

AFRICA ENVIRONMENT AND WANGARI MAATHAI DAY SUCCESSFULLY CELEBRATED IN NOUAKCHOTT.

On March, 3rd 2017, Nouakchott, Capital City of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania (IRM), hosted the celebrations of the Africa Environment and Wangari Maathai Day with the theme: “*Environmental Protection for Present and Future Generation: Implementation of Agenda 2063*”. The annual AU event was celebrated between 1 and 3 March 2017 and it featured a scientific session, exhibitions, field visit and tree planting action.

The 2017 event was attended by various participants including Government officials (Prime Minister, ministers, MPs, etc.), private sector representatives (mainly Energy and Mining industries), NGOs, Civil Societies, youth groups, women associations and International Community such as ECA, UNEP, GGWI, etc. Senegal Republic was specially represented by a delegation headed by the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development H.E. Mr Abdoulaye BALDE. AUC delegation, comprising AU SAFGRAD, was led by HE Tumisiime Rhoda Peace, Commissioner of the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture.



Ceremony chaired by the Prime Minister of the Country with the presence of DREA outgoing commissioner, Ministers of Environment from IRM and Senegal, Representative of PNUE...and a crowded attendance.

Africa Environment Day was designated in 2002 by the then Organization of the African Unity Council of Ministers in their meeting in Durban, South Africa, based on the recognition of the numerous environmental challenges confronting the African continent, which over the years have been further aggravated by loss of biological diversity, climate change, desertification and increased pollution and disposal of waste chemicals. In January 2012, the African Union adopted a decision calling for the joint celebrations of the African environment Day and Wangari Maathai Day.

The celebration of the Wangari Maathai Day is in recognition of the work and life of the late Prof. Wangari Maathai who dedicated her life to promoting environmental conservation and sustainable development in Africa.

THE 2017 CELEBRATIONS IN NOUAKCHOTT

The overall objective of the celebration of Africa Environment and Wangari Maathai Day was to raise awareness at regional and national levels. The commemoration of the Day offered an opportunity for reflection and stock taking on the environmental challenges and of course, opportunities for the African continent. The 2017's theme ("Environmental Protection for Present and Future Generation: Implementation of Agenda 2063") underpins the importance of natural resources like land, forests and biodiversity for the welfare of human society through space and time.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM

One of the key highlights of the commemoration of the 2017 edition of Africa Environment and Wangari Maathai Day was a two-day National Environment Forum from 1 – 2 March. This forum is meant to strengthen collaboration between the government and the various stakeholders including the private sector to promote sustainable natural resources management. The forum organized jointly by the government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, AU Commission, United Nations Environment Programme and other international partners was aiming at providing space for stakeholders at national level to talk about national policies and strategies and the role of the private sector, NGOs and local communities in ensuring environmental sustainability. Mr. Mamadou KOUTOU, AU SAFGRAD Senior Programme Officer has delivered during the forum an interesting presentation on the issue of "Policy dialogue on desertification in Africa".



HE A. CAMARA, Mauritanian Minister Of Environment and Sustainable Development delivering his speech. On his left, is displayed the picture of late Wangari Mathai.



Field visits led by HE Amedi CAMARA, Mauritanian Minister Of Environment, with his peer from Senegal and DREA outgoing Commissioner.

OFFICIAL CELEBRATIONS ON MARCH 3rd, 2017

The ceremony of the Official campaign held March 3rd at the Palais International des Congres of Nouakchott was chaired by HE Mr. Yahya Ould Hademine, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and a mammoth crowd was on hand to grace the occasion. Campaign and advocacy items, made of customized T-shirts and Caps were produced and disseminated by AU SAFGRAD, an important AUC technical office in semi-arid land resilience building.

In her statement, HE Mrs. Tumissiime Rhoda Peace, DREA Commissioner and AUC representative, highlighted the important roles played by public/private partnership in environment management. "Environmental protection can no longer be the sole responsibility of the government so the fact that private sector in Mauritania is supporting the government is quite encouraging. I am particularly impressed with the measures taken by the private sector to minimize the negative

impacts of mining on the environment and the general public” she stated. She also acknowledged the great effort of NGOs, civil societies, youth and women groups and the media in promoting environmental sustainability before appealing the development partners to support women and youths initiatives through capacity building and funding. Prior to that, she expressed her sincere appreciation to the government of the country for hosting the important event and the various experts and partners for the support provided. Furthermore, DREA Commissioner reemphasized the need to enable all make a better use of the collective strength. “It is imperative that we improve coordination among ourselves to promote synergies and complementarities. This will permit impactful achievements on the ground to address the challenges of environmental degradation and women empowerment” she concluded her address to the participants.

All the speeches delivered by leaders taking the floor went in the same vein. They all recognized the importance of the commemoration of such event as well as efforts being engaged by various partners, including the host country, to better manage environment matters. The Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, HE Mr. Yahya Ould Hademine, thanked particularly African Union for having selected his country to host the present ceremony.



Amongst the activities were field visits and tree planting. At the right, AUC Senior Officers Mr. Almami DAMPHA (DREA Environment Division) and Mr. Mamadou KOUTOU (SAFGRAD Programme Officer). On the left, H.E Mr. Abdoulaye BALDE, Senegalese Minister in charge of Environment.

Finally, field visits to various places surrounded Nouakchott were organized. The visiting of the coastal areas of the Capital City permitted to concretely observe the realities of environment challenges and constraints and subsequently the mitigation and adaptive actions by very resilient public and private actors. For instance, solar energy and wind power sites received the participants led by H.E. Mr. Amedi CAMARA, Mauritanian Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, his peer from Senegal HE Mr. Abdoulaye BALDE and HE Tumissiime Rhoda Peace, DREA outgoing Commissioner.

The opportunity of the field visits were also taken to plant trees on the vulnerable sandy dunes of the sea borders of Nouakchott.

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