

NIGER CIVIL SOCIETY STATEMENT FOR COP13

UNCCD-COP13 preparatory workshop

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Sustainable Development in Africa is highly threatened by environmental impacts as desertification, land degradation and droughts, consequences of climate changes. The Sahara and Sahel area is often characterised with grim images of poverty, conflicts and food insecurity or even starvation. In Niger, environmental degradation is a major obstacle to social and economical development, and to the well being of its population. Natural resources decrease strongly threatens food security. This situation primarily endangers vulnerable populations in their way of living and production customs. Among them, women are the most impacted, as they have less access to knowledge and to production means.

The environmental questions are then important concerns for Niger's highest authorities, in particular the President and the First Minister. The threat caused by natural resources degradation calls each citizen to a change of comportment regarding their management. Restoration of ecosystems and their sustainable management will require the commitment of everyone.

Acknowledging those challenges, the Civil Society Organizations gathered during the preparatory workshop organized by the CNCOD/ReSaD, deliver the following statement:

Niger's Civil Society cannot remain passive and accept apocalyptic visions of the world's future. We have arrived to crossroads and still have possibilities to take good decisions about the future for generations to come. History will judges us on the way we took decisions and make choices that are still within our scope. Will we be able to meet this tremendous challenge?

Desertification is defined as: "land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid regions resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities" (UNCCD, July the 17th, 1994). This land degradation can be curbed with sustainable, land and natural resources, management.

Thus, Niger's Civil Society Organizations invite stakeholders to adopt the following actions.

Supporting local authorities (communal level) to take sustainable land management un charge

To this end Niger CSO must:

- Support municipalities counsels for the integration of SLM within their Communal Development Plans,
- Sensitize local and national authorities about SLM,
- Point out to local authorities the risks caused by partition and sale of forest areas, more specifically classified forest,
- Disseminate knowledge to local authorities on the significance to maintain protected areas as a barrier to desertification,
- Work with local radios on the subject of land degradation, in order to reach more local authorities.

Civil society organizations have indentified constraints on gender and land rights regarding SLM and combat against desertification. To overcome these constraints, CSO propose to:

- Give access to technology and land rights to farmers who preserve environment and provide food for millions of families,
- Maintain a balance on land use for ecological and food-producing purposes, relying on the best practices known,
- Secure land rights in order that sustainable food production systems become a common practice.

Involvement of CSO in reaching LDN targets

About Land Degradation Neutrality, Niger CSO formulated recommendations:

- Local authorities must join other stakeholders and get involved into combating desertification. Local authorities have to lead advocacy toward national and regional authorities (ECOWAS, UEMOA, African Union),
- Local authorities and parliament representatives need to participate to sensitization and mobilization conducted toward populations in order to curb land degradation in Niger,
- Beneficiary populations must be involved into decision making process, in order that they assume SLM actions and projects,
- More CSO and networks have to involve into following and evaluating the implementation of national policies about the combat against desertification. Thus the Civil Society will strengthen its influence over decisions makers.
- Technical and financial partners must gather funds for sustainable land management in relation with food security, migrations and security,
- Stakeholders must collaborate to create new land management practices, relying on existing knowledge about smart agriculture and climate change resiliency. These new practices have to be spread on dry and fragile areas where food insecurity gets more and more severe,
- Stakeholders must act efficiently on desertification whose impacts on security, peace and stability might not be visible, but are real for affected countries because of starvation episodes and forced migration.

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