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Climate change and its impact on Sahelian security¹

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Climate change and security in the Sahel

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Introduction

Security in the Mediterranean region is one of the greatest challenges facing states in Euro-Mediterranean relations. For the past decade, the effects of the Arab Spring have created a context of instability in which risks and threats of different kinds have accumulated. Moreover, the Arab uprisings have not only multiplied these factors, but have also favoured their expansion beyond the Mediterranean basin. Today, a strategic

¹ This analysis is part of an ongoing line of research by the International Security Centre on the Sahel. Following the Sahel-Europe Dialogue Forum organised in March 2021, speakers belonging to the Sahel-Europe Dialogue Forum Expert Group have deepened the themes of their conferences, analysing the shared challenges, and the opportunities for cooperation on our common challenges. The political crises in Mali and Chad link the security crisis to governance challenges in these states, where the presence of self-defence militias and jihadist groups hinder economic and social development. In such a changing environment, with the Sahel being Europe's advanced frontier, it is now more important than ever to promote a space for dialogue in which both regions can share, cooperate and propose innovative solutions. This series of publications, as well as the Sahel-Europe Dialogue Forum, have received a grant from the General Secretariat for Defence Policy of the Ministry of Defence.

approach makes it necessary to approach the Maghreb-Sahel region as an inevitably connected space.

The future of the countries on the southern shores of the Mediterranean is one of the priority interests of the EU's external projection. In 2016, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) Global Strategy document², among the lines of action in the Mediterranean, already mentioned the Maghreb-Sahel, that great southern border, and included the need to invest in African peace and development as part of the European Union's security and prosperity.

These data highlight the importance of Europe's multilateral approach to the Sahel, under the prism of an integral cooperation of a multidimensional nature and at different levels of action.

Risks and threats in the Sahel

The Sahel region, in its broadest terms, represents a strip of land stretching from the Atlantic Ocean off the coasts of Mauritania and Senegal to the Gulf of Aden in the Indian Ocean, which bathes the Horn of Africa off the coasts of Eritrea, Ethiopia and Djibouti. This geographical description includes a dozen African states, among which those located in the central zone, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad, have similar characteristics that have favoured their organisation into what is known as the Group 5 Sahel (G5 Sahel). And they maintain close relations with other neighbours, such as Senegal, Nigeria and Cameroon. From the Maghreb's point of view, for Morocco and Algeria in particular, relations with these states form an essential part of their vital interests, while the destabilisation of Libya has completely altered the internal situations of the central Sahel countries.

To list the risks and threats that plague the Maghreb-Sahel region is a long list of challenges: failed states, trafficking associated with organised crime networks, jihadist terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, unfinished conflicts (Mali and Libya), in addition to porous borders, a high population rate, water stress, food insecurity, lack of infrastructure and energy resources, and climate change.

Therefore, in these countries, although environmental factors do not represent the direct cause of the situation of insecurity that characterises the area, they do add to a whole set of elements that determine it and contribute to its aggravation. In other words, there is no definitive evidence that it is the causal factor, but it does exert an

² EEAS. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy. Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/eu-global-strategy/17304/global-strategy-european-unions-foreign-and-security-policy_en

evident multiplying effect on existing risks³. Some researchers, such as Oriol Puig of CIDOB, insist on the need to qualify this correlation when it comes to planning policies aimed at tackling this risk⁴.

The effects of climate change in the Sahel

The causes explaining the origin of climate change on our planet are the subject of constant debate within the scientific community. The argument that anthropogenic causes are at the origin of this evolution has as many defenders as detractors, as no single criterion has been reached among the different scientific interpretations of this phenomenon.

In any case, the scientific explanation of climate change is not part of the content of this analysis. This paper is devoted to the assessment of the risks and threats arising from climate change as an observable phenomenon since the end of the 20th century in the region, regardless of the reasons for its cause. In other words, as has been explained, the relationship between climate change and security. This is an issue that has progressively made its way onto many international agendas.

Europe is located in privileged latitudes where the climate has favoured development, which does not prevent the increase in atmospheric disturbances from having a progressively greater impact. However, from the coasts of North Africa, these favourable conditions for habitable spaces are gradually deteriorating until they reach the Sahel, where one of the world's harshest environmental situations is to be found. It is an area characterised by hostile conditions for survival. Natural resources are limited and the climate is volatile, with high temperatures almost all year round and heavy rains that cause flooding. A marked seasonality that requires very complex observation processes, not always able to provide accurate results. These circumstances mean that this region is permanently subject to "climatic uncertainty".

Over the last 50 years, the average temperature in the Sahel has risen by about 0.5 degrees Celsius, and it is estimated that by the end of the 21st century it may have

³ Philipp Heinrigs (2010). Security Implications of Climate Change in the Sahel Region: Policy considerations. Sahel and West Africa. Club OECD Secretariat. <https://www.oecd.org/swac/publications/47234320.pdf>

⁴ The author's contribution and his intervention at the Sahel-Europe Dialogue Forum (2nd Conference, 23:09) can be found in this same publication.

reached 2 degrees Celsius higher than the current average⁵. The area is dependent on the interaction of greenhouse gas emissions with other environmental factors. This warming will have a direct impact on people, animals and vegetation and could drastically reduce arable land or, in the worst case, render some areas of Africa inhospitable by 2050.

One of the most significant data that best illustrates this climatic fragility is the advance of the desertification process in the Sahel around Lake Chad, although not all the evidence suggests that this phenomenon is a direct result of global warming. In any case, what can be said is that over the last six decades it has gone from occupying around 26,000 km² to just over 2,500 km² today. This is alarming enough to understand how it affects regional development and stability.

The Sahel is facing one of the world's most serious humanitarian crises. And one of the most neglected. Political instability hinders the promotion of measures that address climate governance to facilitate the resilience of societies in the face of this phenomenon. Maman Zakara, from the NGO Folkercenter in Mali, goes further by pointing out that even certain sectors benefit from this conflict, which means that the poor quality of this governance works directly against the population. On the contrary, Sahelian governments should integrate climate change as a central aspect of their development strategies:

In addition to the fight against terrorists, Sahelian states must integrate climate change into their development strategies. Given the urgency and severity of the impacts expected, or already felt, by local communities, most of whom depend on climate risks, climate change adaptation strategies are a development gamble, and investment in development is the best tool to promote peace and security. Development projects and programmes should focus on reducing the vulnerability of populations to climate variability, one of the main characteristics of the Sahelian climate⁶.

To this must be added the weakness of economies still excessively shaped by the development of the primary sector, such as agriculture dependent on rainfall and livestock farming defined by pastoral mobility caused by the search for water sources. Water is an increasingly scarce and sought-after resource. This explains why poverty in

⁵ IPCC. (2014). Cambio Climático 2014. Informe de síntesis del Grupo Intergubernamental de Expertos sobre el Cambio Climático. Pg.10.

https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/SYR_AR5_FINAL_full_es.pdf

⁶ Zakara, Mamane (2014). Mamane Zakara, un jeune cadre nigérien résident au Mali : « la lutte contre le terrorisme requiert la mise en place d'unités de forces mobiles inter-états ». NIGERDIASPORA.

<https://www.nigerdiaspora.net/Archives-Nigerdiaspora-2003-2020/index.php/idees-opinions-archives/item/68420-mamane-zakara-un-jeune-cadre-nigerien-resident-au-mali-la-lutte-contre-le-terrorisme-requiert-la-mise-en-place-d-unites-de-forces-mobiles-inter-etats>

these countries can be considered chronic, resulting in the enormous vulnerability of the Sahelian population.

The alternatives to this economy are still far from satisfying the needs of a population that is also the fastest growing in the world, according to the demographic indices provided by the United Nations. The under-24 age group currently accounts for around a quarter of the region's total population, but is expected to double by 2050.

Many local NGOs are aware of this situation and are committed to finding long-term solutions by working with young people. Issa Garba, coordinator of the Nigerian Youth Network against Climate Change, stresses the importance of youth training. Access to education for young people in the Sahel is the formula both for raising awareness of the threats posed by climate change and for proposing alternatives to the region's impoverished economies. The involvement of this sector of the population in the foundations of progress is essential to avoid the mass migrations that are becoming the only way out.

In addition, as Joël Yodoyman, director of the NGO Green Spaces of the Sahel, points out, the role of Sahelian women is another of the pillars of this development. Today, still subject to many traditional practices and close family ties, they have major obstacles to overcome in rural areas. They are the most direct victims of poverty and the effects of climate change on poverty. They are given a limited place in society, which influences the dissemination of values that determine development, and they themselves are left out of this possibility. Increasingly, civil society actions are aimed at incorporating women into the future of prosperity in the Sahel.

Climate change risks and threats

In relation to the above, a number of risks can be identified that are closely linked to these conditions⁷.

First, the Sahelian way of life causes constant inter-communal conflicts between sedentary and transhumant populations. Increased conflict linked to climate change has led to indiscriminate violence that has forced more than 2.7 million people to flee across the region.

Secondly, and as a consequence of the above, the acceleration of these uncontrolled movements has boosted population displacement within states as well as irregular

⁷ Climate Security Experts Network. Climate-Fragility Risk Factsheet: "North Africa-Sahel". 2020/04. https://climate-security-expert-network.org/sites/climate-security-expert-network.com/files/documents/csen_climate_fragility_factsheet_-_north_africa_sahel.pdf

migration to other countries. In a region of porous borders such as the Sahel, where borders are constantly being crossed, this human movement also leads to conflicts between indigenous populations and those from other places.

Humanitarian action is enormous⁸. It helps to alleviate the hardships of thousands of displaced people, but responses must be accompanied by involvement and commitment from within the Sahel countries, where broad social sectors and international organisations are already active.

Thirdly, the lack of water, food insecurity and natural disasters are driving a significant part of the rural population to move to cities, where governments do not have the capacity to provide the services that the urban population demands. This context easily becomes a source of frustration, especially for young people who see armed groups as a way out of their misery. Hence, the activity related to the multiple possibilities offered by organised crime trafficking ends up becoming the only livelihood system. In this way, this economy becomes a structural element that prevents the Sahel region from emerging from underdevelopment.

This is precisely why border areas are the most affected by violence⁹. Jihadist terrorism is active in these areas, which is not directly related to climate change, but is fed by other circumstances that this factor generates. This is the case in the Liptako-Gourma area, between Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, where there are clashes between members of al-Qaeda and Daesh. And in the Lake Chad area. There, the population has had to move to neighbouring Nigeria, where they suffer the scourge of the terrorist group Boko Haram. In recent years, the strengthening of this faction has been linked not only to political and economic factors, but also to climatic ones. Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, coordinator of the Association of Indigenous Women of Chad, makes a direct link between all these circumstances:

When you can eat, drink and provide for your family, you have dignity. But when you cannot earn that dignity as a man, the world should not be surprised by the conflicts around the Sahel. These men are willing to take on any job to assert their

⁸ Comité Internacional de la Cruz Roja (2019). Malí-Níger: el cambio climático y el conflicto crean una mezcla explosiva en el Sahel”, *Comunicado de Prensa*. <https://www.icrc.org/es/document/mali-niger-el-cambio-climatico-y-el-conflicto-crean-una-mezcla-explosiva-en-el-sahel-0>

⁹ Pablo Delgado Mecinas (2020). Conflicto en el Sahel. Descifrando la Guerra. <https://www.descifrandolaguerra.es/el-conflicto-del-sahel/>

masculinity and dignity," says the activist. Including a 'job' with a terrorist organisation¹⁰.

This population is conditioned by energy development, as access to energy is currently limited to around 20% of the Sahel's population. There is an urgent need to promote the means to combat energy debt. The reaction to global warming due to climate change has led to the development of alternative energy sources aimed at turning this climate hostility towards sustainable development, providing stability and peace.

Solutions for climate security

Climate change is not the only factor that causes the different circumstances described above, but it undoubtedly aggravates them in a very noticeable way, favouring the region's endemic vulnerability and is linked to the projection of security in the Sahel. It is therefore essential to address security from a comprehensive approach (climate change, population dynamics, migration, trade and economic development) with responses from both inter-African cooperation and international action.

All this implies a crisis that tends to become unmanageable and that, although located in Africa, is global in nature. It is essential to understand that the Sahel crisis is a European crisis. Establishing a framework for bilateral and multilateral dialogue between governments on the Sahel progressively represents a priority for African institutions and others outside the continent, such as the European Union and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

In order to assess national and regional risks, the implementation and development of an early warning system would make it possible to anticipate potential conflicts, accompanied by greater coordination between regional governments and international organisations active in the Sahel.

Likewise, climate security requires comprehensive programmes geared towards joint action, sustainable development and regional peace-building measures, which would be conducive to development at the local level. To this end, the international community should leverage economic investments to increase the resilience of the Sahelian population.

While these external investments are materialising and bearing fruit, one of the most significant regional strategies is the development of the "Great Green Wall of the Sahel" (GMV), an initiative launched in 2007, which aims to provide an effective response to

¹⁰ Florencia Valdés Andino (2015). Dans la région du lac Tchad, réchauffement climatique et terrorisme vont de pair. TV5 Monde. <https://information.tv5monde.com/afrique/dans-la-region-du-lac-tchad-rechauffement-climatique-et-terrorisme-vont-de-pair-61151>

this problem. Its scientific and technical director, Abakar Mahamat Zougoulou¹¹, stresses that the initiative is exclusively pan-Africanist in nature as part of this Agency within the framework of the African Union. It is an extraordinary project in its efforts, being one of the most important environmental projects in the world¹², which is not without its difficulties, but is still working towards its goal: to tackle the effects of land degradation and desertification in the Sahara and the Sahel. It is a green belt of vegetation that would cross the entire Sahelian belt from east to west, some 7,000 kilometres, affecting the lives of some 500 million people. It is expected to produce around 200,000 productive jobs, involving the development of women by integrating them through community farms. The year 2025 has been set as the horizon for achieving sustainable rural development, which will make it possible to transform land threatened by desertification into regions of prosperity. As its representative recalls, "the work of planting seeds along the route of the wall seems to be accelerating today".



Great Green Wall Map

Source: Pan-African Agency for the Great Green Wall (APGMV)

¹¹ This author's contribution and his intervention at the Sahel-Europe Dialogue Forum (2nd Conference, 52:18) can be found in the same publication.

¹² Xavier Fonseca Blanco (2017). Una barrera natural para frenar al desierto [Video]. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wMcnEJzEcOs>

The European Union's approach to climate security in the Sahel

The United Nations has understood the importance of GMV as a key factor for security in the Sahel, as it is a solution designed to overcome widespread poverty and guarantee food security for the population.

The great value of GMV is that it has established a model from within the region that is tailored to the real needs of the Sahel. However, this does not diminish the importance of the international community's involvement in this African initiative.

The EU remains a key player in terms of its capacity to invest in the Sahel. In the 2016 CFSP Global Strategy, the lines of action in the Mediterranean region include the willingness to invest in African peace and development as part of the EU's security and prosperity. These investments are expected to be channelled through regional international organisations such as the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) or the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), in order to promote regional integration. They will target multiple sectors, including achieving sustainable development in line with climate change patterns.

This need for external support to the Sahel countries, given the difficulties of their economies, and the implementation of projects developed from internal regional initiatives, would imply the creation of a new model of international coalition. While the control of economic management could be in the hands of those who provide funds for these initiatives, such as the European Union, the implementation and control of development effectiveness could be the responsibility of African actors at the different levels of cooperation. The objective should therefore be to achieve not only greater regional integration, but also international integration.

Conclusion

The challenges facing the security of the Sahel stem from a wide range of factors. Climate change must be included among these and addressed as such. Its impact, whether direct or indirect, is an indisputable fact that affects the entire east-west strip, requiring committed regional integration. International cooperation remains a key element in achieving security, with an effective model of action tailored to the needs defined by the indigenous characteristics of the Sahel.



Opportunities for cooperation to address common threats: climate change and its impact in the Sahel

M. Abakar Mahamat Zougoulou

Introduction to the challenges of the Sahelian region

The Sahelian region is a geographic area bounded to the north and south by the Sahara Desert. It covers an area of about 10 million square kilometres, with a population of over 500 million people living mainly off the land. The area south of the Sahara, made up of the member states of the Great Green Wall Initiative, is characterised by a natural capital of once lush agricultural and pastoral land and important, often untapped or at least largely unexploited mineral deposits, particularly clean renewable energies (solar and wind), and endemic and highly promising value chains, such as Arabic gum and spirulina, which are highly prized internationally. In the 1960s and 1970s, the climate was relatively stable and ecosystems and agricultural systems were in balance. This had positive effects on the social cohesion of communities through constant monitoring of land issues, which were managed by remarkable social regulations.

The important natural capital has been greatly diminished since the drought years (1973) by the effects of climate change, and this recurrently leads to the re-emergence of latent conflicts, less controlled or neglected by public policies, as explained by the OECD analysis by Philippe Heinrigs in 2010¹³, which links nature and security in the Sahel,

¹³ Philippe Heinrigs (2010). Incidences sécuritaires du Changement climatique au Sahel: Perspectives politiques. CSAO/OCDE.

and which was also described by the FAO in 2006 as a human rights issue. At the climatic level, the isohyets in the north-south direction have experienced a very significant shift of about 200 km between 1950 and 1984 (according to global forest statistics), and where there has been mainly continuous land degradation due to soil fragility, drastically reducing the arable potential in terms of agricultural production and productivity. Another important observation is the mismatch between dwindling resources and demographic pressure, which is evolving through population concentration and overexploitation of scarce residual resources, leading to malnutrition, poverty, loss of jobs, and migration towards cities and out of the country, towards Europe.

It is also noted in a joint study conducted in 2004 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)¹⁴ that, during this phase of resource scarcity, it is necessary to adapt the highly sectoral national strategies emanating from North-South cooperation models and use a participatory approach through the empowerment of populations in their territories and the promotion of local economic development. Over time, the Sahel region has become a "no man's land" due to a massive rural exodus, especially of young people, the "soul of the nation", linked to weaknesses in the sustainable management of natural resources and a lack of investment in social and economic infrastructure to reverse land degradation trends.

Thus, the current insecurity observed is essentially due to a certain weakness of Sahelian states in managing the issue of local economic development. Global statistics show that the Sahel is the region with the poorest and most vulnerable population on the planet, and is a breeding ground for terrorism and jihadists. The large-scale emigration of young Sahrawis to Europe, as well as the increase in social and community conflicts and especially terrorism, is one of the consequences of this situation. The Sahel needs a new development strategy for the rural world.

The Great Green Wall Initiative, an innovative solution to the Sahel region's problems

In the face of these major challenges, the Great Green Wall Initiative was created on the basis of political will, an integrated approach to sustainable resource management that is multi-sectoral, ecosystemic and inclusive. The concept of the "Great Green Wall" and the vision promulgated by the Sahelian Heads of State and Government who have devised and reflected on it, is to take into account the participation of the populations

¹⁴ PNUD-PNUE (2004). Intégration de l'environnement et du Changement climatique pour la réduction de la pauvreté et le développement durable.

according to the motto "By and for the populations at the grassroots". The Great Green Wall Initiative is a continent-wide project and a concrete proposal for action within the framework of the global alliance against climate change based on regional and sub-regional cooperation mechanisms.

The design of the Great Green Wall Initiative has been the subject, in particular, of significant reflection and analysis carried out under the scientific leadership of Prof. Abdoulaye DIA and Dr. Robin Duponnois, in 2010, on the implementation concept of the Initiative¹⁵, and in 2012, on the capitalisation of research and the valorisation of local knowledge¹⁶. From these valuable scientific contributions, it became clear that there is an urgent need to take into account populations and their age-old knowledge and modern innovations in the approach to land viability by building and creating vast Rural Economic Emergency Poles for the benefit of local populations through a valorisation of natural capital and its integration into a global and integrated approach to land management.

The Great Green Wall Initiative constitutes today, after only a decade of implementation, a strategy and a finished model of sustainable drylands management, an opportunity for South-South cooperation and an appropriate development response through political will deployed without external influences through innovation, using best practices of sustainable land management and adaptation of local communities and populations to climate change to build sustainable resilience, the preservation of the Sahelian social fabric and sustainable economic development.

Methodology and analysis of this contribution

This contribution follows a pedagogical approach linked to a series of clear questions asked during a thematic session of the Forum organised by the Madrid Institute for International Policy in March 2021 on the Sahel-Europe dialogue "the possibilities for cooperation between to address common threats through an analysis of climate change and its impact on security in the Sahel".

In this framework, the problems of the Sahel region were analysed and, according to the questionnaire, the responses focused on a brief history of the Great Green Wall Initiative, its objectives, the involvement of the population, security and the consideration of gender through the involvement of women, current results and

¹⁵ Abdoulaye DIA & Robin Duponnois (2010). Le projet majeur africain de la Grande Muraille Verte, Concept de mise en œuvre.

¹⁶ Abdoulaye DIA & Robin Duponnois (2012). La Grande Muraille Verte: Capitalisation des recherches et valorisation des savoirs locaux.

difficulties encountered, the paradigm shift in terms of energy linked to development, as well as the expectations of the international community in the framework of North-South cooperation.

A brief history of the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative

At some key dates, the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel Initiative is, at its genesis, a political will to resolve the threats and challenges facing Africa in general and the Sahel in particular.

2005: The basic idea was to erect a "green barrier" to curb desertification and enable the development of drylands and minimise the migration of young people observed, in-situ (in the countries towards the big cities) and ex-situ (towards Europe) in particular. It was launched in 2005 in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), during the General Assembly of the Community of Sahelian States (CENSAD), by the President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obansandjo, in his capacity as President of the African Union. The objective was to find a solution aimed at securing the populations of the arid territories of the Sahel by developing this region, which has become the most vulnerable to climate change. It concerns the entire Sahara region: the northern states (Maghreb) and those south of the Sahara from Dakar to Djibouti.

2007: This idea of erecting a "green barrier" was widely shared and accepted by all Heads of State and Government. Several meetings at the regional, scientific, technical and political levels have made it possible to conceptualise and adopt the foundations, especially the institutional approach and the implementation approach. Thus, the "Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative" in terms of Concept, Approach, Objectives and Strategic Vision. In this sense, it was created in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), under the auspices of the African Union, during its General Assembly on 30 June 2007.

2010: For the implementation of this Initiative, the Pan-African Green Wall Agency was created in 2010 to coordinate, monitor achievements and mobilise resources under the political supervision of the African Union. Initially, eleven states are signatories to the Convention (Burkina Faso, Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sudan). Each of the signatory countries has a dedicated Great Green Wall National Agency, which is responsible for implementing the Initiative in its national component.

Since 2011: To date, ten Member States (except Eritrea) have ratified the Convention, which remains open (Article 16 of the Convention) to all other countries in the Sahara region that wish to join.

2021: Based on the achievements and lessons learned from the first decade of implementation, a 10-year Priority Investment Plan has been developed, on the 2030 trajectory of the Sustainable Development Goals, which was well appreciated by the international community, during the 4th edition of the "One Planet Summit" with the participation of technical and financial partners.

Main objectives of the Great Green Wall Initiative

The main objective of the Great Green Wall Initiative is to combat desertification through the use of proven land reclamation and restoration techniques and to contribute to strengthening the adaptive capacities and resilience of local communities and populations in the face of climate change. This includes restoring the viability and enhancing the natural capital of Sahelian lands. This main objective is based on a geographical area centred between the 100-400 mm rainfall isohyets and aims primarily to secure upstream and indirectly downstream rural production systems through the recovery, development and restoration of land, water and biodiversity, the adaptation and resilience of populations and, above all, the exploitation of agricultural, forestry and pastoral value chains in an integrated and constructive approach through the establishment of Rural Production and Sustainable Development Poles, transforming the land into areas of economic prosperity.

Involvement of the local population

There can be no ownership and development without the active, conscious and voluntary participation of the population. The Great Green Wall concept is fundamentally based on the involvement of the local population, which is the main beneficiary of the initiative in its motto "By and for grassroots actors". Thus, local communities and populations are involved at the front line through awareness-raising actions to ensure their effective adherence to the approach in the choice of sites and the implementation of operations.

At the political and institutional level, the declared will of the Member States has enabled the arid territories to assume their responsibility by ratifying the Convention and, in particular, by creating a national agency that integrates all public and private sectors and the strong support of local communities and populations.

At the organisational level, an innovative approach has been developed to achieve the objectives of real involvement of the populations and communities through the Community and Integrated Sustainable Development Units (UCIDD). The UCIDDs are

determined on the basis of geographical, cultural and social homogeneity and a critical mass of population. They are defined and determined by the communities and populations themselves in order to curb the land issue. They are built around the populations of a village, a group of villages, a terroir or a group of terroirs.

The involvement of the populations is justified in the context of the implementation of the Great Green Wall, as they are in a state of socio-economic fragility and cannot wait several years to receive the benefits of the investments. Parallel to these investments based on land to be restored that can provide income in the medium and long term (4-5 years minimum), socio-economic activities generating income in the short term (6 months to 1 year) must be carried out by participating in all restoration actions, especially in the selection and collection of seeds, the production of seedlings in nurseries, reforestation and monitoring of reforested areas, the development of activities aimed at women and young people.

Security and development for women

One of the strengths of the GMV Initiative is meeting the basic needs of the populations in terms of food and income generation. This has been achieved through the creation of multi-purpose gardens and nutrient gardens managed exclusively by the women of the terroirs. The basis of the Multipurpose Gardens are basic production systems linked to activities, especially horticulture, managed exclusively by women organised in groups.

The success of this multi-purpose garden approach has led to the creation of another more innovative scheme under the label of Integrated Community Agricultural Farms (FACI), whose activities are more extensive, including not only traditional rural production systems such as poultry, horticulture, small ruminant husbandry, beekeeping and fish farming where possible, but also the integration of energy for water drainage and basic social services such as education and health. All of this concerns women in particular, who are the main protagonists.

The precariousness of the populations in general means that short-term income-generating activities ensure the financial security of the populations and guarantee their adherence to large-scale reforestation actions, the benefits of which are expected to last more than three or four years. At present, the reforested sites have generated very significant income and the populations are fully committed to the implementation of the Initiative.

Current results and identified difficulties

In terms of results, it should be noted first of all that current investments are essentially the result of the Member States. After only a decade of implementation and at the level of the eleven Member States, the overall results show that almost four million hectares have been restored, more than two hundred thousand direct productive green jobs and three million indirect jobs have been created, and more than one hundred million dollars of additional income have been brought to the population. This is proof enough that states have shown the international community that they know how to rely on themselves first. The report highlights concrete achievements that constitute milestones and solid foundations that simply need to be consolidated and expanded. It also, and above all, allows us to draw relevant lessons and prospective orientations.

In this perspective, following an assessment of the first decade, a Ten-Year Priority Investment Plan on the 2030 trajectory was developed, based on previous achievements and lessons learned and focusing on five main pillars, which are: (i) sustainable management and development of land, water and biodiversity, (ii) climate change, energy and green economy, (iii) resilient economic development and security, (iv) scientific, technical and logistical capacity building and (v) advocacy, communication and information. The implementation of these broad pillars will accelerate the realisation of the transformative vision and strategic objectives and establish sustainable adaptation and resilience of communities and populations, as well as ecosystems and socio-economic development to climate and ecological risks and security.

Thus, in addition to the first tangible results observed, the mastery, the appropriation of the "Great Green Wall" approach and the adhesion of populations are synonymous with sustainability of future actions. The main difficulty remains the financing of operations. The support from partners that is expected in view of the stakes involved is linked to scaling up through significant investments at the human level by strengthening communities and populations, material and logistical by that of scientific and technical logistical capacities ensuring the guarantee of the Initiative's success.

An energy shift linked to development

Yes, the Great Green Wall Initiative is synonymous with a paradigm shift through the empowerment of populations in their territories and the regulation of the Environment-Development-Security triptych. In other words, thinking for oneself first before relying on others. Projects are often conceived elsewhere without real involvement and thus ownership by the populations. The Great Green Wall initiative is a source of pride, that of having succeeded in a well thought-out African project. The achievement of the objectives in the implementation of the GGW is based on a forward-looking vision

through prevention by means of Early Warning and Response Strategies and the management of the various impacts.

Expectation of the international community, and in particular of the European Union

The EU has always been the main partner of most states in development issues in the Sahel. In this sense, it is still expected to support and engage them through an open partnership in a win-win framework, based on what has been proven and successful by the states and which simply needs to be scaled up with increased investment in view of the challenges.

The implementation of the 10-year Priority Investment Plan on the 2030 trajectory and the sustainable management of production systems require significant investments from the international community, including the European Union. The creation of 100 million hectares of restored land, the creation of ten million jobs, the sequestration of 250 million tonnes of carbon equivalent, the development of agro-ecosystems and the strengthening of the adaptive capacities and resilience of populations are envisaged. This will make it possible to secure land and promote sectors through the enhancement of existing resources with high potential that fall within this vision of the future that will ensure the generation of significant additional income for populations and contribute to food security, job creation and the fight against desertification. This will contribute to the consolidation of peace and security in the Sahel.



Climate change, conflict, and mobility in the Sahel

Oriol Puig Cepero

The EU has a growing interest in the Sahel region for three main reasons: (in)security, migration control and climate change. These phenomena are often intertwined by assuming a gradual advance of the Sahara Desert leading to more conflict and migration. This view of climate change as a 'threat multiplier' needs to be nuanced and no longer linked to purely securitarian approaches. Climate change in the Central Sahel - Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso - is and will be a determining factor in the future of the region, but its impacts will depend on the evolution of social and political factors. Hunger and violence are and will continue to be essentially political.

The most recurrent discourses speak of desertification and increased resource scarcity in the region. However, there is no academic consensus on this. The strongest evidence shows an increase in rainfall over the last three decades and points to a greening of the region. This does not ignore pockets of desertification in places like Sudan or northern Nigeria, but acceptance of a general expansion of the Sahara seems to be insufficiently supported. The only consensus is on faster than global average temperature rise, increased rainfall variability (time and space) and more extreme weather events, floods and droughts.

From this perspective, global warming may exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, but policy management on adaptation and resilience will be key to elucidating its impacts, according to our research¹⁷. Climate change does not appear to be a primary cause of the proliferation of armed groups. At most, an indirect link can be established via the

¹⁷ Our study is based on extensive fieldwork supported by interviews with key actors and organisations; a survey of more than 200 experts in the region; a 30-year scenario-building exercise; and a quantitative analysis of historical, climatic and trend data on food security and conflict.

religious or ethnic instrumentalisation of grievances. Foreign military interventions, on the other hand, do appear to be a primary trigger for the upsurge in violence. The EU's counter-insurgency strategy through multiple actors and interests, the prioritisation of military security or collusion with ethnic militias, as well as the systematic denunciation of human rights violations by local armies worsen the situation.

Climate change could affect inter- and intra-community tensions through its effects on rainfall and transhumance patterns, but this should be analysed on the basis of factors such as unequal natural resource management, historical marginalisation of pastoralist populations or agricultural expansion. Climate change could lead to cascading effects on local livelihoods (rainfall-dependent agriculture and pastoralism), food security and state-citizen relations. Extreme weather events could disrupt agricultural and pastoral production, and harm vulnerable rural communities, especially women and marginalised groups. This could lead to further displacement, although it would remain mostly within Africa, or, conversely, lead to immobility of vulnerable populations due to lack of means to move.

If the EU wants to contribute to resilience in the region, it must urgently rethink its security and migration containment policies, which produce counterproductive effects such as hindering mobility as a form of adaptation to climate variability. It must work towards policy coherence, strengthen local ownership of initiatives and analyse existing vulnerabilities from the perspective of the complexity of their interrelationship with climate change.

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