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Désertif'actions

INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT DESERTIF' ACTIONS 2017

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STRASBOURG DECLARATION OF NON-STATE ACTORS

« REDUCING LAND DEGRADATION AND REHABILITATING DEGRADED LAND MUST BECOME A PRIORITY FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY »





The loss of arable land and soil degradation are some of the major challenges facing humanity. Whether identified causes are climate change, poor agricultural practice imposed by short-term profit seeking, water and soil contamination, land grabbing or urban spread, this phenomenon threatens the tenets of our societies' future, questions the population's security and food sovereignty, and ruins the essential favors that the ecosystems render (water, biodiversity). This fast land degradation also deprives us from their irreplaceable carbon storage capacity, at times when rapid CO2 atmospheric levels decrease is an absolute priority, constantly reaffirmed by the scientific community.

Years pass and time is lacking : 2015 raised lots of hope with the adoption, in New York in september, of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (including the 15.3 goal regarding neutrality in terms of land degradation) and, in december in Paris, of a climate agreement providing a precise framework for States and non-state actors action alike. These international agreements are a precious foundation in guiding the international community towards its priorities.

Taking action is henceforth a shared worldwide injunction.

Gathered in Strasbourg at Désertif'Actions 2017 and representing a diversity of non-state actors - civil society organizations, local authorities, scientists, businesses, native people representatives, women and youths, farmers and unions, together we deem that the time has come to reinforce action, at the height of the environmental and social urgencies, including the reduction of development inequalities, and in compliance with the whole Sustainable Development Goals.

We specifically emphasize on the necessity of a territorial perspective. Following the declarations of the "Climate and Territories " summit in Lyon in 2015 and "Climate Chance 2016" in Nantes, we underline that without this territorial perspective, close to populations and local stakeholders, we won't be able to implement sustainable policies to combat land degradation or to undertake rehabilitation actions. We underline that rallying local and regional stakeholders regarding these issues is crucial, that they must especially be aware that the urban spread, in both North and South, must be absolutely contained and anticipated. We insist that providing elected representatives, particularly in South, with land planification and management tools, and that financing these tools, ultimately inexpensive in view of the stakes involved, must be a priority for the worldwide community. To this end we support the growth of decentralized cooperation in the field of land degradation, while emphasizing the importance of experience sharing, good practice exchange, and knowledge dissemination.

We urge local stakeholders to establish regional alimentary strategies that will help strengthen their autonomy and sovereignty, integrating a production and consumption balance, water and arable land diversity preservation, local seeds conservation, and encourage the implementation of ecological agricultural policies, respectful of both human health and future generations.

Following the Désertif'Actions 2017 summit workshops, we declare that :

- Sustainable Development Goal 15 "avoid, decrease, restore" must be converted to concrete actions. In order to reach the goal 15.3 for neutrality regarding land degradation, the multiple project phases (diagnosis, identifying actions, assess outcomes) must be articulated from local to national scale, together with all the relevant stakeholders. We wish to restate that in the context of a land restoration policy, it is fundamental and urgent to prioritize the prevention of further degradation, and that it is necessary to aim further than the neutrality objective. In this context, scientific production must be greatly boosted and be put forward.



- Investing in the restoration of degraded land must be a priority in the view of the challenges this issue connects (food, migration, climate, ...), most notably in regard to small actors funding. We call for a fast increase in the financial flows from worldwide backers, development banks and consider that a convergence of financial operators working on the climate and those mobilized on land degradation would be of strategic interest. All the while, we must remain vigilant and prevent climate funding from monopolizing land or break up farming economies : opportunities exist, major initiatives have been launched these past few months (4p1000, AAA, 3S, etc.). They must be examined without any dogmatism, and can allow for a change of scale in the implementation of the necessary rehabilitation operations. In order to avoid the abuses, the civil society must remain vigilant and have the means to follow and assess these projects. We require that Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT) be applied, along with free and informed consent of the communities.
- The first cause of migration is intimately linked to climatic causes, to desertification and the insecurity that ensues, of which the livelihood deterioration is the key. Although migration is often a means of adaptation to changing circumstances and that in this context restricting displacements would be a poor option, forced migrations are unacceptable. We relay the call of Ouagadougou regarding the necessity to rehabilitate 10 million hectares of degraded lands while creating 2 million jobs linked to sustainable land use for youth, women and migrants, and to better manage the financial flows in order to act firstly on migratory causes. We claim that reinforcing the capabilities of host communities, the development of actions to protect and share natural resources in vulnerable territories and the consultation with target populations are action drivers that are essential to the implementation of efficient migratory policies, mindful of cultural diversities. The Oases ecosystem, particularly at risk, must be part of these dynamics via the sustainable Oases initiative.
- The paramount role of women, as key players and carriers of ancestral knowledge and sustainable solutions to preserve and restore the lands and ecosystems must be better acknowledged. Women represent 40 to 80% of the agricultural workforce depending on the region, but own less than 2% of worldwide land. We support women's land rights, as producers and recipients, so as to lessen present inequalities and reinforce their global contribution to combating desertification.
- Youth are also the holders of solutions and innovations. The transition towards an ecological and sustainable agriculture, manned by the youth and for the youth, by promoting trades tied to the land, to the preservation of biodiversity, to ensure the communities food security, must be guaranteed.
- It is of key importance to modernize the usual administrative approach regarding water management, and to broaden to a more inclusive perspective. The latter must encompass the diversity of water uses while integrating the socio-economical aspects and favor a diversified and coordinated approach between inter-municipalities, watersheds, or inter-countries. There is a complementarity linking a territory's water resources. We underline that differentiated and complementary management based on time and seasons is invaluable.
- Regulation of multiple and complementary users areas rather than differentiation of area use is to be favored. We restate that it is necessary to build up on what's already implemented while supplementing the national framework with features inspired from the local scale. We warn that creating an added value regarding restoration will generate an access competition that will need to be anticipated. We reaffirm the fundamental importance to list and acknowledge land rights in each degraded land restoration operation, in order to protect ecosystems and the beneficiary communities.



- Adaptation to climate change is too often seen through the prism of preservation from risks and catastrophes ; we affirm the importance to make “combat land degradation” a priority in adaptation strategies, and allocating the necessary resources to it, including local and national funds mobilization, with a major section dedicated to the access to water.
- To ensure resilience and adaptability, a perspective focused on basic communities (and on native people) knowledge is indisputable and must promote time-tested traditional expertise such as recognized in article 7.5 of the Paris agreement, specifically sharing on adaptation and mitigation.

The declaration of Human rights, supported by the City of Strasbourg and other cities around the world, highlights that “land degradation is a violation of fundamental human rights worldwide, and a critical threat for present and future generation” ; the participants of Désertif’Actions 2017 share this message. The urgency to act must mobilize here and now, it is the responsibility of our generation.

TAKING ACTION NOW, IT IS POSSIBLE !

Désertif’Actions 2017 was jointly organized by the associations CARI and Climate Chance, the City of Strasbourg, and supported by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

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