

The Sahel: Land of Opportunities, Land with a Future



Large-scale regreening is possible, at scale and at low costs, as has occurred for example in Niger over millions of hectares. But monitoring the impacts also needs to be much improved. Photo: Robert Winterbottom.

The Land of opportunities. A stable Sahel, with a population of over 300 million and a rising urbanization trend, offers immense opportunities for the global market. The Sahel, the vast semi-arid region of Africa separating the Sahara Desert to the north and tropical savannas to the south, is as much a land of opportunities as it is of challenges. Although it has abundant human and natural resources, offering tremendous potential for rapid growth, there are deep-rooted challenges—environmental, political and security— that may affect the prosperity and peace of the Sahel.

For this reason, the United Nations has come up with a unique support plan targeting 10 countries to scale up efforts to accelerate prosperity and sustainable peace in the region.

(Source)

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) policy dialogue in partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation took place at the stunning Bellagio Centre in Italy. The

discussion theme was ***"A Land of Opportunities: Framing Contextual and Practical Solutions for Lasting Peace and Prosperity in the Sahel."*** UNCCD introduced an exciting initiative aimed at reversing present trends in the Sahel, and restoring its economic, social and environmental capital. The initiative focuses on the large-scale mobilization of communities, social groups and networks to accelerate installation of clean energy, restore degraded lands and catalyse the development of rural enterprise across the Sahel belt, with a special focus on youth and women.

Ecology, Energy, Enterprise

The initiative will focus on three principal axes of activity that have the power to transform the Sahel – restoration of degraded lands and sustainable agricultural practices; provision of clean energy, and development of small- and medium-scale rural enterprise

There is a vast potential for ***ecological restoration*** to return land to productivity and to biological diversity across the Sahel, both through the recovery of degraded lands and through the spread of sustainable agricultural and livestock management practices. This process is actually already underway; millions of hectares of land have restored and regained their green cover, and, contrary to popular belief, tree cover in the Sahel has increased in recent years. The potential for spreading beneficial ecological practices on a very large scale clearly exists.

This central pillar of the initiative aims to make information and know-how about what is already working widely available across the region, and apply it to millions of square kilometres, reinforcing and expanding the **Sahel's Great Green Wall** holding back the advance of the Sahara. **"The initiative will ride on a wave of communication."**

Sustaining ecological progress while supporting economic development will require ***clean energy***. Fortunately, the Sahel is blessed with an inexhaustible energy source. The region receives sunlight more consistently and with greater intensity than almost anywhere else on earth. In fact, the solar energy falling on the Sahel would be enough to meet the energy needs of the entire planet. And yet a high percentage of the Sahel's rural communities have no access to modern energy at all.(Source)

If we can change the narrative, it can spark raised ambition, action and investment from political leaders, businesses and investors – not just for the Great Green Wall but also for

other people- and nature-positive developments, delivered in partnership with local communities and based on the needs and knowledge of the region.

The Great Green Wall is an amazing project. It is showing that we can reverse the damage humanity has done to the planet by deploying integrated solutions that tackle climate change, nature loss and land degradation at the same time. It is showing that we live in an era of hope as much as an era of despair at the state of our climate. If the international community gets fully behind this initiative and starts to implement others like it, **we can transform our world.** (Source)

The race to restore 100 million hectares of Africa's Great Green Wall begins

More about the [Great Green Wall, publications and articles](#), media and [news articles](#) from our library collection.

NEW : [Cost-benefit analysis published in Nature Sustainability](#) shows average return of USD 1.2 for every USD 1.0 invested in the land restoration project, despite harsh climatic conditions.

Africa's [Great Green Wall](#) (GGW) programme to combat desertification in the Sahel region is not only crucial to the battle against climate change but also makes commercial sense for investors .

For every US dollar put into the massive effort to halt land degradation across the African continent from Senegal in the west to Djibouti in the east, investors can expect an average return of USD 1.2, with outcomes ranging between USD 1.1 and USD 4.4, [the analysis finds](#).

The Great Green Wall at UNFCCC COP 26 - Latest references compiled by UNCCD library

- ***A statement by UNCCD Executive Secretary Ibrahim Thiaw***

As the latest round of climate negotiations got underway in Glasgow, at an event co-hosted by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, French President Emmanuel Macron and Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Ghazaoui, it was encouraging to see a strong focus put on efforts to scale up implementation of the Great Green Wall as a critical nature-based solution to climate change in Africa.

And in exciting news for the partnership, Jeff Bezos, Executive Chair of the Bezos Earth Fund, commended African leadership and recognized the impressive contributions of initiatives such as the Great Green Wall and AFR100. He pledged the Bezos Earth Fund's

support – 1 billions US\$ for landscape restoration - creating long-term restoration solutions at an even greater scale in Africa.

UNCCD, as host of the GGW Accelerator, is delighted to see such bold public and philanthropic investments taking shape. We encourage partners to go further and also ensure the remaining bottlenecks to blended and private investment are overcome. The Great Green Wall can be a model for Africa and the world. Its success and its replication across the continent offer a pathway for genuine climate resilience and a way to get human development and nature in balance across Africa.

Land restoration in Africa is indeed a cost-effective nature-based solution to combatting climate change and COP26 represents a unique opportunity to demonstrate that the fight for the climate goes hand in hand with the fight for land and nature. Massively and quickly restoring African land to reduce poverty, reverse biodiversity loss and store planet-warming greenhouse gases makes compelling environmental, social and economic sense.

UNCCD therefore welcomes the support to the Great Green Wall initiative and to the wider African Land Restoration movement that is gathering pace.

The restoration of 100 million hectares of land by 2030 in this part of the Sahel is expected to create an estimated 10 million jobs and lock away 250 million tonnes of carbon in the soil. A decade in and now roughly 18 per cent complete, the Great Green Wall Initiative is bringing life back to Africa's degraded landscapes.

READ further the whole statement [here](#) ; see also [Event photos on Flickr](#)

Do you have confidence in us to build the Great Green Wall, young people ask leaders

A high-level ministerial event on the African led Great Green Wall initiative took place Monday, 8 November at the Climate Change COP26 to identify critical elements to help the public and private sectors to make best use of the billions of dollars pledged this year, and bring to fruition 8,000km of green projects, stretching right across Africa.

Placing local populations and national institutions at the center, making traditional knowledge and capacities the entry points, taking a holistic approach and putting in place effective governance and accountability systems are among the vital elements identified.

Two inspiring youth from the GGW countries, Ms Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim and Mr Sayouba Bonkougou called for the involvement of local populations, traditional and indigenous communities, stating “the Great Green Wall will not be done in the offices. It must be done by communities, where they live.”

“There is no time. We have nine years, and already climate change has reached 1.5 degrees Celsius in our region. We need action. It is up to you to put this in action. Do you have confidence in our ability to do it? We need to go to COP27 with results, not promises,” Ms Ibrahim said on their behalf. Read further [here](#)

Not all walls are built to divide us: In Africa, the world’s longest wall is setting its people free

Across Africa, the world’s longest wall is being built. Not a wall to keep immigrants out or oppressed people in. Rather, a wall to unlock the potential of millions of people in the Sahel.

This is the Great Green Wall – an African-led initiative that the entire international community should throw its weight behind. To unlock the finance that will allow the wall to deliver on all its goals, however, we need to change the narrative in a diverse and vibrant region that is often dismissed as a lost cause.

A wall worth building. **Tina Birmpili, Deputy Executive Secretary, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)** Read the whole article [here](#)

More from the press:

- **RELEASE: AFR100 Issues COP27 Challenge to Mobilize \$2 Billion for Africa’s Locally Led Land Restoration Movement**

GLASGOW (November 2, 2021)—By COP27, which will be held on African soil, unders must invest \$2 billion in [AFR100](#), the continent’s locally led campaign to restore vitality to 100 million hectares of degraded and deforested land. Jeanne d’Arc Mujawamariya, Minister of Environment of the Republic of Rwanda; Nancy Tembo, Minister of Forestry and Natural Resources of the Republic of Malawi; and Mohammad Abubakar, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Federal Republic of Nigeria issued that challenge today at COP26.

“Africa is home to the world’s greatest restoration opportunity, with 700 million hectares of degraded land that can be restored. Africa is the continent most dependent

on the land for livelihoods, and most vulnerable to climate change. Africa must therefore lead the way. We warmly welcome partnership with ambitious funders like the Bezos Earth Fund,” said **Ibrahim Mayaki**, CEO of the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD).

- **Statement by President von der Leyen on the Great Green Wall at COP26**

We are launching a number of initiatives that form a mosaic of actions in support of the Great Green Wall. For instance, in September, we launched our new NaturAfrica initiative. NaturAfrica landscapes will constitute building blocks of the Great Green Wall. It is about sustainable agriculture, forestry, land restoration and green value chains. In our new international development programme, the Great Green Wall priorities feature prominently in most Sahel countries that are part of it.

- **ROYAL LIVE: Prince Charles Co-Hosts ‘Great Green Wall’ at COP26**

The Prince of Wales is joined by Jeff Bezos, French President Emmanuel Macron, and his Mauritanian counterpart Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz for the Great Green Wall session at the COP26 climate summit. The Africa-led initiative’s purpose is to combat desertification by creating a mosaic of green and productive landscapes across north Africa.

- **Amazon founder set to pledge more than £700 million for Africa land restoration**

At an event at Cop26 in Glasgow alongside the Prince of Wales French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen the billionaire said he would match a previous contribution made through his Bezos Earth Fund. The fund has pledged 10 billion dollars (£7 million) to tackle climate change. Tomorrow we will be making an equivalent commitment to landscape restoration with a major focus on Africa

- **Great Green Wall provides ‘precious opportunity’, says Charles**

Bearing in mind that there are some 700 million hectares of degraded land in Africa, the Great Green Wall initiative offers a precious opportunity to restore land, forest and

biodiversity while also addressing the social, economic and environmental impacts of land degradation and desertification,” he said.

“It can also offer a model for the vital role of sustainable supply chains.”

The Duke of Rothesay, as he is known while in Scotland, went on to say that the initiative could form part of a “just and sustainable transition”.

“However, we also know that this transition will cost trillions, not billions to resolve.”

Africa, the Prince said, was “uniquely placed” to help tackle climate change due to its “vibrant young population and unique and precious natural landscapes”.

“We have a precious opportunity to make sustainability the growth story of our time, yet the window for action is – as we all know – rapidly closing,” he said. The Prince added: “Let us roll up our sleeves and start designing the creative solutions we need to secure the future for generations to come.

“Because working together, at the end of the day, I know we can succeed.”

- **COP26: in the Sahel, a Great Green Wall against the desert**

“The Great Green Wall is an essential initiative which should make it possible to fight against desertification and to propose economic solutions”, insisted Monday in Glasgow the President of the Republic. Last January, in Paris, during the “One Planet Summit”, Emmanuel Macron pledged to give a “Boost” to this project aimed at combating the advance of the desert in the Sahel.

- **Musk and Bezos make separate grand gestures over global hunger. Amazon founder Jeff Bezos has also offered millions to tackle desertification**

Land pledge. Meanwhile, Amazon’s Bezos is set to pledge £732 million for land restoration in Africa. At an event at COP 26 in Glasgow alongside the Prince of Wales, French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, the billionaire said he would match a previous donation made through his Bezos Earth Fund. The fund has pledged 10 billion dollars (£7 million) to tackle climate change.

The event focuses on the Great Green Wall initiative, which aims to plant more than 20 million trees across 8,000 kilometres the width of Africa, to tackle desertification. He

told attendees, who also included the president of Nigeria, the president of Mauritania and representatives of the World Bank and African Development Bank, action must be taken to ensure the next decade is not one that is seen as “indecisive”.

“Last month, I committed a billion dollars in grants to support nature conservation and will be starting with the Congo basin countries and the tropical Andes,” he said.

“Tomorrow we will be making an equivalent commitment to landscape restoration with a major focus on Africa.

“We want to work with the major platforms that are already established and ready for scaling, including Africa 100 and the Great Green Wall.”

He added: “We all know that this is the decisive decade, but without action, it will become the indecisive decade.

“We can’t let that happen. “Please consider us an ally for this important cause.”

- **Amazon tycoon Jeff Bezos pledges £732m to help reforestation in Africa after chat with Prince Charles about the importance of trees**

Prince Charles played a key role in getting Jeff Bezos to pledge £732million. Amazon founder is matching a past contribution for land restoration in Africa. The Great Green Wall initiative will plant 20m trees across the width of Africa. Prince was 'instrumental' in bringing Mr Bezos and Emmanuel Macron together Mr Bezos said: 'We all know that this is the decisive decade, but without action, it will become the indecisive decade. 'We can't let that happen. Please consider us an ally for this important cause.'

- **Great Green Wall: Restoring over 100 million hectares for agriculture achievable – Buhari**

President Muhammadu Buhari has expressed confidence that Africa’s ambition of restoring over 100 million hectares of degraded landscape for productive agriculture is achievable.

The president expressed optimism in Glasgow, Scotland at the Climate Change Summit, COP26, a side event on the Great Green Wall (GGW), co-hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron, the Prince of Wales, and the Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani.

According to a statement by Senior Special Assistant, Garba Shehu, Buhari who spoke on the theme of the event, “Accelerating land restoration in Africa, the case of the Great

Green Wall initiative”, President Buhari said it was noteworthy that the meeting was tailored towards ameliorating the problems of land degradation, desertification, depletion of the forest ecosystems and biodiversity in Africa.

‘With all hands on deck and concerted efforts at land restoration by African leaders, I am optimistic that Africa’s ambition of restoring over 100million hectares of degraded landscape for productive agriculture is achievable.

- **Great Green Wall will turn the Sahel green says African Development Bank chief**

President Dr Akinwumi A. Adesina has highlighted the importance of stopping desertification in Africa’s Sahel and turning the region green. Adesina spoke at a high-level side event held on Monday 1 November, on the Great Green Wall initiative during the ongoing UN global climate conference, COP26, in Glasgow, Scotland. The African Development Bank is a major partner in this bold project, which involves building an 8,000 km long and 15 km wide swathe of trees, grasslands, vegetation and plants across the Sahel. The African Development Bank has committed to mobilize \$6.5 billion towards the Great Green Wall initiative, by 2025. This is 45% of the \$14.5 billion that development partners committed to the initiative at the One Planet Summit in Paris. It also represents 20% of the \$33 billion needed to deliver on the 10-year priority investments of the Great Green Wall by 2030.

The Bank chief said his institution was delivering on its commitment through several projects, including \$2 billion for the Desert-to-Power program to deliver universal access to electricity in the G5 Sahel countries (Niger, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Burkina Faso) via solar power.

- **The Great Green Wall Accelerator: new impetus for this iconic African initiative**

At France’s initiative, the creation of the Great Green Wall Accelerator was announced at the One Planet Summit on 11 January 2021. The aim is to give new impetus to this iconic African Union initiative.

On that occasion, the President of the French Republic committed to closely follow progress as regards mobilizing donors for the Accelerator and its implementation.

- **The Great Green Wall Documentary – the line that unites Africa @ COP26**

The Great Green Wall at One Planet Summit 2021 - Latest references compiled by UNCCD library

- **Great Green Wall receives over \$14 billion to regreen the Sahel** – France, World Bank listed among donors

The ambitious Great Green Wall for the Sahel and Sahara Initiative has received at least 14.326 billion United States Dollars in new funding. The funding will fast track efforts to restore degrading land, save biological diversity as well as create green jobs and build resilience of the Sahelian people. Emmanuel Macron, President of France, made the announcement at the just concluded One Planet Summit for Biodiversity on 11 January 2021, co-organized by France, the United Nations and World Bank. ([Source](#))

- **Climate graphic of the week: the Great Green Wall scales up**

New funding of more than \$14bn pledged for planting across almost a dozen countries in region bordering Sahara.

The ambitious initiative known as the Great Green Wall received a boost this week with a pledge of \$14.3bn in new funding from the African Development Bank, France and the World Bank to plant an 8,000km long and 15km wide mosaic of trees, grasslands, vegetation and plants across the Sahel, the arid savannah on the southern edge of the Sahara. ([Source](#))

- **Great Green Wall at One Planet Summit 2021**

Biodiversity is our life insurance, but it is under threat. The COVID19 crisis has dramatically changed our lives; and it has also brought to the forefront the crucial need to better preserve biodiversity. **Our lives and economies rely on nature.**

France, together with the United Nations and the World Bank, organized a "One Planet Summit" for biodiversity on 11 January 2021 in Paris. The Summit brought together heads of state and government, leaders of international organizations, financial institutions, companies and NGOs, all ready to demonstrate that their commitments are leading to concrete actions to preserve and restore biodiversity, and to lead systemic transformations of our economies.

This high-level meeting is a major milestone for the political mobilization for nature in 2021, the year that should lead to an ambitious new international agreement on biodiversity. At the summit, UNCCD presents the Great Green Wall Initiative – a game-changing African-led project that aims to restore degraded landscapes and improve millions of lives in one of the world's poorest regions, the Sahel. The Great Green Wall Initiative is regreening the Sahel, restoring degraded lands and providing decent livelihoods for its people, snaking the Sahel all the way from Senegal in the West to Djibouti in the East, restoring degraded lands and providing jobs and opportunities for millions of people in Africa.

In a post COVID context where Sahelian countries are struggling with budgets and funding, the new commitments launched at One Planet Summit will help meet financial requirements and turbo charge the achievement of GGW goals. To complete the Wall, it is estimated that USD 33 billion US dollars of investment – from private, national and international sources will be needed. ([Source](#))

- **African Development Bank President Adesina named a champion of Africa's Great Green Wall climate-adaptation initiative**

President Akinwumi A. Adesina has been announced as a champion of Africa's Great Green Wall (GGW) initiative. The appointment was made at a forum held in the margins of the One Planet Summit 2020¹ to mobilise support for the ambitious project to plant an 8,000 km swathe of trees and other vegetation across the Sahara and Sahel regions of Africa. **The Great Green Wall will act as a barrier against desertification and aims to create over 10 million green jobs in the region.**

"I would also like to welcome the commitment of Dr. Adesina, President of the African Development Bank, who has agreed to take on the role of resource mobilization champion and help raise, by 2030, all the necessary funds for the realization of the Great Green Wall," French President Emmanuel Macron told participants.

In the role of champion, Adesina will lead the mobilisation of political and economic support for the initiative.

"The Great Green Wall Initiative is the first step on the way to nature-based solutions as well as solutions based on the vitality of African eco-solutions," said Macron. "France is

very committed to this region from the standpoint of security and sustainability. We need to beef up the initiative for all the 11 countries.”

During the forum, Adesina announced that the Bank would mobilize up to \$6.5 billion over the next 5 years for the Great Green Wall Initiative, joining multilateral development institutions, governments and development partners that have pledged over \$14 billion. The World Bank, for instance, pledged over \$5 billion in funding to advance land restoration and degradation issues and to address challenges around Lake Chad.

Adesina praised the initiative. **“The Great Green Wall is part of Africa’s environmental defense system — a shield against the onslaughts of desertification and degradation,”** he said. “The future of the Sahel region of Africa depends on the Great Green Wall. Without the Great Green Wall, in the face of climate change and desertification, the Sahel may disappear.”(Source)

- **FAO Director-General calls for urgent scale-up of Africa’s Great Green Wall**

11 January 2021, Paris/Rome - The Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, QU Dongyu, today appealed for an urgent scale-up of Africa's Great Green Wall initiative to restore degraded land, create jobs and address climate change.

The Director-General spoke in a virtual address to the Great Green Wall investment forum held at the **One Planet Summit for Biodiversity 2021** hosted by French President, Emmanuel Macron. The Prince of Wales and the President of Mauritania, Mohamed Ould Ghazouani, also addressed the summit.

Qu emphasized FAO's commitment to the **Great Green Wall** Initiative stating that the UN organization had worked with local communities in the Sahel region on a comprehensive approach towards land restoration by providing plant science and mechanization of traditional agricultural methods to transform agri-food systems and landscapes.

"Over the last five years, we applied this approach in over 400 communities, thereby helping to restore over 50,000 hectares of degraded lands to the benefit of close to one million people," Qu noted.

Endorsed by the African Union in 2007, the Great Green Wall is Africa's flagship initiative to combat climate change and desertification and address food insecurity and poverty with the goal of restoring 100 million hectares by 2030. FAO has played a leading role implementing projects linked to the initiative.

The Director-General said FAO currently has a project portfolio of \$238 million directly supporting the 5 Pillars of the Great Green Wall Accelerator and a total project portfolio of over \$1.15 billion supporting 11 Great Green Wall countries.

FAO's activities include technical assistance on the restoration of degraded lands across the Sahel from Mauritania and Senegal in the west to Djibouti and Eritrea in the east of the continent. (Source)

- **Sowing hope. Sahel's Great Green Wall: It's not just about planting trees.** The Great Green Wall of the Sahel is an ambitious programme aimed to combat the natural challenges the region is facing. It demonstrates the will and commitment of both the people and the regional states to reject its geographic and climatic fate. The scale of ambition is high.

Indeed, how, and above all **what is the rationale behind a programme aiming to re-green an 8000 kilometres long stretch** from the Atlantic coast to the Red Sea? One that crosses 11 countries as diverse as Djibouti and Eritrea in the East or runs from Nigeria through Senegal and Mauritania to the West? What are the sources of funding? What level of political will and determination exist to achieve these goals?

Additionally, the Great Green Wall would create millions of jobs, especially in rural areas. Jobs that could meet the basic needs of young people and **deter their temptation** to engage in dangerous activities, such as illegal immigration, terrorism or illicit trafficking. **It also meant millions of women**, who are essential producers in these rural areas, could add value to their products, thanks to improved access to electricity, in particular solar energy. The added value of coupling technology and energy would be to increase access to markets by stemming the enormous loss of agricultural produce caused by inadequate infrastructure at the processing and conserving stages. **National policies have also evolved favourably** despite a lingering prioritisation of urban investment, often to the detriment of the transformation of rural economies. Investing in the Great Green Wall **has the potential to change these conditions.** It would make it possible to create and tap into value chains, transform and add value to local products

(rather than export raw products) and create green and sustainable jobs (rather than have the youth fending for themselves). The provisional results from the **first twelve years of the Great Green Wall** are encouraging, with nearly 20 million hectares of land restored. But, to borrow from the Olympic motto, we need to go faster, higher, stronger to meet the 2030 goals....the Great Green Wall will become **the largest living structure on earth grown by humans**. A new wonder of the world benefiting present and future generations. And as the French poet and writer Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, once said: "We do not inherit the land from our parents, we borrow it from our children." *Read further the Ibrahim Thiaw's op-ed*

- **Global and African Leaders Welcome Launch of GCA Africa as "Historic Moment to Accelerate Adaptation" on the Continent**

The Global Center on Adaptation today announced the launch of its regional office in Côte d'Ivoire.

Hosted by the African Development Bank at its headquarters in the Ivorian capital Abidjan, GCA Africa will work with partners across the continent to scale and accelerate adaptation action that protects African communities from the impacts of climate change.

GCA Africa will focus on programs and action, knowledge acceleration and capacity building and agenda-setting that respond to the acute challenges from the changing climate facing African countries.

The GCA Africa programs include improving the food security of one billion people in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2030 through a program on rural well-being and food security, as well as projects to support communities through water for urban growth and resilience; using nature for more resilient infrastructure; adaptation finance and building youth leadership.

Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director, International Monetary Fund said:

"More than any other region, sub-Saharan Africa is vulnerable to the impact of climate change, which threatens lives and livelihoods and undermines economic growth. After the current crisis, boosting resilience is an urgent priority so it's vital we share the knowledge and best practice that can help accelerate climate adaptation."

Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations said:

“There is an urgent need to step up the support for people in Africa, and around the world, affected by climate change. I welcome the Global Center on Adaptation Africa as a crucial partner in delivering the elevated ambition and enhanced action that is needed to make this shift towards a resilient future.” In May 2020, GCA Africa published [a GCA policy brief\(link is external\)](#), with the African Adaptation Initiative and endorsed by 54 Heads of State and Government, which recommended focusing stimulus investment in Africa on resilient infrastructure and food security to overcome the COVID-climate crisis. Read [further here](#)

- **Opening Remarks at High-Level Meeting on The Economic Challenges from The Security Crisis in the Sahel.** Remarks by Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva

In effect, **the security crisis and the economic crisis in the Sahel feed on each other in an endless vicious cycle.** Breaking this cycle will require a sense of urgency and continuing commitment and cooperation across institutions, including the IMF. A strategic schedule of technical and high-level meetings could help maintain momentum. [Read more](#)

- **Closing Remarks at High-Level Meeting on The Economic Challenges from The Security Crisis in the Sahel.** Remarks by Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva

When I think about the future of the Sahel an old saying comes to mind: *“We do not inherit the land from our ancestors. We borrow it from our children.”*

Millions of people living in the land of the Sahel today face desert and drought, hunger and violence, economic insecurity and now a devastating pandemic. But how we act now will determine whether or not the future is brighter for the next generation. And with over 64 percent of the population in the Sahel under 25 years of age, this is an especially urgent task.

So, what would it take to resolve the crisis – and build a better future for the Sahel?

First, strong international cooperation to help resolve the security crisis in the Sahel.

Second, stronger domestic foundations for success. If we want to ensure that efforts to address the security crisis can succeed without crowding out other urgent spending and harming the most vulnerable, it is vital to reinforce economic fundamentals.

Third, stepped-up support from external partners. Given the magnitude of needs in the Sahel, domestic efforts will not be enough. External partners have already brought direct security support and financial assistance to the region, and supported the creation of the G-5 Sahel and the Sahel Alliance. But much more is needed. All of us, including the IMF, have a critical role to play in supporting the countries of the Sahel. Budget support, including in the form of grants, will be particularly important.

Fourth, increased resilience. COVID-19 is not the first shock this region has faced. It will not be the last – especially with the looming climate crisis. Even as we attend to immediate and urgent needs, we must recognize that building a better future also requires building resilience in the face of future shocks. This will require investing in people – building up human capital, expanding access to digital technologies, supporting public health systems.

Let me end on a note of hope – and responsibility. One initiative I have watched with interest is the movement to build a “Great Green Wall” of nature across the Sahel, 8000 km from sea to sea. If completed, it would be the largest living structure on the planet.

This symbolizes that it is possible to **build forward better** – to leave the world we are borrowing from our children better, more sustainable, more inclusive. If we work together, I believe that a better future in the Sahel is well within our grasp. [Read further](#)

- **Smart Villages: Empowering rural communities in ‘Niger 2.0’**

Despite the geographic challenges, including that much of the country is covered by the Sahara Desert and over 80% of citizens live in rural regions, the government is striving to connect communities to information and communication technologies (ICTs) through the “Niger 2.0” Smart Villages project.

“This is a project that puts technology at the service of development,” says Ibrahima Guimba-Saidou, Minister, Special Advisor to the President and Director General of Niger’s National Agency for the Information Society (ANSI). Read [the whole story here](#)

- **BURKINA FASO: A solar panel production plant built in Ouagadougou**

Burkina Faso has just set up a solar panel production unit. Called “Faso Energy”, the facility located in the capital Ouagadougou is capable of producing 30 MW of solar panels per year.

A solar panel assembly plant has just been set up in Burkina Faso. Located in the capital Ouagadougou, the facility has a production capacity of 30 MW of solar panels per year, i.e. 200 solar panels manufactured every day. This project is initiated by El hadj Moussa Koanda. This economic operator has invested more than 3 billion CFA francs (nearly 5 million euros).

Named “Faso Energy”, the plant was inaugurated on September 22, 2020 by the Burkinabe Prime Minister Christophe Joseph Marie Dabiré. According to this official, the facility will promote the acquisition of solar energy equipment by the population, thus reducing the need to increase the rate of access to electricity in Burkina Faso. According to the World Bank’s 2018 [report](#), 62.3% of the Burkinabe population has access to electricity in the country. [Read more](#). More about Desert to Power Initiative from the AfDB read [here](#)

- **UNHCR uses drones to help displaced populations in Africa**

Remotely piloted aircraft help to assess needs of people fleeing conflicts and persecution in Mali, Nigeria and South Sudan.

For many people drones conjure up images of remotely piloted aircraft bristling with missiles, used for military ends. But in conflict-affected parts of Africa, versions of the technology are being used by humanitarian aid organizations like UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, to plan relief responses and save lives.

Drones are increasingly in use in countries like Niger, Burkina Faso and Uganda to help map huge populations of displaced people, assess their needs and figure out how best to get assistance to them. They are also being used to evaluate environmental damage caused by displacement.

“There are numerous peaceful applications of this technology, whether in human rights, aid delivery, or settlement mapping,” says Andrew Harper, head of UNHCR’s Innovation unit, noting that the potential use for drones is “overwhelming.” Read [further](#)

- **Meat, Milk and More: Policy Innovations to Shepherd Inclusive and Sustainable Livestock Systems in Africa**

Overgrazing—often as a result of growing livestock populations and the extension of cropping areas into grazing land—as well as reduced seasonal mobility and insecure land tenure are among the main causes of grassland degradation in Africa.

Estimates show that 18.5 percent of the total grazing area land is degraded in SSA, while in the Near East and North African (NENA) region only 2.9 percent of the total grazing area is affected. By restoring the quality of pastures and increasing the sequestration of soil organic carbon, the negative impact of livestock on grassland can be reduced. In addition, livestock overgrazing can lead to biodiversity loss through a reduction in plant cover, which negatively affects the population sizes of wild herbivores and predators.

While it is not yet possible to predict the precise impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic on the global, and more specifically the African livestock sector, it is expected to have a significant impact, with important lessons for devising regulations governing the sector in the future.

At the same time, data shows that the demand for livestock products including beef, dairy and poultry, will double to triple in Africa by 2050, and the major share of the demand will be in urban and peri-urban areas. In order to meet this growing demand, the number of medium-sized farms emerging in Africa's peri-urban areas is likely to increase, as well as the number of mixed crop-livestock farms

The farmer-pastoralist conflict in Nigeria **In recent years, conflicts between nomadic herders and sedentary agrarian communities have increased in the Sahel region, threatening countries' national security.** In Nigeria, drought and desertification have destroyed pastures in the country's far-northern Sahelian belt, while growing animal populations compels herders to move from the predominantly Muslim north to the predominantly Christian south in order to find grassland and water for their herds. Insecurity in the north (an impact of the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast and rural banditry and cattle rustling in the northwest and north-central zones) also triggers many herdsmen to migrate south.

The conflicts between pastoralists and crop farmers have taken a substantial humanitarian and economic toll: in 2016, 2,500 deaths in Nigeria were linked to the conflicts, while 62,000 people were displaced between 2015 and 2017. Conflicts between herders and farmers have been further fueled by religious tensions. To find

a permanent solution to the conflicts, the government of Nigeria passed a **Grazing Bill** that aims to expand and legalize pastoralists' access to grazing land.

However, more needs to be done to develop early-warning or rapid response mechanisms and to enhance livestock management practices to reduce tension with agrarian communities.

Studies in Kenya have shown that for every on-farm dairy job, an additional 1.3 jobs were created in the processing and service sectors. In 2012, over 2 million jobs were generated by the Kenyan dairy industry, representing around 13.5 percent of the country's total labor force.

In Zambia, the broiler chicken value chain alone provides approximately 31,000 jobs, of which over 25,000 are in the traditional production system and 6,000 in the modern production system using new technologies and practices resulting in feed efficiency.

In Mauritania, female engineer and entrepreneur Nancy Abeid Arahamane established Africa's first camel milk dairy in 1989. Based in Nouakchott, Tiviski now produces over 20 different products out of camel, cow, and goat milk. The milk is collected at three collection centers from nomadic pastoralists, some dispersed as far as 800 km from Nouakchott.

Tiviski's products are sold at supermarkets and numerous small shops in the capital city. The company is also looking to export camel cheese to European markets, but regulatory hurdles have limited access. By 2016, the company had already acquired half of the Mauritanian pasteurized milk market. It received a US\$9.5 million investment from the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) in 2016 to expedite its modernization and diversification and expand its milk production. This investment has unlocked the company's capacity to process milk from over 2,000 livestock herders from across the Mauritania Sahara, 15 percent of whom are women. The company has created over 200 direct jobs at the dairies, all of which are allocated to Mauritians, and further indirect jobs for milk collectors in Mauritania's Trarza and Brakna regions.(Source)

- **Commitments made at One Planet Summit to LDN Fund start pouring in (14 December 2017)**

French President Emmanuel Macron announced in his closing statement Tuesday that the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund is one of the 12 global initiatives that will be supported under the One Planet Summit, stating that protecting land and water resources from the effects of climate change would be the second of the Summit's 12 engagements.

"Here, several concrete measures have been taken to mobilize the 300 million United States dollars needed to activate the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund, that is, the Fund to combat land degradation and desertification. France, Canada and other partners announced funds to realize actions aiming to reaching land degradation neutrality by 2030, an attainable objective if in the next few weeks we can raise the USD300 million needed to realize the fund."

The LDN Fund was one of 10 Projects the One Planet Summit had identified as "Projects for our planet."



Drought, desertification and greening in the Sahel

There is growing evidence of greening in the Sahel. It is widespread. It cuts across the entire area, and it's dynamic. In fact, almost all of West Africa is experiencing this greening.

Greening is considered the ultimate weapon to fight global warming. It's not just happening naturally in the Sahel. It's Sahelians also growing a bagful of valuable trees.

From the tasty mango tree, to the oil rich Silk cotton (*Ceiba pentandra*), Shea (*Vitellaria paradoxa*) and Neem (*Azadirachta indica*) trees, multiple use Egyptian balsam (*Balanites aegyptiaca*), African mahogany (*Khaya senegalensis*) and African locust bean (*Parkia biglobosa*) trees, and the nature nurturing Acacia (*acacia albida*) tree, among others.

Trees are natural air conditioners, and are vital for both the rural and urban areas. They provide food, but they are also fertilizing the land in the Sahel in ways that could be making a difference to resilience that is far better than elsewhere in the world. FROM the new UNCCD report "*Drought, desertification and greening in the Sahel*" available in [English](#) and [French](#)

[Science policy blog](#) [Why the Sahel might be the most resilient place to global warming in the future](#) with Luc Descroix . Further reading and Sahel related content from [the Knowledge Hub](#) and [library](#)

The Sahel has potential, but is bound by a vile narrative

- **The Sahel has potential, but is bound by a vile narrative**

When the Sahel region appears in global media, we always hear the same refrain: **extremism, terrorism, conflict and poverty**. Yet this vast, dynamic, and diverse region of Africa is so much more. From Mauritania and Senegal, our respective countries, in the west, to Djibouti in the east, **the region is bursting with potential**.

To see this potential, and fulfil it, **the narrative of insecurity needs to change**.

There are so many **positive things to say about the Sahel**.

First, and this may surprise many people, the region while – on the surface – seems to suffer from water scarcity, is not short of water resources. The **Sahel has large transboundary regional watersheds and groundwater reservoirs**. Considerable reserves of freshwater are stored in deep-water tables, on a scale of thousands of

billions of cubic metres. These reserves could meet the current and future needs of West Africa. But **less than 1% of their potential is in use.**

The potential to irrigate land is huge and in areas far more fertile than people realise – areas such as the Senegal river basin, the Mopti region in Mali and the Maradi area in Niger. Just as with water, **we do not take full advantage of these soils.** Practical solutions – such as better adapted seeds, water-efficient irrigation systems and careful fertilisation – could boost yields by 50%. The **boons for food security** are obvious.

One general perception of the Sahel is true: the region gets a lot of sun. This means that it has **huge potential for solar energy**, in addition to the **wind and hydroelectric energy potential** that exists. Clearly, a lot needs to be done to start drawing on this energy due to the limited infrastructure.

But this task, in itself, is **an opportunity to create skilled jobs, improve food conservation and reduce food loss**, in turn.

Land restoration is another huge opportunity, as we can see in the **Great Green Wall Initiative –building a wall that plants hope**, brings peace and prosperity. A wall that will create 10m rural jobs and reduce forced migration. A wall worth building.

Then there are **the people, the greatest resource and force for change** in any culture or society. The 11 countries of the Great Green Wall have a population of close to 500 million people that is expected to grow to 1.6 billion by the end of the century. And they are young.

The youth of the Sahel must be provided with adequate tools, skills and access to opportunities to **unleash their talent and creativity.** Some countries are depriving themselves of half of their resources/workforce. Women and girls must be empowered and enabled to contribute to the development of their countries as agents of changes. We must **create a path towards transformation, innovation and prosperity.**

Changing the narrative creates a self-reinforcing cycle of improvement and of hope. One that can promote **the creation of well-funded, impactful programmes and innovation** that are driven by local needs, and high-scale structural transformation initiatives, with the leadership of, or in partnership with, local communities, the private sector and diaspora.

The [UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the UN Support Plan](#) to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals are vital tools for both unleashing the potential in the Sahel and reshaping perceptions of the region.

Unrest – and yes, there is unrest in the region – comes largely from poverty and lack of opportunities. If we can **start to improve the economic situation**, we can dampen the unrest and the positive narrative will take care of itself.

It will not be easy. Setbacks such as the Covid-19 pandemic and political instability will no doubt arise. But the Sahel deserves more and can give more – to its citizens and to the world. A hopeful and dynamic narrative is a vital step for the region to deliver on its potential. We need the world to hear it.

Sahel, one of the world's youthful region

With 64.5% of the population being below 25 years, the Sahel is one of the world's most youthful regions. Therefore, investments in education and vocational training could yield huge demographic dividends. The Sahel is also endowed with enormous renewable energy potential; it has more solar energy production capacity than other regions of the world.

The macroeconomic conditions in the Sahel have been steadier and stronger than the continental average over the past decade.

The Sahel is endowed with great potential for renewable energy and sits atop some of the largest aquifers on the continent. Potentially one of the richest regions in the world with abundant human, cultural and natural resources([Source](#))

UN support Plan: "Sahel, Land of Opportunities"

The UN support plan, entitled "[Sahel, Land of Opportunities](#)" targets 10 countries, namely Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, Senegal, the Gambia, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Cameroon, with efforts to accelerate prosperity.

- The plan focuses on six key areas, including cross-border cooperation; prevention and sustaining peace; inclusive growth; climate action; renewable energy; and women and youth empowerment. It will also support ongoing

efforts and initiatives by Governments, international and regional organizations, and other partners.

- In addition, given that nearly 65 per cent of the region's population is below 25 years of age, the plan urges specific investments in education and vocational training to achieve higher demographic dividends.
- The support plan is based on the priorities and needs of the people and countries of the Sahel and was developed in consultation with governments and regional partners, including the African Union to ensure inclusiveness, as well as national ownership and leadership.

Despite the enormous potential of the Sahel, the region remains gripped by **humanitarian crisis** as a result of insecurity and natural disasters, leaving millions in need of international assistance and protection.

The overarching goal of the **UN Support Plan for the Sahel** is to scale up efforts to accelerate shared prosperity and lasting peace in the Sahel countries and the region at-large by implementing priorities to achieve the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and the African Union Agenda 2063

The **launch** was held on the margins of the 31st Summit of the African Union, in Nouakchott, the capital of Mauritania and was chaired by Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mauritania.(**Source**)

Turning dry Sahel into land of opportunity

What are the main challenges facing the Sahel? One of the biggest constraints in the region is the lack of electricity. However, with the abundant sunlight and the wind all year round, we can create renewable energy almost everywhere in the Sahel. In some cases it could be off-grid solutions, and in other cases it can be on-grid solutions, meaning that we generate energy, transfer it to the national grid and distribute it to reduce dependence on fossil fuel. Under the Paris Agreement on climate change, countries are required to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. We need to generate energy that can transform economies in the Sahel. For example, fishing products can be processed locally, creating value-added jobs for the local youth. Although pastoralism can pose a challenge due to the frequent conflicts between pastoralists and farmers in

the region, at the same time, there is plenty of fresh beef, even halal, exported from the Sahel to such places as the Middle East and North Africa.

Burkinabe historian Joseph Ki-Zerbo: **“We do not develop others, we develop ourselves.”** Read further Ibrahim Thiaw's whole [interview piece here](#) .

Presentation of the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel

Background information: Why the Sahel Support Plan? The Sahel, the vast semi-arid region of Africa separating the Sahara Desert to the north and tropical savannas to the south, is as much a land of opportunities as it is of challenges. Although it has abundant human and natural resources, offering tremendous potential for rapid growth, there are deep-rooted challenges—environmental, political and security— that may affect the prosperity and peace of the Sahel.

For this reason, the United Nations has come up with a unique support plan targeting 10 countries namely Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Cameroon, to scale up efforts to accelerate prosperity and sustainable peace in the region.

The support plan highlights the enormous opportunities in the Sahel and its vast assets in natural resources, energy, tourism and culture; and is aimed at mobilizing public resources and triggering private investments in the 10 countries in support of ongoing efforts and initiatives by governments, international and regional organizations, and other partners, is built around the following six priority areas:

- i. Cross-border cooperation
- ii. Prevention and sustaining peace
- iii. Inclusive growth
- iv. Climate action
- v. Renewable energy
- vi. Women and youth empowerment

It will bring coherence, improve coordination and strengthen collaboration with all partners in the region, including national and regional institutions, bilateral and multilateral organizations, the private sector and civil society organizations, to work towards operationalizing and implementing the Security Council resolutions on the Sahel.

Women, youth and job creation will cut across all priority areas and interventions, aiming at strengthening governance, improving security and building resilience, as well as promoting a more integrated approach to address the humanitarian-security-development nexus as a strategy to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). ([Source](#)) and ([UNDP Video](#))

The Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative as an opportunity to enhance resilience in Sahelian landscapes and livelihoods

The Great Green Wall as a potential game-changer in the Sahel. The Great Green Wall of the Sahara and the Sahel (GGW) is a reforestation effort to halt land degradation across the African continent. It is a multibillion-dollar initiative involving a range of stakeholders including national governments, international organizations, the business sector, and civil society. The GGW is designed to enable these actors to collectively manage natural resources in the Sahel region from Senegal to Djibouti

Finally, there is now a **window of opportunity to rethink development actions** in the region as there is a consensus that business-as-usual development efforts are ineffective, and where the concept of resilience becoming increasingly embraced in the high-level discourse of development agendas. ([Source](#))

The Great Green Wall and G5. With a population of over 300 million and a rising trend of urbanization, the Sahel region offers huge opportunities for its populations. At the same time, however, the region is facing an increase in extremism, terrorism and criminality, fueled by endemic poverty, high income inequality, a high rate of youth unemployment and governance deficiencies. [ILO alliance with G5 Sahel](#) . ([Source](#))

Sustainable International Agriculture (SIA) 2019 Conference | Sahel, a land of agricultural opportunities and challenges

The Sahel, one of the poorest regions in the world, is vulnerable to crises and insecurity. In this zone of transition between the desert and humid tropical Africa, the food economy employs two thirds of the population.

How can Sahelian agriculture innovate and develop to meet the vital needs of a growing population in the face of climatic hazards? In this context, how can Sahelian agriculture develop to provide a source of food, jobs and income, as well as preserve its

natural resources? **How can the Sahel's young people and dynamic population innovate in this field?**

Water management is a major issue for agriculture, as well as for food and nutritional security for populations in the Sahel. Large rivers, including the Senegal, Niger, Logone and Chari rivers, and lakes, such as Lake Chad, cross the region, which is divided into three distinct zones: the Sahelo-Saharan zone (annual rainfall 150 - 200 mm) in the north, the typical Sahelian zone (250 - 500 mm) and the Sudan-Sahel zone (500 - 750 mm) in the south.

A succession of agro-sylvo-pastoral zones extends from the north to the south with different crops, including maize and cotton in zones with the highest rainfall and sorghum, groundnut, cowpea and millet in zones with the lowest rainfall.

Pastoralism is omnipresent and livestock mobility is high, since herders move south with their animals in search of food in the dry season. This secular transhumance has always been a source of rivalry with farmers when it comes to access to resources (water, grazing areas, transhumance corridors). The conflicts are now escalating: climate disruption is forcing livestock further south and more land is being used for crop production as a result of population growth. Read more from ([Source](#))

To develop the Sahel sustainably, the constraints must be turned into opportunities

What are the key drivers of development upon which CIRAD focuses its research efforts in the Sahel?

The first driver of development, which underpins all the others, is education and training for the **380 million young people who will enter the job market by 2030, at a rate of 30 million every year!** The challenge for the Sahel and more broadly for sub-Saharan Africa as a whole will be **to provide them with jobs and income.** This is crucial, and is why training is central to CIRAD's concerns. The goal is to build the capacities of research institutions, but also of professional and non-governmental organisations. We also seek to contribute to modernising vocational training by promoting research findings. Innovation processes are one research area, but some projects go as far as supporting the creation of innovative companies. We are constantly working to ensure a continuum between knowledge and innovation production and training, which is a key driver of impact and development.

In the Sahel, CIRAD also focuses **its efforts on agroecology to improve agro-sylvo-pastoral systems**. But it is also important **to foster high value added sectors and markets**.

A particular concern is **promoting products from pastoralism, especially milk**. **Land issues are another research area for CIRAD**. These include the management of conflicts between sedentary farmers and nomadic herders.

Source: Excerpt from **Sylvie Lewicki's interview** Deputy Director of Cirad - La recherche agronomique pour le développement, Montpellier (CIRAD): "To develop the Sahel sustainably, the constraints must be turned into opportunities "

"Marshall Plan" for the Sahel - The Sahel Alliance and what has been done so far

The Sahel Alliance is an initiative launched in July 2017 by France and Germany, which currently associates nine players: France and Germany, the European Commission, the African Development Bank (ADB), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and, more recently, Italy, Spain and the UK.

The aim is to build an **international platform for cooperation in favour of development in the Sahel**, to enable more numerous and more efficient operations. The Sahel Alliance should enable more efficient coordination of initiatives, and aims to improve the support provided by development partners in the region.

To this end, the Sahel Alliance works in six priority sectors: youth employment, **rural development and food security**, energy and climate, governance, decentralization, access to basic services, and security.

On 13 April 2018, in Ouagadougou, the Minister of the Economy, Finance and Development in Burkina Faso, Ms Hadizatou Rosine Coulibaly, chaired the launch workshop of the Sahel Alliance, which she called a **"Marshall Plan" for the Sahel**.
(Source)

Tackling the employment challenge in the Sahel by investing in food value chains

Population pressure, climate change and a rise in conflicts raise huge issues for countries in the Sahel. One of the main challenges is training and providing jobs for

young people. The food economy, which already employs two people in three, is one of the most promising sectors. Agricultural productivity, value chain structuring and career attractiveness are vital issues, according to Mali's Minister of Agriculture, who spoke at a conference, "Sahel, terre de défis et d'opportunités agricoles" (Sahel, land of challenges and opportunities for agriculture), organized by CIRAD and the Agence française de développement (AFD) on 27 February, during the Paris International Agricultural Show. *"Thirty million jobs will have to be created in the Sahel by 2025. Agriculture will be key."* ([Source](#))

1. [SIA 2019 Conference | Sahel, a land of agricultural opportunities and challenges](#)
2. [L'agriculture au Sahel, un défi qui nous concerne tous !](#)
3. [Sahel, les enjeux de la recherche agronomique sont déterminants](#) (video)
4. [Pourquoi investir dans le développement agricole au Sahel](#) (video)
5. [Sustainable development in the Sahel](#)
6. [Boosting micronutrients in food through agro-ecology in the Sahel](#)
7. [L'agroforesterie à la rescousse des cultures au Sahel](#) (video)
8. [Milk, a powerful lever for development in the Sahel](#)
9. [Using digital technology to predict mango production in the Sahel](#)
10. [Using food reserves to manage famines](#)

In the Sahel, agriculture and climate change have gone hand in hand for years

Severe droughts, climate variability ... the Sahel has been suffering the whims of the climate for decades. Farmers have had to adapt by using innovative systems and not just technologies, paving the way for the latest approach: climate-smart agriculture.

The climate change factor has also been integrated into agricultural policies, which is vital if those policies are to be effective. Some explanations and concrete examples from Robert Zougmouré, West Africa Regional Coordinator of the CGIAR Programme on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security, and Laurent Sedogo, former Minister of Agriculture and the Environment of Burkina Faso ([Source](#))

The Africa Centre for Climate and Sustainable Development (ACSD) Special Initiatives

To better coordinate the work of the UN system and to facilitate the cooperation between the 30 different agencies working in the Sahel region, the Secretary General on 21 March 2018 has appointed Mr. **Ibrahim Thiaw**, former Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)), Assistant Secretary-General and

Special Adviser for the Sahel. (Since 2019 Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw is the Executive Secretary of UNCCD)

In support of the action of the Special Adviser and thanks to the intervention of the Africa Centre for Climate and Sustainable Development (ACSD) and UNDP, Italy provided funding of 1.500.000 EUR which helped realize the surge capacity needed to fast track implementation of UNISS. This included the establishment of the Office of the UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser for the Sahel in Dakar, Senegal.

The generous support of the Italian government was given through the Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea ([IMELS](#)) on a cost-sharing basis under the auspices of ACSD with the goal of promoting the Sahel as the Land of Opportunities.

Since its inception, The Office of the UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser for the Sahel (OSAS) has made significant **progress on:**

Building strategic partnerships with main stakeholders associated with the Sahel including [G5 Sahel Secretariat](#), [Alliance for Sahel](#), [Sahel Special Envoys from the EU](#), [the World Bank](#), [Africa Development Bank](#), foundations such as [Bill and Melinda Gates](#) hastening resource mobilization and implementation of concrete programs; Changing of the Sahel's narrative, usually focused on its challenges such as violence and conflict, extremism and terrorism, shocks and vulnerabilities, to articulate one that inspires hope with an emphasis on the inherent opportunities in energy, natural resources and new potential markets. For more information please visit [Source](#)

Leading the Way: How Africa is Establishing a 21st Century Trade Agenda.

The African Continental Free Trade Area represents a major opportunity for countries to boost growth, reduce poverty, broaden economic inclusion and help “expand opportunities for all Africans”, hailed a World Bank official , which if fully implemented, could boost regional income by around \$450 billion. AfCFTA would not only boost African trade, particularly intraregional trade in manufacturing, but also increase intra-continental exports by 81 per cent and to non-African countries by 19 per cent. The African Continental Free Trade Area has the potential to increase employment opportunities and incomes

“Successful implementation will be key”, spelled out the World Bank economist, elaborating on the importance of monitoring impacts “on all workers –women and men, skilled and unskilled—across all countries and sectors, ensuring the agreement’s full

benefit” **Trade pact could boost Africa’s income by as much as \$450 billion: World Bank** (Source)

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement stands to connect 1.3 billion people across 55 countries, making it the largest free trade area in the world by membership. The pact has the potential to lift 30 million people out of extreme poverty, increase workers’ wages and generate gains for women. But achieving its full potential will depend on putting in place significant policy reforms and trade facilitation measures.

The creation of the AfCFTA regional market is a major opportunity to help African countries diversity their exports and accelerate growth. This is especially important in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disrupted trade and triggered up to \$79 billion in output losses during 2020 in Africa alone.(Source)

African Development in the Age of Stranded Assets which discusses Africa’s development in light of potential asset stranding. The report aims to raise awareness on the need for effective natural resource management by African governments to achieve lower-carbon economies.

Energized: Policy innovation to power the transformation of Africa’s agriculture and food system

Africa’s continued **reliance on biomass for cooking, hot water, and heating** is taking a toll on the continent’s forests and soils. In addition to **contributing to land degradation**, the typical partial combustion of fuelwood emits carbon dioxide, methane, and black carbon and is a major cause of indoor air pollution, with damaging health effects. Fuelwood scarcity, coupled with efforts to make alternative fuels more widely available, is expected to result in a switch away from wood use, especially in urban areas.

Since 2015, only seven million people have gained access to clean cooking options in SSA, meaning that the number of people without access increased to over 900 million in 2018 as population growth outpaced provision efforts. Furthermore, it is estimated that, under current trends, nearly one billion people will still lack access to clean cooking options in 2030.

Although the importance of switching away from fossil fuels is widely recognized across the continent, **Africa’s vast renewable energy potential remains largely untapped**. The main potential sources of renewable energy are hydro, solar, wind and geothermal. With

abundant perennial and nonperennial water resources, Africa's hydropower potential represents about 10 percent of global hydropower potential, yet Africa currently only exploits a meager 7 percent of its potential. The largest share of the continent's hydropower potential is concentrated in the Inga Dam in the Congo basin.

As improved energy solutions take hold and Africa's agriculture sector becomes more mechanized, it will be necessary to ensure that the youth are trained to design, assemble, and repair new technologies.

Financing Africa's agricultural energy transition. The high cost of electricity is a key factor in keeping smallholder farmers disconnected from improved energy services. At an average of US¢ 14 per kWh, the cost of electricity in SSA is among the highest globally and where electricity is provided by generators, this can reach US¢40 per kWh. This compares to US¢4 per kWh in Asia Pacific or US¢ 1per kWh in South Asia. There are several reasons for these high costs: low investments, poor maintenance, few cross border interconnectors, difficult topography, and frequent droughts. As a result, connecting even a single household in a small country like Rwanda can cost up to US\$2,000 – well above the average annual income. Similarly, rural connections in Kenya cost from US\$1,400 to US\$1,800, almost 70 percent of which is the cost of poles and wires.

However, following severe droughts in the 1980s, thermal power plants were introduced to Ghana's energy mix and now provide 60 percent (the largest share) of electricity.

As African countries respond to the call for more sustainable economic models, the demand for cleaner energy generation, energy efficiency, pollution control and natural resource management have the potential to create millions of **"green jobs"** on the continent. In South Africa alone, it is estimated that an additional 462,000 green jobs will be available by 2025.

Agriculture, often considered as outdated, unprofitable, and hard work by many youth, may become more attractive with energy access allowing the adoption of energy-based technologies and machines. [Further reading](#)

Byte by byte: Policy innovation for transforming Africa's food system with digital technologies

Morocco has deployed two satellites, which enable a range of applications, such as monitoring of agricultural activities, prevention and management of natural disasters, and monitoring of environmental trends and desertification.

Youth empowerment. Agricultural digitalization is an opportunity for Africa to leverage its youth bulge. Between 10 and 12 million young people are expected to enter the African labor market each year over the next decade. While some African countries have seen a growth in formal employment, most young people are likely to work in informal, often low-paid jobs. Currently, farming alone accounts for about 60 percent of total employment across the continent, and significantly more when jobs along the entire food value chain are taken into account. In Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia, for example, the food system is projected to add more jobs between 2010 and 2025 than the rest of the economy, yet young people show little or no interest in pursuing employment opportunities in the agriculture sector. **However, digital technologies are rapidly changing the agriculture employment landscape, creating jobs that require a new set of skills and that are more profitable and appealing to the youth.**

For young Africans to be able to compete for high-tech, better-paying jobs and to harness the increasing opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship in the agriculture sector, digital skill and literacy training—as discussed in Section 5 of this report—must be at the heart of young people’s education and training. Africa’s young people are its most valuable asset. **The entrepreneurial spirit of Africa’s youth visible in many parts of the continent reflects how Africa is becoming innovative in finding locally relevant solutions to daily challenges in agriculture, health and education.**

Fostering a business-friendly environment and culture of entrepreneurship will be key to harnessing this spirit. A longterm, sustainable transformation of the agriculture sector through the use of digital technologies and services therefore requires improved access to quality education. Investing in education and practical and transferable skills training—such as programming, data science, and user interface design—is an opportunity to fortify Africa’s greatest asset: its people. Governments and the private sector need to create the right ecosystem that will enable young people to succeed.

Land rights. Farmers base labor use and finance decisions on the potential return on investment. In this context, land rights—including the rights to use, control and transfer land—affect these decisions. Secure land tenure enables farmers to invest in long-term

improvements to their farms and soils with the expectation that they will reap the benefits of those investments. Accordingly, land property rights are a key factor for improving living conditions since they enhance the investment in agricultural production, food security, economic growth, and natural resource management, and help reduce socioeconomic gender inequalities. Moreover, evidence shows that land security enhances sustainable land management practices.

In many African countries, **land rights are managed through complex, often opaque arrangements**. Geospatial data related to landholdings are not easily available or cross-referenced against official data on landholdings in text documents. It is therefore difficult to prove ownership of land and use it as collateral for credit. **Smartphones, cameras or drones**, which can capture geospatial and topographical data—using, for example, Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and global navigation satellite systems—are therefore **useful tools for land mapping and land tenure programs**. In Tanzania, drones are being used to support such a land tenure program. [Further reading](#)

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