

## Press Release

### **COPERNICEA: National accounts go green**

Wednesday, February 26, 2020, signature in Paris of a financing agreement between the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) and the French Development Agency (AFD), for the implementation of the COPERNICEA project, with the presence of the OSS Executive Secretary, Mr. Khatim Kherraz, the Deputy Director of the AFD Africa Department, Mr. François-Xavier Bellocq, and AFD and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs representatives.

The COPERNICEA program will support six French-speaking African countries, including Tunisia, in the preparation of environmental accounts according to the ENCA (Ecosystem Natural Capital Accounting) method serving the Sustainable Development Goals.

#### **A real paradigm shift**

The collection and analysis of satellite images - completed by physical and socio-economic data - characterize land use and the situation of the ecosystems. The associated environmental accounting makes it possible to study ecosystem changes, the impact of investments and to assess the economic cost of the ecological restorations that would be necessary. Operating a real paradigm shift, these new indicators should improve investment decision-making and complete national accounts (growth, employment, trades) which until then did not take ecosystems into account.

COPERNICEA will be implemented over a four-year period by the OSS, an international organization based in Tunis. The target countries (Burkina Faso, Guinea, Morocco, Niger, Senegal and Tunisia) give a sample of coastal, Sahel or Maghreb States and each of them is facing major challenges in relation to water, climate, land use and loss of biodiversity. This will involve establishing a national and regional network for sharing and exchanging information and data useful and necessary for Ecosystem Natural Capital Accounting (ENCA).

Moreover, COPERNICEA will become a frame of reference accessible to all other French-speaking countries of Africa and likely to be replicated on a continental scale. This new accounting tool will allow all African countries to join the biodiversity agenda set during the 15<sup>th</sup> conference of the parties (COP15) of the Convention on Biological Diversity which will take place next fall in Kunming, in China.

As far as Tunisia is concerned, it is a matter of helping better assess the country's natural capital and to enlighten the agricultural, infrastructural or tourist investment choices from the point of view of their impacts on (i) ecosystems, (ii) water resources, (iii) changes in carbon stock, (iv) and land use.

An official project activity start-up workshop will take place on March 16 - 18, 2020 at the Ramada Gammarth Hotel (Tunis), and will bring together officially designated focal points as well as representatives of the various partner institutions of the project.

**The AFD:**

The Agence française de développement - French Development Agency group (AFD) is a public institution that finances, supports and accelerates the switchover to a more just and sustainable world. French platform for public aid to development and sustainable development investment, we build with our partners shared solutions, with and for the populations of the South.

Our teams are involved in more than 4,000 on-field projects, in the overseas territories and in 115 countries, for the greater good of humanity - climate, biodiversity, peace, women-men equality, education or even health.

We thus contribute to the commitment of France and the French people to Sustainable Development Goals. For a shared world.

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**The OSS:**

Created in 1992, the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) is an international organization with an African vocation based in Tunis, Tunisia. The OSS initiates and facilitates partnerships on common challenges related to the management of shared water resources, the implementation of international agreements on desertification, biodiversity and climate change in the Sahara and Sahel region. Its accreditations as an implementing agency with climate funds (Adaptation Fund and the Green Climate Fund) come to strengthen its role and promote the mobilization of financial resources to deal with the impacts of climate change and contribute to the efforts of countries in adaptation and mitigation.

Its programs and projects are funded by voluntary contributions, grants and donations from its members and partners. The OSS has 25 African countries, 7 non-African countries, 13 organizations (representative organizations from West, East and North Africa, UN organizations) and 3 non-governmental organizations. The OSS is a flexible structure with a multicultural and multidisciplinary team that makes a high added value contribution to the sustainable management of natural resources and to the mitigation of climate change in Africa. For more information, please see: <http://www.oss-online.org/>

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*Photo: Signature of the financing agreement between the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) and the French Development Agency (AFD), Paris, February 26, 2020.*