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Saint Malo Summit

Speech by Mr Dorsouma Al-Hamndou, Environmental Expert, Sahara and Sahel Observatory

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Thank you all. I am going to take ten minutes to speak to you about my region, the Sahel, which has very particular characteristics.

My presentation will focus on the impact of global warming on the Sahel.

Before I begin, I would like to give you a quick overview of the organisation I work for, the Sahara and Sahel Observatory. It is an international organisation with a strong regional focus on the Sahara and Sahel region. The Observatory represents approximately 21 countries and 5 countries in the North, 4 sub-regional organisations and civil-society organisations.

Generally speaking, the Sahara and Sahel Observatory's role is to help countries to come up with useful information concerning the deterioration of the environment. We have a few projects in the field, particularly with scientific and technical programmes and we also provide support to the implementation of environmental conventions, especially the three conventions resulting from the Rio process.

Our strategy is based on sustainable development with two major focal areas, shared water resource and environmental monitoring. We therefore concentrate on joint aquifer management via projects in the north of the Sahara and aquifer monitoring in the south of the Sahara in the field of water, and on observation and environmental monitoring in the field of the environment.

As you know, the Sahel is a transitional zone between the arid part of the Sahara and the tropical regions to the south. The region has been set apart by its strong changes in climate and its high dependence on natural resources since the dawn of time. The region's economy is mainly based on agriculture and is therefore not very diversified. It has a high level of debt and unfortunately little capacity to adapt to climatic factors. You will agree that its greenhouse gas emissions are low.

Africa is only responsible for 7% of global emissions and 4% of CO₂ emissions.



However, my region hardly contributes to global emissions and yet is suffering the strong impact of climate change.

Here are a few examples that demonstrate the significant changes in climate in the region: firstly, considerable variations in temperature. These variations have gained momentum since 2000. As regards the measurement of rainfall, we have also observed a sharp drop since the latest droughts of 1970 - 1980 and since 2000, resulting in a 20-30% pluviometric deficit compared to previous years, affecting our mainly agricultural regions.

As I said earlier, the importance of agriculture in the Sahel goes without saying, but agriculture is mainly rainfed and subsistence-based. It accounts for roughly 31% of GDP. It employs 78% of workers in the region. This agriculture is extremely limited by economic, social and climatic obstacles, particularly low investment and profitability rates, significant use of fragile natural resources and the considerable impact of climate change on crop yields.

For instance, climate change is having far-reaching effects on millet and sorghum yields in Niger and Burkina Faso. These crops are pivotal for the region's food security. The changing climate in the Sahel is currently compounded by variable desertification. Generally speaking in Africa, 25% of land has already deteriorated, 12% moderately so and 5% extremely so and almost 22 million people are affected by this phenomenon.

The region is also suffering from water-related problems. Less than 9% of all renewable water is located in Africa, 300 millions of people are unfortunately affected by water stress and scarcity whereas the region's water potential remains significant but insufficiently used. There are many large cross-border basins but this is not enough to prevent the scarcity problems I have just mentioned from occurring.

One example is Lake Faguibine in Mali which has practically gone dry due to the drop in rainfall. This is also the case of Lake Chad, the fourth largest lake in Africa, which is threatened with drying up and has lost 80% of its surface area over the last few years.

The climate in Africa and in the Sahel in particular is very uncertain, with the low performance of climatic models in the Sahel area. There are studies underway and we are still awaiting the results. Adaptation against this backdrop is a key challenge for the Sahel, with urgent action that we strongly wish will be taken: an assessment of vulnerability to be further researched, an assessment of needs and the cost of adaptation, support for the implementation of national action plans for adaptation which also concern sector-based strategies on climatic risk management.

As regards the cost of adaptation, many organisations have attempted to calculate it. It is estimated at \$50 billion, which is no comparison to the hundreds of billions needed to shore up the international financial system. Yet unfortunately today, funding for adaptation remains highly insufficient and inconsistent regarding the considerable requirements. And yet, as you know, there is no shortage of financial resources in the world.

I would like to wind up the presentation with a few words on Africa's and more specifically the Sahel's contribution to the carbon market. This contribution is very insignificant with only 2% of all CDM projects (clean development mechanisms) against 64% for example in Asia.

In conclusion, climate change is a scientific fact. Before, we believed that it was merely the wild imagination of certain experts, but today, it is real and its impact on the Sahel is significant. It is now necessary to develop urgent short-term initiatives and above all actions that are part of the long-term development process.

We also believe that a new drive is required, through a real contribution from African governments, their national budgets and funding from development partners.

Lastly, we believe that information and scientific studies on climate are key issues. We must step up investments in forecasting, monitoring and scientific studies of the Sahel's climate, which, as I said earlier, has been the subject of very few studies. It is therefore fundamental that we develop viable observation systems and equip countries in the Sahel with the means to access data, share information and make full use of it.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to finish my presentation with this photo of a farmer in the Sahel who has to scratch at the earth to survive.

Thank you very much.