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Press Release

AU SAFGRAD actively represented African Union Commission (AUC) at the AU celebration of World Day

Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso - 16 June 2017. Every year the World Day to Combat Desertification (WDCD) is observed to promote public awareness of international efforts to combat desertification. This year 2017, Ouagadougou, the Capital city of Burkina Faso hosted the UNCCD celebrations. AU SAFGRAD actively participated in the events to represent African Union Commission.



The WDCD is celebrated each year on 17th June, but the 2017 edition was organized from 14th to 16th of June. Various important activities were scheduled. Very important personalities which include Heads of States from ECOWAS (HE Mr Ibrahim Boubacar Keita of Mali, HE Mahamadou Issoufou of Niger, and and the host HE. Mr Roch March Christian Kabore of Burkina Faso) were present in the event. Mrs Monique Barbut, Executive Secretary of the UNCCD and several leaders of national, regional and international institutions with interest in desertification and related issues also graced the occasion. The 2017 event addressed the 3 S initiative (Stability, Security and Sustainability) and the central theme was “Our land, our home, our future”.



AU SAFGRAD, African Union specialized technical office for research and development in semi-arid zones of Africa, actively participated to the event. First of all, during the opening ceremony (15th June), the Coordinator, Dr Ahmed ELMKASS, while speaking on behalf of HE Mrs Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture of the African Union Commission, highlighted the role of African Union in combatting desertification notably through resolutions and decisions taken by AU Head of States and Government.

Furthermore, the office took the opportunity of this unique event in Ouagadougou to organize a high level meeting of a policy dialogue gathering numerous stakeholders. This conference occurred on the morning of June 15th with a strong participation of national and international organizations. Besides the meeting, an exhibition fair grouping several institutions including AU SAFGRAD, was held at Ouagadougou international conference center, offering a communication platform for participants and guests. Prior to that day, a full-page article written by the AU SAFGRAD head of office was released in *l'Observateur Paalga*, one of the most important daily newspapers in the country and beyond.

A Declaration was read as the conclusion of the ministerial meeting organized within the framework of the 2017 WDCD. The so-called Ouagadougou Declaration appealed for a better political commitment of international community to address land degradation, desertification, drought, climate change and their consequences such as food insecurity, migration, conflicts, displaced people, etc. This historical Declaration is targeting by 2020, among other, two main objectives namely the rehabilitation of 10 million ha of degraded lands and the creation of two million jobs related to sustainable land use for youth, women and migrants.

With regards to the importance of the Ouagadougou Declaration, AU SAFGRAD, with a dozen of key partners, notably UNCCD, EU, NEPAD, FAO, IRD, SOS SAHEL, OIF, CILSS, CORAF/WECARD and WETLANDS International, organized a technical workshop on the 16th of June. The experts' gathering aimed at clarifying the way forward to operationalize the declaration adopted by ministers in charge of Environment during the 2017 WDCD edition in Ouagadougou.

Undoubtedly, the 2017 WDCD held in African land, in Burkina Faso, is appearing, according to experts, as a historical turning point in the UNCCD celebrations process. The role of AUC, through notably AU SAFGRAD, was in all points of view unquestionable from the beginning to the end. There is henceforth hope that the objective of collectively combating for achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN), mainly in Africa, is definitely on track.

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