



## THE SAHARA AND SAHEL OBSERVATORY AT COP 21

### An African Institution working for resilience-strengthening in the face of uncertainty

**Tunis, 20 November 2015** – The Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS), a Tunis-based intergovernmental, scientific and technical organization, operates in Africa's Sahel-Saharan region. Its members include 22 African and five non-regional countries<sup>1</sup>. OSS will take part in the COP21 UNFCCC and will contribute to discussions on the new global climate change regime to be agreed in Paris.

The predominately arid Sahara and Sahel region, OSS's zone of action, hosts most of Africa's least developed countries (LDC). The impacts of climate change, which are harshly felt in these countries (recurrent and extended droughts and more frequent extreme weather events), are likely to intensify if average global temperature exceeds the critical threshold of 2°C. This could prove disastrous for these countries, which are the least contributors to greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere and whose adaptive capacity remains the lowest.

These countries are also subject to considerable risks of « environmental shocks » (accelerated land degradation and acute water stress) which could undermine, in the long term, their ecosystems and economies if no concrete measures are swiftly implemented to strengthen their resilience.

Mitigating climate change and adapting to its impacts constitute an opportunity for introducing alternative development paradigms, such as the green economy, and new approaches for sustainable natural resources management.

Populations and ecosystems' resilience and adaptation constitute a vital issue for vulnerable communities in OSS's zone of action. Regional stability and peace in the Sahel and North Africa regions are also at stake.

While focusing on the sustainable management of both land and groundwater resources, OSS has been working for more than twenty years on supporting member countries through a wide range of activities at the regional and national levels, thus enabling national stakeholders to address climate change. These activities include:

- enhancing knowledge about ecosystems in the Sahara and Sahel region
- strengthening environmental monitoring capabilities
- producing natural resource management tools
- developing decision-support tools aimed at private and public decision-makers

- capacity building for institutional and community stakeholders
- disseminating good practices and expertise available in the region

The accreditation of OSS as a Regional Implementing Entity (RIE) for the Adaptation Fund extended the organization's action to climate finance mobilization on behalf of its member countries, which have thus far benefited very little from available resources. OSS is currently undertaking an accreditation process by the Green Fund, a mechanism created to facilitate developing countries' access to climate finance for both adaptation and low-carbon development.

OSS is also working to underpin its member countries' efforts in the implementation and monitoring-evaluation of commitments under the post-Rio environmental conventions, including Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), Land-Degradation Neutrality and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

In its various interventions, OSS will highlight the importance and urgency of strengthening the resilience of African countries and of mobilizing adequate financial resources to bolster their adaptive capacity while ensuring sustainable development.

### **OSS whereabouts at COP21**

The OSS delegation will organize four side-events under the following themes:

- Presentation of the Green Economy in Africa Program (EVA) and panel discussion on related challenges in the region (1 December, espace Francophonie, 15h00-16h30)
- Groundwater in the Sahara and Sahel Region, an important resource in adaptation to climate change (2 December, espace Société civile, 11h00 -13h00)
- Common Challenges and opportunities of the Sahara and Sahel Region facing climate (4 December, Zone bleue, 15h00 - 16h30)
- The Great Green Wall Initiative for a climate-resilient Sahara and Sahel Region (8 December (tbc), Africa Pavilion)

Please write to ([oss-cop21@oss.org.tn](mailto:oss-cop21@oss.org.tn)) if you have questions or would like to request a meeting with our delegates in Paris. You can also visit our two information booths located in the Blue zone and the Civil Society space.

For more information, including the side-events' flyers, visit:

[www.oss-online.org/en/actualites/oss-cop-21-unfccc](http://www.oss-online.org/en/actualites/oss-cop-21-unfccc)