags, sometimes racing them, and weave their nests with plastic debris, evoking their love for this modern material. The wind carries particles, creating a genuine aerial ballet. The mountains are adorned with layers of plastic waste, offering a new artistic perspective on geology.





Inhabitants, proudly strutting among the plastic waste, proudly stroll through this modern canvas, sporting protective masks adorned with artistic motifs, testifying to their intimate relationship with the chimerical atmosphere. Their homes, designed with recycled materials, reflect their commitment to environmental protection. This landscape, «wonderfully» polluted by plastic, is a recall of our responsibility in creating this unique ecosystem, overwhelmed by our unconditional love for this synthetic material. No landscape in the world escapes the debris and fragments of plastic that can be found as far away as Antarctica. In addition to drifting cans and bottles, the water is teeming with tiny particles, often invisible to the naked eye.

Indeed, plastic has become an ever-present element of modern society. Plastic discoveries continued to emerge over the years and its production and use have increased like never before. Unfortunately, we have become addicted to the packaging, single-use products and conveniences that facilitate our modern lives.

#### **Flooded with plastic, nature suffocates!**

The ongoing catastrophe: mountains, rivers, seas and fields full of garbage and clogged with plastic waste that is very difficult to degrade, a sky choked with toxic emissions from the production and transformation of plastics, and pollution that reaches the geology by entering into the composition of rocks, or plastiglomerates.

#### **Today, plastic is one of the most serious threats to our planet.**

To mark World Environment Day on June 5, 2023, which focuses on solutions to plastic pollution, the Sahara and Sahel Observatory is sharply standing against plastic pollution and highlighting its impact on our planet. It urges us to intensify and take immediate measures to tackle this crisis, mobilize transformative action, reduce plastic consumption and production, and adopt simple and easy gestures to limit its use.

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# World environment day: “Call to take action for a plastic-free future !”



Call to take action for a Plastic-Free Future!

World Environment Day on June 5, 2023, focuses on solutions to plastic pollution as part of the #BeatPlasticPollution campaign, and is an important opportunity to raise the community awareness about the harmful impact of plastic on our planet, by placing special emphasis on its invasion into our lives.

Plastic that used to be considered as a revolutionary innovation, has become an ever-present element in our contemporary society. Knowing the history of plastic is essential to understand how this material infiltrated our daily lives and ultimately caused a major environmental crisis. The history of plastic is rich in discoveries and developments that have largely shaped our current use of this material.

**1736 - Rubber:** French naturalists discovered the elastic properties of rubber, which came from plants found in the Amazon basins.

**1870 - Celluloid:** The Hyatt brothers invented celluloid, first artificial plastic material.

**1907 - The synthetic polymer:** Léo Baekeland discovered formo-phenolic resins, the first industrial synthetic polymer. These resins, known as bakelite, were used for their insulating and heat-resistant properties in manufacturing electric insulators.

**1935 - Synthetic fibers:** Polyamides were invented, marking a milestone in the synthetic fiber industry.

Since then, the production and use of plastic has grown like never before, providing a great deal of benefits such as lightness, durability and ease of manufacture. Plastic is found in the packaging of our products (36% of the plastic used in the world), in the fibers of our clothes (14%), in every object surrounding us (15%), in the transport we take (7%) and in the buildings we live and work in (16%).







New discoveries continued to emerge over the years. Some of these discoveries include biodegradable plastics, shape memory plastics, conductive plastics and self-healing plastics. This growth has also led to a massive accumulation of plastic waste ranging from 2 million tons in 1950 to more than 430 million tons in 2020. Plastic production will have doubled again in 2040 and will exceed one billion tons in 2050 if no action is taken to halt this frenzy. The proliferation of plastic in our daily lives is more mismanaged than recycled and global recycling forecasts give only 9% of all plastic collected. About 46% of this waste goes to landfill, 22% becomes litter, and 17% is incinerated placing an even greater threat to our environment.

Unfortunately, we can no longer live without plastic packaging, single-use products and plastic conveniences for our modern lives. With this excessive consumption, did you know that this material needs 100 to 1,000 years to degrade in nature?

Have you ever thought how many plastic bottles and bags you have bought? Unbelievable, isn't it? It is imperative that we all take urgent and joint action to tackle plastic pollution. How? There are simple things that we can all do in our daily lives.

- Go for sustainable alternatives such as the use of reusable bottles, fabric shopping bags, stainless steel or bamboo utensils,
- Properly recycle waste in accordance with local selective sorting guidelines,
- Choose products with minimal packaging and avoid over-packaged products,
- Take bulk foods rather than individually wrapped products,
- Avoid hygiene and cosmetic products containing plastic microbeads.



On this day, let's take part in the fight against pollution by adopting these easy gestures and committing ourselves to put an end to plastic use. It is our duty to leave a healthy environment to future generations.

**Join the #BeatPlasticPollution campaign and take action now to break free from plastic.**

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# World day to combat desertification and drought: “Her land. Her rights”



Desertification and drought are having considerable consequences on the increasingly numerous countries they affect. Many countries around the world are vulnerable to the devastating effects of drought on natural resources and people's quality of life. In recent years, Europe, the western United States, Chile, Australia and the Horn of Africa have all experienced episodes of extreme drought that highlighted the global scale that the problem has taken.

Over the past two decades, from 1998 to 2017, droughts have caused economic losses that amount to \$124 billion worldwide, causing human suffering and loss (source: IDRA). Drought risks are unevenly distributed and hit hardest those who are less able to cope, women being particularly affected. According to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the countries most affected by desertification and land degradation are mainly located in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

In Africa, desertification and drought are a major challenge for rural communities who depend on agriculture and livestock for their livelihood. Climate change, deforestation, unsustainable agriculture and overexploitation of natural resources are all key drivers that exacerbate to this phenomenon that directly leads to the loss of fertile land, the reduction of water resources, the degradation of ecosystems and the threat to food security.

Desertification and drought have considerable repercussions on African populations such as poverty, forced migration, conflicts over natural resources and gender disparities. Women, who represent the majority of agricultural workers, have a hard time accessing land, natural resources and support services, such as bank credit, training and infrastructure.

June 17 marks the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought and is an opportunity to raise public awareness on these critical issues and encourage international cooperation in the fight against this scourge. This year's theme has come to honor women «Her Land. Her Rights» and to highlight the importance of ensuring equal access to land for women, especially indigenous people.

**Raising  
awareness  
is good, taking  
action is even  
better!**







S  
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even



African women are often excluded from decision-making processes on land issues. According to an African Union report, they only own 1% of the land in Africa and represent only 15% of the holders of official land rights. This precarious situation exposes them to risks of displacement, marginalization and poverty.

Yet, women are key players in the fight against drought and climate change and have valuable knowledge of traditional agricultural practices, natural resource management and biodiversity conservation. They are also environmental and human rights defenders and contribute to the resilience of communities in the face of climate disruptions. What Wangari Muta Maathai (2004 Nobel Peace Prize, activist and founder of the Green Belt Movement) did, is an inspiring example of how women's commitment to the environment can contribute to strengthen the resilience of communities and their actions to combat deforestation and desertification.

To enable women to fully play their role in the fight against desertification and drought, it is highly important to guarantee their land rights. This requires practical measures to promote gender equality in land policies, build women's capacity in land management and provide them with financial and technical support for their agricultural and natural resource management activities.

The World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought is an opportunity to remember that access to land is a fundamental right for women, especially indigenous people, and an essential condition for guaranteeing their food security, economic independence and dignity. It is also a call to action for governments, civil society organizations and the private sector to show a stronger commitment to gender equality and the fight against drought in Africa and around the world.

It is important to call for collective action to support desertification and drought combat initiatives, by investing in sustainable solutions, building local capacities and promoting international cooperation. The initiatives to be supported can be innovative projects for soil conservation, water management, reforestation and sustainable agricultural practices, aimed at restoring degraded ecosystems and strengthening the resilience of African communities. The Great Green Wall Initiative is a telling example of such a project.

We celebrate this day to reaffirm our commitment to gender equality, social justice and the preservation of our environment. Together, we can help build a world where women have the right to equally own, use and benefit from land, for the good of all and for future generations.

The OSS, member Organization of the International Drought Resilience Alliance (IDRA) launched on the occasion of the 27th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, joined other partners at the United Nations water conference in New York on March 23, 2023, to put drought resilience on top of the global political agenda (<https://idralliance.global>).

Ring the bell is good, acting is even better!

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# International day for the conservation of the mangrove ecosystem



“I’m mangrove, some people think that I’m just a forest with visible roots, when in fact I’m a life bond between land and sea; I’m about 70 species of unique salt tolerant trees and shrubs, found along tropical and sub-tropical coastlines, with a particularly heavy presence in Asia, followed by Africa and South America.

Today, and each 26th of July is the International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem, adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in 2015. A day, made to raise awareness about me being an important, unique, special and vulnerable ecosystem and to promote solutions for my sustainable management, conservation and uses.

You might wonder why the General Conference of UNESCO made a whole day for me? what makes me special to earn this honor?

My distinguished and unique branched roots, which sometimes grow above the ground, are the most important part of my structure. Those help me adapt to my environment and I use them as an anchor for stability and as a way to catch as much oxygen as I need. Some of my species even breathe oxygen like you, with aerial roots!

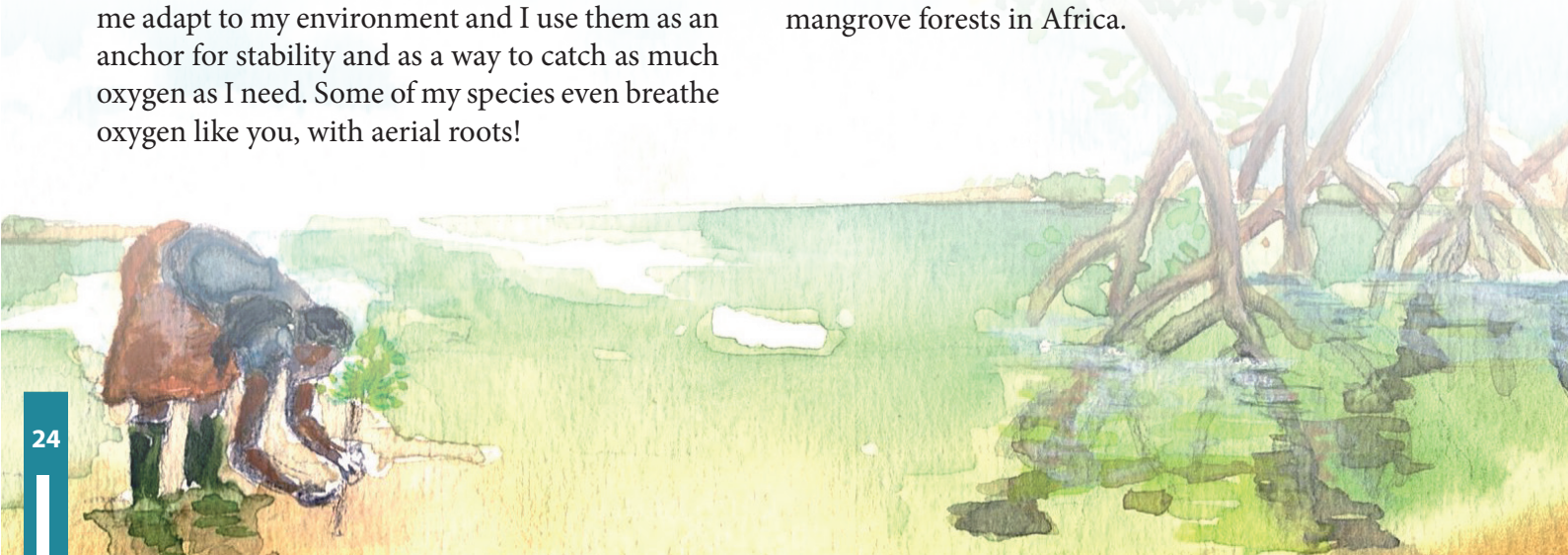
This unique feature is underlie many of the ecosystem services that I provide. They call me the “coastal guardians” because my root system works as natural shield against erosion by reducing the impact of waves and storms and keeping the land protected from any damaging ocean hazards.

I’m also called “the nurseries of the ocean” due to the high number of species who rely on the habitats provided by my roots to feed, grow and for refuge during their larval and early stages.

And guess what! you also rely on me! I heard that more than 210 million of you live close to me and benefit from the fisheries that I provide, thus contributing to your local economies and livelihood.

Last but not least I filter water by trapping sediments and absorbing excess nutrients. And most of all I’m a nature-based solution for climate change mitigation.

Speaking of Africa, I cover there more than 3.2million hectares of its coasts which is 19% of the world total. Mangroves in Africa are found mainly in the western Atlantic coast with Nigeria having the most extensive mangrove forests in Africa.





In fact, I play an essential role in the coastal fisheries of west Africa, where this activity contributes with \$400 million annually to the regional economy. Furthermore, livelihoods and communities rely on me for fuel wood for fish drying, timber and other building materials also products like snails, honey, oysters, crabs, and traditional medicines. According to a study conducted in the west African coast, active shellfisheries are being conducted in a large geographical coverage of my ecosystem with close to 571,000 household beneficiaries and over 50,000 harvesters, mainly women, being the primary resource users. They harvest over 300,000 MT of shellfish that brings a proximate value 336 million USD.

Despite all of this importance and all the ecosystem services that I provide, the same people that I support in their livelihood made me threatened while exploiting, without limits, the natural resources that I mentioned above, like urbanization, rising demands for land, fuel wood, and charcoal, all of this exasperated with the climate change.

I'm sorry to tell you that the loss of 30% of my ecosystem in Africa during the last 25 years, surly comes with a heavy price mainly on you, because I'm nature and nature is known to be rapidly resilient in contrary of you. For this reason, I advise you to not take mangroves for granted, use it rationally and work on their conservation before it's too late.

Given this background, through the project "Adaptation of agricultural production systems in Coastal Areas of Northwest Guinea-Bissau", the GCF and the Sahara and Sahel Observatory aim to restore 250 hectares of mangrove swamp areas, to protect coastal communities, rehabilitate wetland ecosystems and improve the resilience of mangrove-rice system farmers.

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# International African women's day: “Letter to my Earth”



July 31

Beloved Earth,

On this International African Women's Day, here I come, full of thoughts on our challenges, our achievements and the crucial contribution of African women to our continent.

Allow me to address this letter to you, a letter of a friend who needs to tell you about our common journey.

Mother Earth, you have always been a nurturing mother, a protector and a home to us all. We, African women are intimately connected to you, for we live and depend on the resources you, so kindly provide. We are also aware of the challenges we face due to climate change and the degradation of our environment.

We feel the increasingly devastating effects of climate disruptions and here we stand, helpless and sad, losing our lands that used to be full of life, witnessing the changes in our seasons and petrified with the scarcity of our water resources.

It is true that Africa has not contributed significantly to the greenhouse gas emissions that lie behind these climate changes. However, we have decided to be part of the solution. We embraced these challenges as we are relentlessly seeking lasting solutions to preserve our treasured relationship with you.

Earth, for you to recover, we have made the commitment to restore our degraded lands, we plant trees, adopt sustainable agricultural practices like half-moons and anti-erosion benches, and invest in agroforestry to maintain soil fertility and fight erosion. We try to find balance between food production and environmental preservation. And I can tell you: it's not easy.

We, African women, fight for food security for our families and communities. We grow climate-resilient seed species, raise animals adapted to our environment and develop efficient irrigation systems to cope with droughts. Entrepreneurs that we are, we create agricultural cooperatives, process local products and contribute to the agricultural value chain to provide for our families and contribute to the economic development of our regions.

What we do, Mother Earth, is the fruit of a spirit of collaboration and solidarity between us all. We support each other, share our knowledge and skills, we sit for training programs and benefit from funding that meet our specific needs. By joining forces, we are stronger and better prepared to overcome challenges. Earth, it is important to highlight the positive impact of climate funds in the battles we fight as African women. These funds have recently started to support our initiatives, build our capacities to face climate change challenges. This precious support allowed us to make our voice heard, to take up environmental challenges and to actively contribute to the preservation of our planet and we are grateful for that.





Mother Earth, I won't be lying to you. Despite the many achievements we made, we, African women still have much to do to have equal land rights with men. We are not as self-reliant as we should be and this limits our ability to act fully and freely. We dream of having the power to decide land use, contribute more to the economy, bring our vision to reality and make a change. It is a concern that I sadly share with you knowing that you understand my frustration and my desire for freedom of action. I know you will always be there for us to support our fight for equal land rights. The land is ours and all voices, including mine, must be heard to shape a better future.

Today, on this International African Women's Day, I thank you, Earth, for the priceless support and resources you give. Together we will keep raising awareness, thinking of innovative paths and seeking justice. There so much we can do, all it takes is for us, women, to have full autonomy and equal land rights to create meaningful change.

I am so proud of what we, African women, have accomplished in the preservation of our environment, food security and sustainable economic development. I am also proud with the connection I have with you.

On this special day, I promise to keep working for a fair and prosperous future, using your resources responsibly and leaving a lasting legacy for future generations.

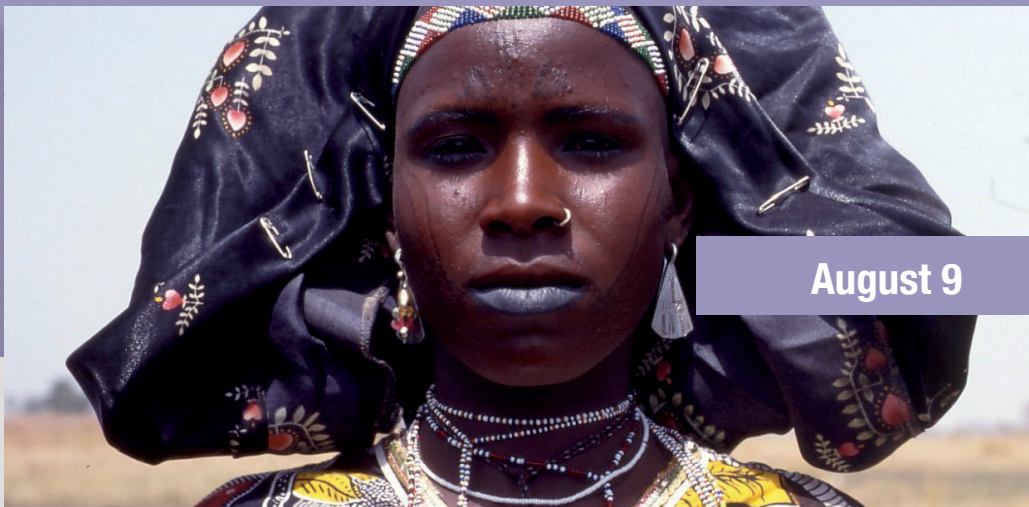
Happy International African Women's Day to all my sisters committed to preserving our environment, food security and sustainable economic development.

With the determination and love of an African Woman.

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# International indigenous peoples' day: “young indigenous people, agents of change for self-determination”



August 9

Indigenous peoples are the custodians of their lands. They carry within them the stories, beliefs, and ways of life that have evolved in harmony with nature for generations. However, they are often misunderstood, unrecognized, or underestimated, while they represent the pillars of cultural and ecological diversity in our world.

On August 9, the world comes together to celebrate World Indigenous Peoples Day, a day that reminds us of the crucial importance of preserving and respecting their rights, cultures, and lands. They are deeply rooted in their environment and their existence is closely linked to the health and sustainability of the ecosystems that surround them.

They show extraordinary resilience in the face of external pressures, preserving their ways of life and their knowledge in the face of adversity.

This special day urges us to reflect on the challenges they face, such as the dispossession of their lands, the loss of their traditional resources, and the gradual disappearance of their languages and customs.

Indigenous peoples contribute to the preservation of biodiversity, the conservation of natural habitats, and the promotion of a balanced relationship with nature. Their traditional practices of agriculture, fishing, hunting, and natural resource management are full of valuable lessons for a harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.







Yet, marginalization, discrimination, loss of territories, and the effects of climate change are all threats that loom over them. Their voices and rights are often neglected, despite their invaluable contribution to the cultural and ecological diversity of our planet.

On this International Day, let's take a moment to recognize, celebrate, and support the indigenous peoples of the world, guarantors of an essential cultural and natural heritage for a sustainable and equitable future for all.

Let's commit to listening to their voices, respecting their rights, and learning from their millenary knowledge. Let's take example from their resilience to build a world where cultural and ecological diversity is valued, protected, and passed on to future generations.

The theme of this day for the year 2023 entitled «Indigenous Youth, Agents of Change for Self-determination» focuses on indigenous youth and their responsibility in the decision-making process. Their self-determination is expressed through their tenacity in facing the most urgent crises that humanity is facing. Their future depends on the decisions that are made today to facilitate their representation and participation in the global efforts to combat climate change and peacebuilding.

The establishment of the platform for indigenous peoples and local communities and the operationalization of its working group within the Paris Agreement constitute important advances for the recognition and valorization of the endogenous knowledge of indigenous peoples and for their participation in the decision-making process, in connection with climate change.

The Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) highlights the concerns of indigenous peoples in its governance. In this respect, the OSS specifically applies Article 10 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which states that: "Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly evicted from their lands or territories. No resettlement may take place without the prior, free and informed consent of the indigenous peoples concerned, and after agreement on just and fair compensation, and, when feasible, the option to return".

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# International day for disaster risk reduction: “fighting inequality for a resilient future”



October 13



## **Inequality at the heart of the disaster: A connection to break**

### **The Echo of Nature: Insights on the 2023 disasters**

Natural disasters are not random, meaningless occurrences. Every hurricane, every earthquake, every flood is much more than a simple manifestation of natural forces. They are merciless reminders of our footprint on the planet, alarm bells that the Earth sends to humanity. Since the beginning of the year 2023, our planet has witnessed a series of natural hazards and tragic events. Devastating earthquakes hit Turkey, Syria and Morocco and claimed the lives of thousands of people. The United States was swept by crushing storms. Megafires ravaged more than 14.2 million hectares of land in Canada, while in Hawaii, fires of unprecedented scale swallowed entire cities. In the Mediterranean region, fires and floods have caused significant human losses in Europe and North Africa. And in Asia, devastating storms and floods hit China.

These natural phenomena strike without discrimination. However, their impact is unevenly distributed and felt and it is clear that the most vulnerable and marginalized communities are the most affected. October 13 is an annual event marking the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction. It is a day of unity, action and consideration of how to face the challenges of nature and fight its forces. With “Fighting inequality for a resilient future” as a theme, this day opens the prospects to explore the relationship between natural disasters and inequality.



## Disasters in Africa come to unearth the inequalities

In suffocating metropolises and remote villages, access to drinking water is a rare privilege and inequalities are plain to see. Every corner of Africa is a witness of such inequalities, underpinned by a challenging socio-economic reality that is particularly perceptible during natural disasters.

Natural hazards leave a mark of material destruction, but they also paint a bleak picture of social injustice and deeper vulnerabilities. Women, children and the elderly are very often times the hardest hit, due to limited access to care and education. Children find their dreams of attending schools go up in smoke, while grown-ups, have no other choice but to rebuild their lives even if they have no financial safety net.



## Making it through the clouds: Community resilience in Africa

Here is what the WorldRiskIndex (WRI) 2023 says: In the current African landscape, nearly 80% of regions are exposed to high or very high risk. We better answer these questions before it is too late: Are we going to be helpless victims to the vagaries of mother nature or will we manage to build our resilience to face the complex challenges of life?

In this context, community resilience, strengthened by the integration of disaster risk reduction measures, is a true sign of hope. It goes beyond mere survival to rising up to the challenge of facing the storms.

By integrating disaster risk reduction into socio-economic planning, communities can not only connect with each others, foster education, improve women's empowerment and stimulate local innovation, but also benefit from a legislative framework that encourages and supports these endeavors.

The Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) report: "Indestructible: Building Poor People's Resilience to Natural Disasters," digs deep on how Disaster Risk Management (DRM) and strategic development can jointly combat poverty and reduce risks in the 117 countries surveyed.

In Ethiopia, for example, reforestation and soil conservation initiatives have been adopted to counter erosion in mountainous areas. These measures not only protected local communities from landslides during torrential rains, but also created sustainable local jobs.

This confirms the crucial importance of investment in building resilience which, like early warning systems, improving access to individual banking services, insurance policies and protective measures, could make it possible to better predict and withstand calamities, then recover, adapt, break through the cycle of poverty and thus promote shared prosperity.

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# World soil day: “Soil and water : a source of life”



World **Soil**, **Water**, or even **Life** Day...What difference would that be? Of course, these are not synonyms, still, they are interdependent and interconnected elements that come together. This is why the theme of the World Soil Day “Soil and Water, sources of life” could not have come at a better time.

It goes without saying that soil is the physical support of life, water is an essential element for life, and life is the set of phenomena which characterize living beings. But let's take a closer look...

There might be several questions to ask... How important are soil and water to keep life on Earth? What is the relationship between soil and water to achieve sustainable agri-food systems?

First of all, it's not just about what the soil provides to humans.

It is important to value and protect soil for many other reasons. Soils support a considerable number of plant and animal species of different sizes. In a single gram of soil, there can be up to 50,000 species of microorganisms. Yes, underground biodiversity is much greater than the one on the surface. Healthy soil is also a very valuable carbon store that captures carbon and keeps it locked in stable forms. It regulates the atmosphere and plays the role of a natural filter which purifies and stores the infiltrating water. To make a long story short, soil is the basis of life for all living things.

Since the dawn of time, human beings have settled near soils that are more easily cultivated. Indeed, soil and water are at the origin of ecosystems but also of global food production, the quality of nutrients and their availability. 95% of our food is produced in our soils. One cubic meter of healthy soil can hold more than 250 liters of water. Soil and water are therefore the very spot in which plants develop. Most of the elements that plants need to grow properly and have nutrient-rich tissues come from the soil that allows the people to grow the food they depend on. In addition, soils and the water cycle deeply intertwine. The capacity of the soils to store water and release it is fundamental to feed plants (green water) and for the recharge of groundwater and watercourses (blue water).





The fact is plain to see: soil and water provide ecosystems and societies with a huge deal of services and crucial raw materials for all our activities.

Unfortunately, not only these resources are limited but they are coming to depletion.

By 2030, the most vulnerable people will suffer from an overall decline in food production due to more frequent crop failures and the emergence of almost a billion hectares of degraded land.

Today, Africa is facing land degradation, one of the most serious threats caused by agriculture, overgrazing, deforestation, mining, industrialization, infrastructure, urbanization and pollution, in addition to natural factors.

African populations heavily depend on natural resources and have agriculture as their primary means of livelihood. Due to poverty and difficult socio-economic conditions, this aspect has become increasingly perceptible. By domino effect, the soils and natural resources are heavily and unsustainably exploited without taking into account the capacity for resilience that is increasingly marked. Indeed, it is said that 65% of productive land on the African continent is degraded. Degradation affects more than 30% of arable land in the Sahel region due to the expansion and intensification of agriculture in order to feed the growing populations.

Integrated soil and water management might be the key to their sustainability. Additionally, implementing sustainable soil management practices will surely improve water quality and quantity for agriculture as well as soil biodiversity and fertility. Indeed, sustainable soil management is indispensable to reduce erosion and compaction which disrupt the water storing, draining and filtering capacity, but also exacerbate the risk of flooding, landslides, sand and dust storms, droughts, etc. Soil and water conservation thus increases the capacity of land to withstand extreme climate events and contributes to climate change mitigation and adaptation. In other words, the soils represent water reserves for plants and for exchanges with the atmosphere.

Characterising the water reservoir accessible to the plant called the “available water capacity” is decisive for better understanding the interactions between the crops and their environment, optimizing water management through irrigation and adapting the choice of the crops. Preserving these reserves makes it easier for crops to adapt to increased evaporation, reducing the need for irrigation and mitigating temperature increases through evapotranspiration. Moreover, the fight against urban heat islands requires the creation or conservation of green spaces, and therefore the soils.

Now what ?

Synergies between the three Rio Conventions to achieve the objectives and in particular, improve soil health need to be strengthened. Between a 21st session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (CRIC21), which was held recently, and a 28th Conference of the Parties on climate change (COP28) currently underway, this World Day highlights the immediate need of united efforts.

During CRIC21, the importance of the local know-how of indigenous populations, community commitment, capitalization and sharing of knowledge as well as strengthened science-policy-society interface were often highlighted. It is in this spirit that the Sahara and Sahel Observatory is developing a documentary book on land degradation and sustainable management in Africa which will be released soon.

In addition, on the occasion of World Soil Day, the whole society is mobilizing to empower citizens and to advocate for sustainable management of soil resources. Many events aiming to draw attention to the importance of healthy soils are organized around the world. The convergence of different stakeholders towards a common objective constitutes a true element of hope.



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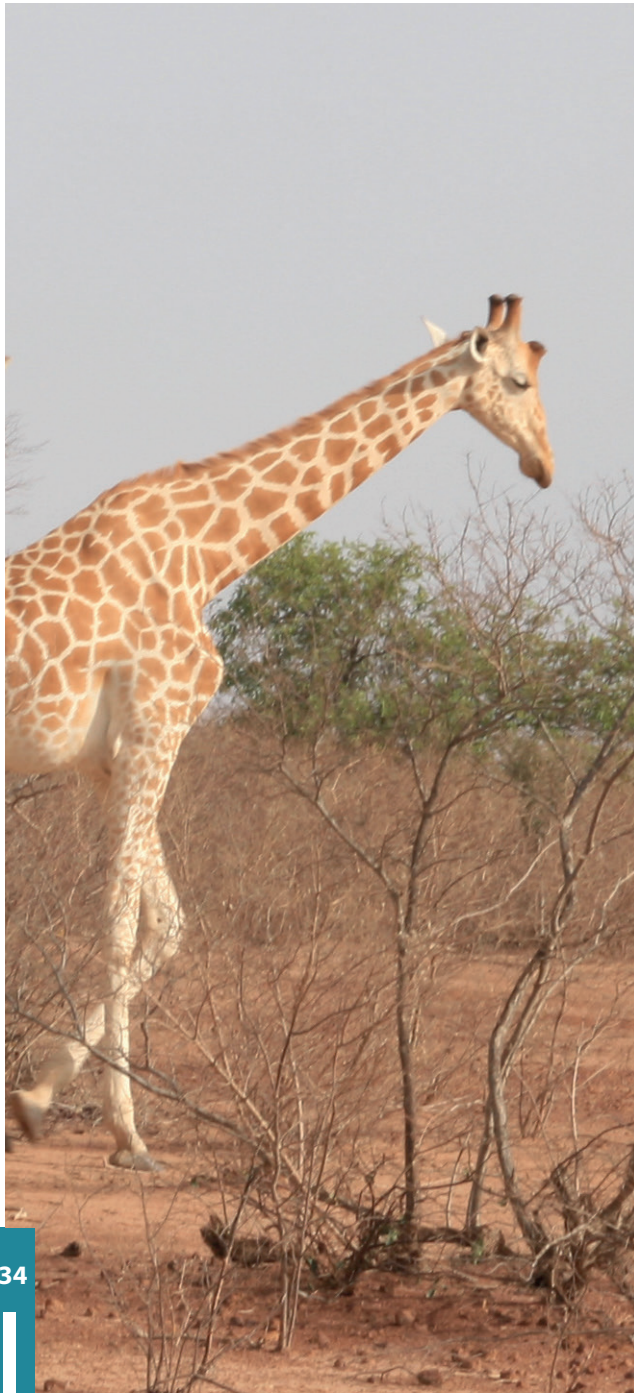


# World climate day:

## “The oss carries the voice of africa to defend adaptation as a priority”



December 8



During the first African Climate Summit, held in Nairobi from September 4 to 6, 2023, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres, stated that there was still potential for hope to avoid the worst effects of climate change through a more impactful climate action. Thus, he called on world leaders to come as one to counter climate change and its adverse impacts on development, particularly in Africa, where adaptation capacities are limited. Mr. António Guterres also indicated that even though Africa represents only 4% of global Greenhouse Gas emissions, it unjustly bears some of the worst effects of rising global temperatures: extreme heat, heavy flooding and tens of thousands of deaths from devastating droughts.

Despite this dark picture of Africa being the continent most affected by global warming, political speeches, debates and commitments seem to be very little focused on adaptation which should make it possible to reduce its vulnerability and strengthen its resilience in order to guarantee a sustainable development. Indeed, mitigation is much more present on the political agenda of international events, meetings and negotiations on climate change. All multilateral climate agreements including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Kyoto Protocol (KP) and the Paris Agreement (PA) have placed much greater emphasis on mitigation. For example, Article 2 of the UNFCCC states: “The ultimate objective of this Convention and any related legal instruments that the Conference of the Parties may adopt is to achieve, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Convention, stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Such a level should be achieved within a time-frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner ».



In this context, the Sahara and Sahel Observatory celebrates the 2023 World Climate Day and joins all other organizations, institutions and initiatives to put climate change on top of political agendas, as a priority for Africa to take substantial measures in the short, medium and long term in order to prepare and support communities, cities and ecosystems to respond to extreme weather events. The 6th IPCC report explained that with the current financing, African countries will not be able to adapt and meet the growing needs of their populations. It is said that by 2050, the cost of adaptation will increase from around 20 to 50 billion dollars per year for a 1.5°C warming trend and to more than 100 billion dollars per year for a 4°C warming trend. The lack of knowledge and insufficient data is also a big problem to financing adaptation for African countries.

The OSS takes the World Climate Day to welcome and recognize the international efforts and negotiations currently underway to take into account climate change adaptation, in particular:

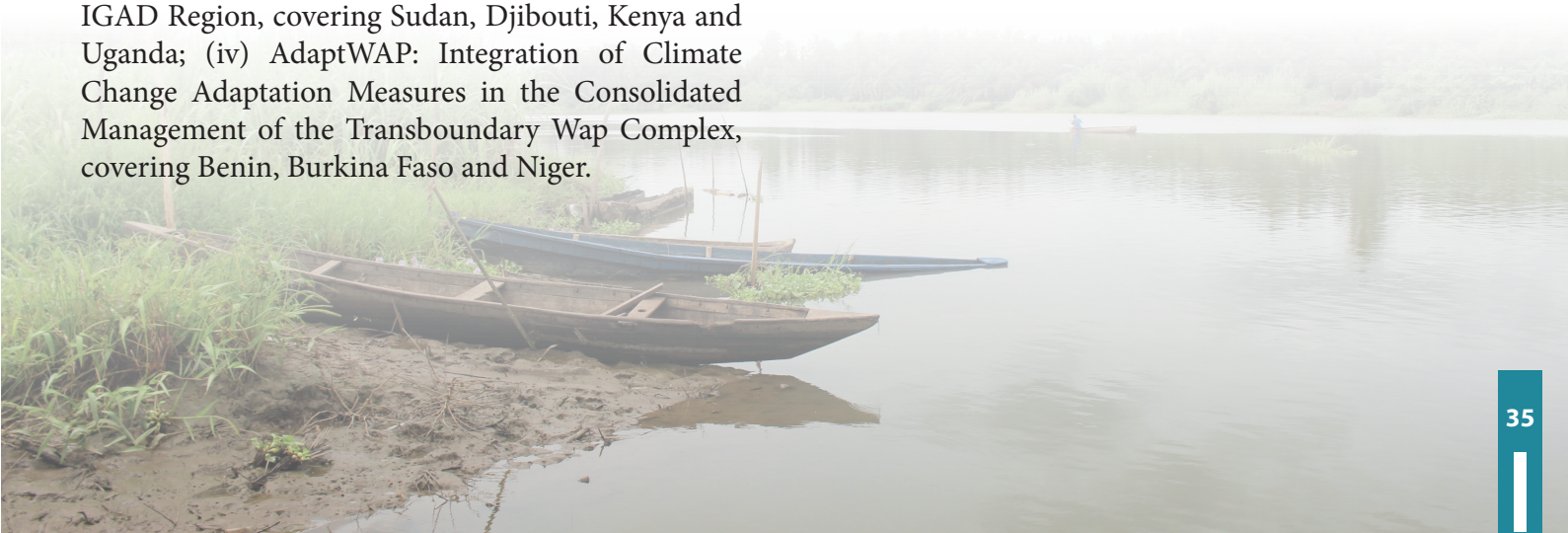
The operationalization of the Glasgow-Sharm El-Sheikh Work Program on the global adaptation objective (2022-2023) that should be adopted at COP28. The OSS has an extensive experience in implementing concrete adaptation projects on the African continent taking into account the sustainable management of ecosystems, the integrated management of water resources, the improvement of the living conditions of the populations, etc. which can be references for the establishment and operationalization of the global adaptation goal framework. These projects include: (i) EURECCCA: Enhancing Resilience of Communities to Climate Change through catchment based integrated management of water & related resources in Uganda; (ii) ADSWAC: Strengthening resilience as a means of adaptation to drought and climate change in communities in South-West Africa, covering Angola and Namibia; (iii) DRESSEA: Strengthening Drought Resilience for Small Farmers and Pastoralists in the IGAD Region, covering Sudan, Djibouti, Kenya and Uganda; (iv) AdaptWAP: Integration of Climate Change Adaptation Measures in the Consolidated Management of the Transboundary Wap Complex, covering Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger.

The establishment of financing arrangements to deal with losses and damages. While welcoming the historic decision of the international community to set up a special fund for losses and damages, the OSS proposes that the Early Warning Systems (EWS), the promotion of Income Generating Activities (IGAs) and revolving funds are included among the technical tools considered in these financing arrangements. It is worth mentioning that the OSS has always been contributing with its expertise in this regard. In addition, in the context of this new international financial mechanism, the OSS has experience having implemented a specific policy concerning involuntary displacement and the resettlement of populations. This policy aims to identify, avoid and reduce any possible harm to populations and the environment during the implementation of its projects.

With the aim of strengthening its position on adaptation to climate change, the OSS delegation is taking part in the Dubai COP28 of the UNFCCC from November 30 to December 12, 2023 and is hosting side events focusing on: (i) climate finance, providing solutions for land and ecosystems in Africa; (ii) from the project approach to the program approach, what advocacy strategies for decision-makers? And (iii) from incubation to financing for adaptation: accelerating the development of water & climate projects.

The OSS calls upon every decision-maker and key player to place special emphasis on adaptation and give it greater importance in the same way as mitigation, for the more mitigation efforts are made, the less adaptation efforts will be necessary. But as for now, it is crucial to immediately undertake adaptation measures in Africa.

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