

## International Efforts to Protect the Environment: Africa in Perspective

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### **Abstract**

*Our Mother Earth is currently facing a lot of environmental concerns. The current environmental challenges represent a considerable measure of danger to the well-being of people and creatures. The environmental problems like global warming, acid rain, air pollution, urban sprawl, waste disposal, ozone layer depletion, water pollution, climate change and many more affect every human, animal, and nation on this planet. Over the last few decades, the exploitation of our planet and the degradation of our environment has gone up at an alarming rate. As our actions have been not in favor of protecting this planet, we have seen natural disasters striking us more often in the form of flash floods, earthquakes, blizzards, tsunamis, and cyclones. Different International and regional environmental groups around the world put in their efforts in finding solutions and educating people as to how their small actions, when combined together, can play a big role in protecting this planet. Granted that there are a whole lot of international conventions, treaties and protocols adopted globally to mitigate the emerging environmental concerns, this study examines the efforts of international and regional multilateral bodies as well as projects targeted at protecting the environment to bring about sustainability.*

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### **1.0 Introduction**

On December 3, 1968, the Swedish Ambassador to the United Nations *Sverker Astrom*, proposed to that body an International environmental conference to be hosted by the Swedish government in Stockholm during 1972. Under the shadow of growing world concern for environmental deterioration, he concluded his remarks by saying: “There are many issues on which the members of the United Nations are divided. On the issue now before the General Assembly we are hopefully all united.”<sup>1</sup>

The 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, which is the very first International effort at protecting the environment convened under the slogan “*Only One Earth*” quickly revealed that the world was in fact substantially divided. While there may be a general

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<sup>1</sup>Grieves F.L., 1978 *Regional efforts at International environmental protection* - Int'l L., 1978  
HeinOnline p.2

spiritual recognition that all mankind has a common fate on “Spaceship Earth,” the differing political and economic stances around 193 United Nations members poses obvious difficulties for the rapid development of a universal international regime regarding environmental use and abuse. This term paper addresses two general goals. The first is to identify key environmental challenges in contemporary times. While the second is a review of current global and regional environmental undertakings by reputable organizations that are involved (in varying degrees) with the study of environmental issues and the process of evolving international rules to regulate and protect the environment.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.1 Why Do We Need To Protect the Environment

It is necessary to protect the environment as to reduce the destructions of ecosystem caused by a myriad of anthropogenic activities. It is more of a moral obligation for humans to protect the environment from pollution and other activities that lead to environmental degradation. Importantly, environmental degradation is detrimental since it threatens the long-term health of animals, humans and plants. Protection of environment is needed for sustainable development. Biodiversity is currently being lost at up to 1,000 times the natural rate. Some scientists are now referring to the crisis as the ‘Earth’s sixth mass extinction’, comparable to the last great extinction crisis 65 million years ago. These extinctions are irreversible and pose a serious threat to our health and wellbeing. Designation and management of protected areas is the cornerstone of biodiversity conservation. However, despite an increase in the total number of protected areas in the world, biodiversity continues to decline. To live in a healthy environment, threats to the development of the environment are to be identified and removed.<sup>3</sup>

*“Sooner or later, we will have to recognise that the Earth has rights, too, to live without pollution. What mankind must know is that human beings cannot live without Mother Earth, but the planet can live without humans”.*  
~ Evo Morales.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.2 Issues of Environment Protection

The third decade of the 21st century has begun and the environmental challenges we have ahead of us, set out in the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for **Sustainable Development** are 17 in all. This global plan of action adopted in 2015 puts forward specific measures to achieve a world that is fairer, more prosperous and more respectful of the environment within ten years<sup>5</sup>. In this regard, the UN itself warns that we are running late, and the question now is whether we still have time to

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.un.org › environment › stockholm1972> <accessed 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2010>

<sup>3</sup> Pievani T., Rendiconti L, 2014 The sixth mass extinction: Anthropocene and the human impact on biodiversity - Springer

<sup>4</sup> Bolivia's defiant leader sets radical tone at Cancún climate talks: available @ <https://www.theguardian.com › cancon-talks-evo-morales> <accessed 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2021>

<sup>5</sup> [Sustainable development.un.org/index.php?menu=122](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=122) <accessed 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2021>

save the planet. Below, are some of the main global environmental problems which must be resolved this decade:

- I. **Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation:** Global warming due to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions — which according to the UN have increased by almost 50% since 1990 — is accelerating climate change and threatens the survival of millions of people, plants and animals by causing meteorological events like droughts, fires and floods, which are becoming increasingly frequent and more extreme. This means we need to take measures to mitigate its effects and adapt to its consequences which, even if we keep global warming under 2 °C as required by the Paris Agreements, will last for centuries.
- II. **Pollution problems and their effect on health:** The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 90% of humanity breathes polluted air, so is calling for a reduction in air pollution to cut rates of respiratory illnesses, thus preventing seven million deaths a year. Contaminated water also causes major health problems and five million deaths a year according to *Oxfam Intermón*<sup>6</sup>. The UN advocates eliminating dumping, minimizing the use of chemicals and treating more wastewater, among other measures.
- III. **Protecting the Oceans:** The oceans have become the giant waste dumps for plastics. What's more, there are other serious environmental problems related to the oceans such as damage to ecosystems due to global warming, dumping of pollutants, wastewater and fuel spills. The UN calls for improved management of protected areas, giving them sufficient resources, and reducing overfishing, pollution and acidification of the ocean caused by the increase in the earth's temperature.<sup>7</sup>
- IV. **The energy transition and renewables:** While energy accounts for 60% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the UN calculates that 13% of the world population lacks access to electricity and that 3 billion people depend on fossil fuels for cooking. This situation requires an energy transition towards a cleaner, more accessible and efficient model based on the use of renewable energy sources to build communities that are more sustainable, inclusive and resistant to environmental problems like climate change.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup><https://www.oxfam.org> › press-releases › health-spending.<accessed 10th June, 2021>

<sup>7</sup><https://www.imo.org> › Pages › marinelitter-default,<accessed 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2021>

- V. Protecting biodiversity:** We have already lost 8% of known animal species and 22% are at risk of extinction due mainly to the destruction of their natural habitats, poaching and the introduction of invasive species. The UN has called for conclusive actions to put an end to these threats and conserve our natural heritage, including our increasingly threatened forests.
- VI. Sustainable urban development and mobility:** The growth of cities, which will need to accommodate around 5 billion people by 2030, will be another of the decade's big environmental challenges. The metropolises of the future will need to be compact, safe, inclusive, ecological and energy efficient, with more green spaces, more environmentally friendly buildings and more sustainable methods of transport which put the needs of pedestrians above those of traffic.
- VII. Extreme meteorological phenomena:** Global warming is causing increasingly frequent, intense and devastating droughts, hurricanes and heatwaves. Keeping temperatures stable, as has been championed in negotiations at the highest level, as well as improving our capacity to respond to climate emergencies, are the keys to minimizing the number of these catastrophes, adapting to them, and defending ourselves from them.
- VIII. Overpopulation and waste management:** The UN expects the world population to exceed 8.5 billion by 2030, forcing us to considerably reduce the amount of waste we generate through prevention, reduction, reuse and recycling as part of the circular economy, with the aim of minimizing the impact on health and on the environment.

### 1.3 Fundamental Principle of International Environmental Law

**The Principle of Cooperation:** This principle means that protection of the environment is *acommon concern* of all human kind, and that as far as possible, solutions to environmental problems must be effected by all countries in the world. Virtually all international treaties are also based on the recognition of the need to co-operate with other states at different levels: bilateral, regional or global. The creation of numerous International institutions with the responsibility of environmental protection also corresponds to the necessity of co-operation.

The need for countries to co-operate to conserve the environment is expressed in several environmental instruments, starting with *Principle 24 of the Stockholm Declaration* which states that: *"International matters concerning the protection and improvement of the environment should be handled in a cooperative spirit by all countries, big and small, on an equal footing. Cooperation through multilateral or bilateral arrangements or other appropriate means is essential to effectively control, prevent, reduce and eliminate adverse environmental effects resulting from*

*activities conducted in all spheres, in such a way that due account is taken of the sovereignty and interest of all states”<sup>9</sup>*

This principle has been reaffirmed in the **1982 World Charter for Nature**, which stipulates that, states shall cooperate in the conservation of nature. Similarly, **Article 197 of the Convention on the law of the sea (UNCLOS)** provides that: *States shall co-operate on a global basis and, as appropriate, on a regional basis, directly or through competent international organizations.....for the protection and preservation of the marine environment, taking into account characteristic regional features.”*

Furthermore, **Principle 7 of Rio Declaration**- the Principle of Common but differentiated responsibilities was formalized in the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. “*States shall cooperate in a spirit of global partnership to conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystem. In view of the different contributions to global environmental degradation, States have common but differentiated responsibilities.*”<sup>10</sup>

The principle balances, on the one hand, the need for all states to take responsibility for global environmental problems and, on the other hand, the need to recognize the wide differences in levels of economic development between states. These differences in turn are linked to the states’ contributions to, as well as their abilities to address these problems.

## **2.0 INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS CONCERNED WITH ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

### **2.1 The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) established in 1972, with headquarters in Nairobi Kenya, addresses environmental issues at the global and regional level for the United Nations. UNEP’s mission is “to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.”

To accomplish its mission, UNEP:

- Assesses environmental conditions and trends at the global, regional and national levels;
- Develops international agreements and national environmental instruments; and
- Strengthens institutions for wise environmental management.

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<sup>9</sup>United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (stockholm Declaration) U.N. Doc.A/CONF.48/PC.13(1971

<sup>10</sup>United Nations Conference Declaration on Environment and Development (Rio Declaration) U.N. Doc.A/CONF.151/5/Rev.1(1992)

UNEP is governed by the United Nations Environment Assembly, a council with universal membership that sets the UNEP agenda.<sup>11</sup>

UNEP also hosts the secretariats of several programs and conventions, including:

- Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building (BSP)
- Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes
- Convention on Biological Diversity
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
- Convention of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
- Global Adaptation Network
- Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint
- Global Programme of Action (GPA) for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities
- Minamata Convention on Mercury
- Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and its Multilateral Fund
- Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles
- Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade
- Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants
- UNEP Regional Seas Programme

## 2.2 World Commission on Environment and Development WCED (Brundtland Commission)

The Brundtland Commission (named after its chairperson **Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland**, former Prime Minister of Norway) Report of 1987 was the emergence of a new consciousness in the world about the importance of sustainable development. The Brundtland Commission gave a new definition of sustainable development as a concept that integrates the importance of development with the cause of environmental protection. Since the Commission's report, the importance of sustainable development has been realized all over the world. It is now realized that without environmental protection, development is not sustainable. Hence, all development measures today are assessed for how far those measures are consistent with the cause of environmental protection<sup>12</sup>.

## 2.3 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

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<sup>11</sup> United Nations Environment Programme UNEP available @ <https://www.unep.org/><last accessed 7th June, 2021>

<sup>12</sup> Brundtland Report 1987: available @ <https://www.are.admin.ch/sustainable-development/international-cooperation> <accessed 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2021>



The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established in 1988 under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organization for the purpose of assessing “the scientific, technical and socioeconomic information relevant for the understanding of the risk of human-induced climate change. It does not carry out new research nor does it monitor climate-related data. It bases its assessment mainly on published and peer reviewed scientific technical literature.” The goal of these assessments is to inform international policy and negotiations on climate-related issues.

*The First Assessment Report (FAR)* of the IPCC (1990), as well as a supplemental report prepared in 1992, supported the establishment of the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, commonly known as “The Earth Summit”) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992. The UNFCCC treaty, which the United States has signed, serves as the foundation of international political efforts to combat global warming.

The IPCC’s reports were also influential at the first **Conference of the Parties (COP)** to the Climate Convention, held in Berlin, Germany, in 1995. Attendees produced the so-called Berlin Mandate, setting out the terms for a negotiation process that would produce binding commitments by industrial countries to reduce their heat-trapping emissions after the year 2000.

The significantly strengthened *Second Assessment Report (SAR, 1996)*, along with additional special materials on the implications of various potential emission limitations and regional consequences, provided key input to the negotiations that led to the adoption of the *Kyoto Protocol* to the UNFCCC in 1997. The Kyoto Protocol is an international agreement that establishes binding targets for reducing the heat-trapping emissions of developed countries. After the SAR was published, a number of technical papers and special reports have been prepared on the impact of aircraft, land use, technology, and changing emission levels on global warming. *The Third Assessment Report (TAR, 2001)* concluded that temperature increases over the twenty-first century could be significantly larger than previously thought, and that the evidence for human influence on climate change was stronger than ever.

*The Fourth Assessment Report (AR4, 2007)* emphasized that “the warming of the climate system is unequivocal” and that it is affecting ecosystems worldwide. And the *Fifth Assessment Report (AR5, 2013/14)* asserted that “human influence on the climate system is clear, and recent anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases are the highest in history.” These findings informed the climate negotiations resulting in the Paris Agreement of 2015, in which 197 countries committed to limiting global warming to below 2°C.

In tandem with the Paris agreement, the Conference of Parties (COP) invited the IPCC to provide a special assessment on the impacts of climate change when global temperature reaches 1.5°C

above pre-industrial levels. The special report was released in 2018 serves as the basis to discuss adaptation options in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication.<sup>13</sup>

## 2.4 United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO works on the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable use of its components through UNESCO designated sites, including biosphere reserves, World Heritage sites and UNESCO Global Geoparks. In 2018, UNESCO designated sites protected over 10 million km<sup>2</sup>, an area equivalent to the size of China. These conservation instruments have adopted policies and strategies that aim to conserve these sites, while supporting the broader objectives of sustainable development. One such example is the policy on the integration of a sustainable development perspective into the processes of the World Heritage Convention.<sup>14</sup>

## 2.5 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) founded 30<sup>th</sup> September 1961 with headquarters in Paris, France, is an international organization comprised of 29 industrialized member countries committed to all aspects of international economic cooperation. OECD work on environment helps countries design and implement effective policies to address environmental problems and sustainably manage natural resources. It examines the linkages between the environment and economy. It's International Programme for Action on Climate (IPAC) supports countries' efforts to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement, by evaluating national and international policies to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, providing policy advice and sharing best practices.<sup>15</sup>

## 2.6 Incorporation of Environmental Protection in Military Operations

### 2.6.1 North Atlantic Treaty Organization NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was created in 1949 by the United States, Canada, and several Western European nations to provide collective security against the Soviet Union. Environmental experts have argued that the military should adopt measures to protect the physical and natural environment from harmful and detrimental effects of its activities. Environmental degradation can cause social and economic instability and new tensions, whereas the preservation of the environment during a military operation can enhance stabilization and foster lasting security.

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<sup>13</sup>The IPCC: *Who Are They and Why Do Their Climate Reports Matter?* Published by union of concerned scientists Jul 16, 2008 Updated Oct 11, 2018 p.1-5

<sup>14</sup> **Labadi S., 2017** UNESCO, world heritage, and sustainable development: International discourses and local impacts - *Collision or collaboration, 2017* - Springer

<sup>15</sup> Organization for economic co-operation and development: available @<https://www.oecd.org> < last accessed 10<sup>th</sup> June 2021>



NATO member countries are aware of the environmental challenges during military operations and they have adopted rules and regulations to protect the environment. NATO's measures range from safeguarding hazardous materials (including fuels and oils), treating waste water, reducing fossil fuel consumption and managing waste to putting environmental management systems in place during NATO-led activities. In line with these objectives, NATO has been facilitating the integration of environmental protection measures into all NATO-led military activities. NATO started to develop its environmental protection policy in the late 1970s when NATO expert groups and processes were established to address environmental challenges, resulting in a number of guidelines and standards. At this time, NATO's policy states that NATO-led forces "must strive to respect environmental principles and policies under all conditions".<sup>16</sup>

## 2.7 Earth System Governance Project (ESGP)

Founded in January 2009, The Earth System Governance — a global research alliance, is the largest social science research network in the area of governance and global environmental change. The Earth System Governance research alliance takes up the challenge of exploring political solutions and novel, more effective governance mechanisms to cope with the current transitions in the biogeochemical systems of the planet. The normative context of this research is sustainable development; earth system governance is not only a question of institutional effectiveness, but also of political legitimacy and social justice. The Earth System Governance Project is a core project of *Future Earth* which is a global network of scientists, researchers and innovators collaborating for a more sustainable planet.<sup>17</sup>

## 2.8 World Nature Organization (WNO)

The World Nature Organization (WNO) which entered into force on 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2014 is dedicated to the protection of the environment at international level. Its main focus is on energy efficiency, climate protection, sustainable development and a sustainable energy supply. As a permanent platform, the WNO tries to build bridges between business interests as well as development and environmental protection while, at the same time, making the economic value of nature apparent. The initiative to found the World Nature Organization (WNO) is to address the critical challenging of global threat to soil, oceans, forests, water and air. To face these global challenges, it has been deemed essential to involve all countries worldwide in the foundation of a World Nature Organization (WNO), which is the very first intergovernmental organization on a global scale dedicated to international environmental protection.<sup>18</sup>

## 2.9 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

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<sup>16</sup>North Atlantic Treaty Organization available @ <https://natolibguides.info/Environment<10th, June 2021>>

<sup>17</sup> Available @ <https://www.earthsystemgovernance.org/about-the-project/>

<sup>18</sup> Available @ <https://www.iucn.org> <accessed 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2021>

The International Union for Conservation of Nature IUCN was established in 1948 on the 5th of October and it includes government and non-government members. The IUCN is the world's oldest and largest global environmental organization that helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges. Its work focuses on valuing and conserving nature, ensuring effective and equitable governance of its use, and deploying nature-based solutions to global challenges in climate, food and development. IUCN supports scientific research, manages field projects all over the world, and brings governments, NGOs, the UN and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice.<sup>19</sup>

### **3.0 FUNDING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

#### **3.1 Global Environment Facility (GEF)**

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) was established on the eve of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit to help tackle our planet's most pressing environmental problems. Since then, the GEF has provided close to \$20.5 billion in grants and mobilized an additional \$112 billion in co-financing for more than 4,800 projects in 170 countries. The GEF works with partners to improve ocean governance with and across nations through transboundary partnerships as well as helping countries develop regional institutional frameworks.

The GEF's marine projects have addressed the breadth of threats and issues facing ocean governance, including fisheries and pollution. The GEF also supports effective sustainable management of large marine ecosystems and with GEF's support, at least 124 countries are now working together on shared large marine ecosystems. The GEF initiated the Transboundary Waters Assessment Programme (TWAP) that created the first baseline assessment of all the planet's transboundary water resources. The GEF has also funded marine protected areas across the world. To date, the GEF has created or effectively managed over 3,300 protected areas covering 860 million hectares; protected 46 river and lake basins, 8 ground water basins, and 23 of the planet's 64 large marine ecosystems; reduced 2.7 billion tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions; and brought 103 million hectares under sustainable land management, benefiting more than 50 million smallholders<sup>20</sup>.

#### **3.2 Save Our Species (SOS)**

Save Our Species, is a global coalition initiated by IUCN, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and World Bank to build the biggest species conservation fund, supporting on-the-ground field conservation projects all over the world. SOS combines resources and funding experience from the World Bank and GEF, the authoritative science of IUCN and the resources of the private sector to target funding to species conservation projects where and when it will have the most impact<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> International Union for Conservation of Nature available @: <https://www.iucn.org> <accessed 10th June, 2021>

<sup>20</sup> The Global Environment Facility: available @ <https://www.thegef.org> <accessed 10th June, 2021>

<sup>21</sup> Save our species: available @ <https://www.iucn.org> <accessed 10th June, 2021>

## **4.0 PROTECTING THE OCEANS**

### **4.1 International Maritime Organization (IMO)**

Founded in 1948 as the United Nations agency responsible for developing and adopting measures to improve the safety and security of international shipping and to prevent pollution from ships, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has an integral role in meeting the targets set out in United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. In the 1960s, the world became more aware of the spillage of oil into the oceans and seas through accidents or as a result of poor operating practices. Spurred by major oil pollution incidents, such as the Torrey Canyon disaster off the south-west coast of the United Kingdom in 1967<sup>22</sup>, IMO embarked on an ambitious programme of work on marine pollution prevention and response, and on liability and compensation issues. A key outcome was the adoption, in 1973, of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, universally known as **MARPOL**.

Today, the expanded, amended and updated MARPOL Convention remains the most important, as well as the most comprehensive, international treaty covering the prevention of both marine and atmospheric pollution by ships, from operational or accidental causes. By providing a solid foundation for substantial and continued reductions in ship-source pollution, the Convention continues to be relevant today.<sup>23</sup>

## **5.0 REGIONAL EFFORTS AT PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT**

### **5.1 Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC)**

The LCBC was established on 22nd of May 1964 by the four countries that border Lake Chad, but now comprising 8 member states - Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Sudan, Algeria, and Libya. The objective of the LCBC is the sustainable and equitable management of Lake Chad and other shared water resources, the preservation of ecosystems, the promotion of integrating and preserving of peace and transboundary security in the Lake Chad Basin. At one time considered to be the sixth largest lake in the world, Lake Chad is said to have shrunk by a staggering 90% between 1963 and 2013. Currently estimated at about 500 square kilometres in size, it may disappear in the next two decades if measures are not taken to forestall

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<sup>22</sup>**Wilson C.V. 1973** - The Impact of the Torrey Canyon disaster on technology and national and international efforts to deal with supertanker generated oil pollution: an impetus for change?  
The University of Montana press p.7-9

<sup>23</sup>International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships available @<https://www.imo.org> <accessed 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2021>

this disaster<sup>24</sup>. The dramatic shrinking of the lake has had far-reaching consequences. The populations of the Chad Basin countries, and beyond, have traditionally relied on its waters and those of its source rivers for survival.

However, as Lake Chad has shrunk, food insecurity has risen dramatically, with more than 7m people in the sub-region facing the threat of famine and half a million children suffering from malnutrition. Fishermen have been left without a means of earning a living with the depletion of fish varieties and farmers and herdsman have struggled to make a living due to the little water left in the lake. This has led to large numbers of herdsman migrating in search of greener pastures, resulting in conflicts.

Following on from decades of efforts to address the ongoing environmental decline, which has led to mass migrations and wide-scale insecurity in the sub-region, a three-day International Conference on *Saving Lake Chad* took place in Abuja, Nigeria in late February 2018. It was organized by the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and the Federal Government of Nigeria, with the support of UNESCO. This included a high-level meeting of leaders of member states of the LCBC. The aim of the conference was to create global awareness of the socio-economic and environmental challenges arising from the dwindling of Lake Chad and the resulting threat to livelihoods that has seen increased insecurity; as well as to discuss ways of stopping the lake from drying up any further.

Since 2014, the *IUCN BRIDGE project* also works in partnership with the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) in supporting the basin countries to implement transparent and concerted actions for improving transboundary water governance<sup>25</sup>.

## 5.2 Curbing Desertification

### 5.2.1 The Great Green Wall

The Great Green Wall is a symbol of hope in the face of one of the biggest challenges of our time – desertification. Launched in 2007 by *the African Union*, this game-changing African-led initiative aims to restore Africa's degraded landscapes and transform millions of lives in one of the world's poorest regions, the Sahel. Once complete, the Wall will be the largest living structure on the planet – an 8,000 km natural wonder of the world stretching across the entire width of the continent.

The Great Green Wall is now being implemented in more than 20 countries across Africa and more than eight billion dollars have been mobilized and pledged for its support. The initiative brings together African countries and international partners, under the leadership of the African Union

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<sup>24</sup>African Business Newspaper 18th May 2018 available @<https://african.business/2018/04/economy/saving-lake-chad><accessed 19th June 2021>

<sup>25</sup>Nwilo PC, Olayinka DN, Okolie CJ and Emmanuel EI, *'Impacts of land cover changes on desertification in northern Nigeria and implications on the Lake Chad Basin'* (Journal of Arid Elsevir 2020 p5-7)

Commission and Pan-African Agency of the Great Green Wall. While some countries started the implementation of the GGW activities as early as 2008, others joined as late as 2014, when the GGW declaration was ratified<sup>26</sup>. The 11 countries selected as intervention zones for the Great Green Wall are: Burkina Faso, Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sudan.

### **5.3 UNEP OGONI Environmental Assessment Report and Clean-up**

The Report of the Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland by the United Nations Environment program (UNEP) was published in 2011. The environmental restoration of Ogoniland is likely to be the world's most wide-ranging and long-term oil clean up exercise ever undertaken. The report proposed the establishment of a Restoration Authority with an explicit mandate to clean up Ogoniland and restore the ecosystems. The report also recommended the establishment of an Ogoniland Environmental Restoration Fund with an initial capitalization of 1 billion dollars to cover the clean-up costs.<sup>27</sup>

### **5.4 The Governors' Climate and Forests Task Force (GCF)**

The Governors' Climate and Forests Task Force (GCF) is a unique sub-national collaboration between 29 states and provinces from Brazil, Indonesia, Ivory Coast, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, Spain, and the United States. The GCF seeks to advance jurisdictional programs designed to promote low emissions rural development and reduced emissions from deforestation and land use (REDD+) and link these activities with emerging greenhouse gas (GHG) compliance regimes and other pay-for-performance opportunities. GCF focuses on all aspects of efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and establish lasting frameworks for low emissions development<sup>28</sup>.

It facilitates the exchange of experiences and lessons learned across leading states and provinces; synchronizes efforts across these jurisdictions to develop policies and programs that provide realistic pathways to forest-maintaining rural development; supports processes for multi-stakeholder participation and engagement; and seeks financing for jurisdictional programs from a range of sources, including pay-for-performance public finance, emerging carbon markets, and ongoing efforts to de-carbonize agro-food supply chains. Cross River state in Nigeria is a beneficiary of this programme.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

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<sup>26</sup>Mbow C., *The Great Green Wall in the Sahel* Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Climate Science, 2017 - oxfordre.com p97 <accessed 10<sup>th</sup> June 2021>

<sup>27</sup> United Nations Environment Programme UNEP Ogoni Report: available @ <https://www.unep.org/> <last accessed 7th june, 2021>

<sup>28</sup>GCF Task Force: available @ <https://www.gcftf.org> <accessed 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2021>

Efforts to preserve biodiversity must take into account not only the physical environment, but also social and economic systems that are well connected to biodiversity and ecosystem services. Mobilizing existing natural and social science, new technologies, and indigenous and local knowledge can inform us about the drivers of biodiversity loss and effective approaches to recovery, resilience and behavioural change. There has never been a more urgent need to restore damaged ecosystems than now and to re-establish our bond with nature. Ecosystems support all life on Earth. The healthier our ecosystems are, the healthier the planet - and its people. Taking this into account, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2021–2030 the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration to call for the protection and revival of ecosystems all around the world, for the benefit of people and nature. It aims to halt the degradation of ecosystems and restore them as well as conserve the ecosystems that are still intact. Only with healthy ecosystems can we enhance people’s livelihoods, counteract climate change, and stop the collapse of biodiversity.

## **7.0 Recommendations**

Saving the planet seems like an impossible task. But if everyone does just a little bit, these small changes will add up to a big impact on the environment. No effort is too trivial, let’s change those unfriendly habits and take action today to save our planet!

- I. Developed nations and industrialized countries should urgently reduce emissions and provide adequate funding for protecting the environment.
- II. Lack of adequate technical and financial resources and capacity can limit the upscaling of innovative solutions, demonstrating further the need for regional and subregional co-operation.
- III. Capacity development needs should be addressed at three levels: national, provincial and local.
- IV. Countries and institutions must cooperate on the basis of equality and reciprocity in order to develop harmonized policies, programmes and strategies to guarantee environmental sustainability.



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