

25 MAY 2023— IN PERSON & HYBRID

ACCELERATING THE GREAT GREEN WALL: FOSTERING THE AFRICA-EUROPE PARTNERSHIP FOR A JUST RURAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE SAHEL

High-level conference at the European Parliament—Brussels

PROGRAMME—25 May 2023 from 13:45-17:20



This high-level conference is organised by the **Renew Group (Renew PAC) of the European Parliament** (Renew's delegation for the Pacific, Africa and the Caribbean), in partnership with the **Africa-Europe Foundation (AEF)**, the **Pan African Agency of the Great Green Wall (PAAGGW)** and the **United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)**.



CONTEXT

Revitalised by France's President Emmanuel Macron and Heads of States from the Pan African Agency of the Great Green Wall at the One Planet Summit in 2021, with the creation of the Great Green Wall Accelerator, the Great Green Wall initiative (GGWI) is the most ambitious nature-based solution on Earth and contributes to the implementation of multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Stretching along the southern edge of the Sahara Desert from Senegal to Djibouti, the Great Green Wall initiative is addressing **land restoration, biodiversity preservation and regenerative agriculture**. It also aims to provide answers to the ever-growing **challenges of climate change, soil degradation, food insecurity, access to energy, poverty and unemployment, and issues related to stability, security and mobility in the Sahel region**.

At COP26, the European Commission President committed additional support to the Great Green Wall initiative with €700M per year, but there remains a lack of visibility on the EU strategy towards the Great Green Wall. For Sahelian countries, it is critical for financial support to be directed towards Great Green Wall national transformative programmes, developed by the Great Green Wall national coalitions, to ensure the necessary coordination, and facilitate monitoring and evaluation.

As we approach the mid-term point of the Great Green Wall Accelerator (2021-2025), the **critical challenge now is to provide up-to-date information to European and African decision-makers, for them to become stronger advocates for driving the mobilization of further resources to achieve the 2030 goals**.

Coordinated efforts between the EU and Africa could boost the cross-continental partnership while advancing a collective action agenda to put the Sahel on the road to prosperity by 2030. Over the past year, the French and Senegalese presidencies of the EU and AU respectively provided a unique opportunity to give a revised impetus to the region, as demonstrated with the Food and Agriculture Resilience Mission (FARM), aimed at counteracting risks of rising food insecurity and famine in Africa. **Now, and for the upcoming year, it is up to Sweden, Spain and Comoros to take up this challenge, as respective presidents of the EU and AU.**

This high-level conference on May 25th 2023 builds on the international momentum around the GGWI and follows up on the One Planet Summit, the 6th AU-EU Heads of State Summit and international conferences such as the Biodiversity, Desertification and Climate COPs. It also complements the launch of the Global Gateway and new EU regulations on deforestation-free products. The conference will **bring together key stakeholders from Africa and Europe (political leaders, field experts, research organisations, development and financial institutions, and civil society) with the objective** to discuss how to enhance our partnership, as Africa and Europe, and develop credible mid (2030) and long-term (2050) strategies for investment in the Great Green Wall.

PROGRAMME

13:45-17:20 **ACCELERATING THE GREAT GREEN WALL:
FOSTERING THE AFRICA-EUROPE PARTNERSHIP FOR A JUST RURAL
TRANSFORMATION IN THE SAHEL**

13:45-14:00 **Registration and networking opportunity**

14:00-14:30 **EYE-OPENING HIGH-LEVEL KICK-OFF SESSION:**

- **Catherine Chabaud**, MEP (Renew), Member of the Development (DEVE) Committee, Member of the Intergroup on Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development, Member of the SDG Alliance
- **Ibrahim Mayaki**, AU Special Envoy for Food Systems, and Co-chair of the Africa-Europe Foundation Strategy Group on Agriculture and Food Systems; Honorary President of the Sahel and West Africa Club at the OECD; former Prime Minister of Niger and CEO of AUDA-NEPAD
- **Ibrahim Thiaw**, Executive Secretary at the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)
- **Stéphane Bijoux**, MEP (Renew), Vice-chair of the Committee on Development (DEVE), Chair of the EU-CARIFORUM Delegation, Member of the Intergroup on Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development
- **Brahim Said**, Executive Secretary of the Pan African Agency of the Great Green Wall (PAAGGW)

PROGRAMME

14:30-15:45 **FROM WORDS TO ACTION – IMPLEMENTING THE GREAT GREEN WALL**

As showcased in recent IPCC reports, the drylands of the Sahel are suffering ever-more volatile patterns of rainfall, greater risk of flooding and harsher droughts. Heavy pressure from farming has squeezed grazing lands and led to the degradation of soils and vegetation, and falling crop yields. But pockets of green hope exist where more resilient rural landscapes have been created, and people's incomes and livelihoods improved. We need to share solutions from existing actions which offer lessons for policy and practice, and demonstrate how to accelerate the Great Green Wall Initiative across the region

The Great Green Wall Initiative was initially created by leaders of the African Union to offer tools to their population to create local prosperity for and by themselves. The initiative is based on people on the frontlines fighting every day to build better livelihoods. These voices from the field provide a better understanding of the challenges but also the opportunities offered by the initiative, and how better to support local efforts which can achieve global impact.

This session aims to demonstrate concrete success stories from the field, offering testimony which illustrates the key ingredients needed to make progress, and presenting practical and replicable measures. Such examples must provide the foundation stones for scaling up the implementation of the Great Green Wall Initiative.

Confirmed speakers already include:

- **Oumar Abdoulaye Bâ**, Director of ASERGMV (Senegalese Agency for the Great Green Wall reforestation)
- **Birguy Lamizana**, Sahel Senior Programme Manager, Global Mechanism at the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)
- **Yusuf Maina Bakar**, Director of the Great Green Wall for Nigeria
- **Rémi Hémercyck**, Executive Director SOS Sahel
- **Patrick Worms**, Senior Science Policy Advisor, CIFOR-ICRAF
- **Nabil Ben Khatra**, Executive Secretary of the Sahel and Sahara Observatory
- **Andrew Harper**, Special Advisor to the High Commissioner for Climate Action at the United Nations Human Right Commission (UNHCR)

This panel discussion will be followed by a short presentation from a delegation of French students to report on their field trip in Senegal, focusing on the Great Green Wall.

15:45-16:00 **Coffee break**

PROGRAMME

16:00-17:15 UNLOCKING FINANCE & DELIVERING AN AMBITIOUS AFRICA-EUROPE AGENDA FOR THE GREAT GREEN WALL

Endowed since the One Planet Summit in 2021 with a financial envelope of \$19 billion for the period from 2021-2025, the Great Green Wall initiative needs to be further supported in order to deliver and demonstrate the social, economic and environmental benefits it can bring to the Sahel's development. A clear mapping of the pledges is needed to build strong partnerships, and develop credible mid (2030) and long-term (2050) strategies.

Questions will include:

- How to unlock the finance pledges, make funding more efficient and agile for projects with demonstrated socio-economic and environmental benefits? What complementary measures to strengthen delivery on the ground?
- How to encourage Europe to work with African leaders to develop a long-term approach to support the Great Green Wall, encompassing a sustainable agri-food production plan (e.g. plant-based and animal protein plan) and soil restoration?
- Can Europe and Africa co-create a sustainable food-production plan in the Sahel to cope with the rise in famines, food insecurity, and how can the Sahel region benefit most from the Great Green Wall initiative?

Confirmed speakers already include:

- A representative from the European Commission
- **Dorsuma Al-Hamndou**, Division Manager, Climate and Green Growth Department at African Development Bank Group (AfDB)
- **Markus Berndt**, Director-General and acting Managing Director at the European Investment Bank (EIB)
- **Estherine Fotabong**, Director of Programme Implementation and Coordination at the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD)
- **Sandra Rullière**, Deputy Head of Rural Development and Agriculture Division at the French Development Agency (AFD) (*tbc*)
- **William Kwende**, Founder of Serious Shea
- **Ahmed Aziz Diallo**, Mayor of Dori & C3Sahel Coordinator
- **Barry Andrews**, Member of the European Parliament (Renew), President of the SDG Alliance

17:15-17:20 CLOSING REMARKS

17:20 End of high-level conference