

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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DISASTER RISK REDUCTION: LESSONS FROM THE SAHEL RESILIENCE PROJECT

African Union (AU) Member states recently had an opportunity to collectively reflect on the progress achieved through the Sahel Resilience Project. The “Lessons Learnt Workshop” was held in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, on 23-24 February 2023. The Project, commenced its implementation from 2019 with support from the Government of Sweden through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and implemented jointly with AUC, Economic Community of West African States



(ECOWAS), UN Women, and other stakeholders in the Sahel. The project focuses on seven countries within the Western Sahel region: Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, and Chad.

At the opening session, Mr Harsen Nyambe Nyambe, Director of Sustainable Environment and Blue Economy (SEBE) at the AU Commission, acknowledged the support by the Government of Sweden and UNDP. Mr Nyambe said, "The AU Commission acknowledges the commitment shown by UNDP as our cooperating partner in the Sahel Resilience Project. The Commission also recognises the support

provided by Sweden and the cooperation by the ECOWAS and other stakeholders in the Project. The Sahel Project has extended its effect to address conflict and other complexities facing the Sahel region. The Project has played a major role in building the institutional capacity of the AUC through staffing and supporting the foundation of the Africa Multi-hazard Early Warning and Early Action System Programme. We hope all of us present can learn from this workshop and replicate the best practices where possible".

In her opening remarks, Dr Reshmi Thecketil, Sahel Resilience Project Manager, UNDP, conveyed the greetings from the UNDP resident representative of the United Republic of Tanzania, and those of Dr Njoya Tikum, the Chief of the UNDP Sub-regional Hub for West and Central Africa (WACA). Reflecting on the remarkable progress of the Project, she said, "UNDP has a specific interest in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. The Sahel Resilience Project has been addressing risk-informed development from the lenses of these two angles cemented on data and evidence and strengthened institutional arrangements and capacities. The story of the Sahel Resilience Project has been one of resilience, and we appreciate the commitment by Sweden and all our partners".

On his part, Mr Mohamed Ibrahim, Head of the Humanitarian and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Division at the ECOWAS, underscored that the institution was pleased to be part of the implementation of the Project. He highlighted how, "the Project has demonstrated the need to fill the gap in strengthening technical and institutional capacity. The Project has been actively involved in data collection and analysis, enhancing early warning systems, and information gathering and dissemination. ECOWAS has benefited from capacity building and strengthened its technical institutions, including AGRHYMET. We look forward to further collaboration with Sweden, UNDP and the African Union Commission".

Mr Prudence Constatine, Assistant Director of Disaster Risk Management, Office of the Prime Minister, Tanzania, which also coordinates disaster risk reduction and management in the country, shared opening remarks on behalf of the host government. He took cognisance of Sweden and UNDP's funding support of 7.5 million US dollars to the Sahel Resilience Project, and stressed that "Over the next two days,

we shall learn best practices from the Project, including data for decision making, which would be resourceful in tracking the domestication of the Sendai Framework and the Africa Programme of Action in the Sahel region".

Over the subsequent two days, AUC and UNDP presented the programmes and activities implemented through the Project. These included the assessment of the status of multi-hazard early warning systems in Africa, which laid the foundation for the Africa Institutional and Operational Framework for Multi-hazard Early Warning Systems and Early Action. Others included the development of the COVID-19 Recovery Framework for Africa. Both frameworks were endorsed by the 35th Assembly of the AU Heads of State and Government in 2022 and officially launched by H.E. Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique and the AU Disaster Risk Management Champion in October 2022.

Participating Member states, Regional Economic Communities and partner institutions also reflected on the findings of the "[Disaster Risk Reduction in West Africa and the Sahelian Region: A Review of Progress](#)" Report, launched in October 2022 by the AUC, UNDP and the ECOWAS Commission. Reflections by participants focused on avenues of potential implementations of the report's recommendations to accelerate the implementation of the [Africa Programme of Action](#) for the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. Furthermore, the participants described actionable steps towards inclusive disaster recovery, strengthening regulatory and policy frameworks for risk-informed development, and resilient urban risk management practices.

At the closing ceremony, Dr Reshmi Thecketil assured the participants of UNDP's commitment to rethinking resilience based on the reality on the ground and that the final steps would advise the next steps for the Sahel Resilience Project. Mr Harsen Nyambe Nyambe thanked the participants for enriching discussions, and Mr Mohamed Ibrahim said that the Project demonstrated that the AUC, RECs, Member States and partner institutions could work together towards achieving [Agenda 2063](#). Mr Makulu Nicodemus Butondo, Principal Officer for Disaster Risk Management, Office of the Prime Minister, the United Republic of Tanzania, officially closed the workshop,

commended all participants for their participation, and called for all stakeholders to work together at all policy levels.

The Sahel Resilience Project is made possible through the generous support from the Government of Sweden and UNDP. The substantial support to the DRR Unit by the European Union within the framework of the 11th European Development Fund Intra Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Natural Disaster Risk Reduction Programme, enabled the Unit to provide support to the implementation of the project.

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