

Acceleration of the implementation of the Great Green Wall for the achievement of the SDGs and Agenda 2063 of the African Union: Constraints and multifaceted challenges of actors and other stakeholders for the eradication of extreme poverty, insecurity and food self-sufficiency in Africa.

context and Justification

Africa is currently facing considerable present and future challenges in the agricultural sector. Indeed, its climate is changing, its population is growing steadily to reach 2.4 billion by 2050, cities are expanding, diets are undergoing substantial changes, while soils are increasingly degrading at an alarming rate.

Despite its immense agricultural resources, Africa faces food insecurity and malnutrition. In 2019, the number of people affected by hunger is estimated at over 246 million. These figures are rising, and will continue to do so if nothing is done to counter the amplifying effects of climate change. Every year, Africa imports over 80 billion US dollars worth of agricultural and food products. A considerable loss of earnings for the African economy, and a contributing factor to global warming due to production, transport and storage methods.

- These data not only sound the alarm, but also offer economic opportunities in the agricultural sector for Africa's youth, who make up over 77% of the population. A perspective that can help combat forced migration, food insecurity and conflict, but above all promote and facilitate Africa's emergence. The well-being and prosperity of present and future generations depend on arable land. It is necessary and urgent to intensify efforts and reflections on sustainable models, innovation and levers of action to make African "land" the bedrock of inclusive and sustainable development.
- In Africa, around 65% of productive land is degraded, 45% is affected by desertification, 55% of which is at very high risk of desertification.
- Africa is currently losing 4 million hectares of forest every year. In Niger, for example, this loss is 100,000 ha per year. However, Africa has more than 700 million hectares of degraded land that could be restored.
- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimates that, by 2030, Africa will lose two-thirds of its arable land if desertification is not halted. According to the IPCC's 2019 forecasts, the number of people living in arid zones vulnerable to water stress, drought intensity and land degradation would reach 178 million in 2050 with a warming of 1.5°C, increasing to 220 million with a warming of 2°C and 277 million with a warming of 3°C.

Recognizing that neutrality in terms of land degradation is the key to food security, biodiversity preservation, the fight against climate change, peace and sustainable development in general, the Agir pour les Terres (AIT) initiative has positioned itself as a rallying point for civil society and other stakeholders, mobilizing them towards action, alerting them to the urgency of inaction, and promoting high-impact, transformative solutions.

To illustrate this point, and given the scarcity of arable resources and the handicap of land restoration, we would like to address the thorny issue of implementing the Great Green Wall, which will be a boon in several respects to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

The Great Green Wall is a pan-African initiative for the restoration and sustainable management of land in the Sahelo-Saharan region, aimed at combating land degradation and poverty. The idea of creating the initiative was first mooted in 2005 at the seventh session of the CENSAD Heads of State and Government Conference - held in Ouagadougou on June 1-2, 2005 - by the former President of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, and was strongly supported by the President of Senegal, Abdoulaye Wade. In 2007, the Initiative gained momentum when the African Union's Declaration 137 VIII was adopted, approving the decision on implementation (AU 2007).

The initiative involves a range of stakeholders, including national governments, international organizations, the private sector and civil society, working together under pan-African coordination to halt land degradation. International partners such as the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Bank (WB), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the European Union (EU), and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), among others, have mobilized substantial investments to advance the implementation of the Great Green Wall (**GGW**) initiative.

Since its launch and the start of its implementation, however, progress has been painfully slow, and we hope that our side event will set the record straight at the 10th session of the African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, to be held in Cairo from April 23 to 25, 2024. The theme of this year's event is "**Strengthening the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions**".

Names of all organizers:

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