

**Joint Declaration of the Sahel Alliance and the United Nations Convention on
Combating Desertification**

Great Green Wall – Towards climate resilient development in the Sahel

3rd General Assembly of the Sahel Alliance

4th April 2022, Madrid

Climate change, desertification, land degradation and drought interconnected crises are at the heart of the Sahel Alliance members' concerns. Climate change, ecosystem losses and all environmental problems weaken populations, affect the potential for economic growth, social cohesion, security and stability of the G5 Sahel countries¹ and slow down the joint efforts of development partners. Recognising the close correlation between climate change adaptation, food security and population resilience at the Sahel Alliance General Assembly on 15th February 2021, the Alliance members reaffirmed their focus on climate and environment action **to ensure sustainable and resilient development in the Sahel, to reduce the risk of conflict and to create economic opportunities**. On 13th December 2021, the 7th Operational Steering Committee of the Sahel Alliance welcomed the commitment of several members to the Great Green Wall (GGW) Initiative, while encouraging the rapprochement and the search for synergies between the two platforms, based on common objectives, within the framework of an enhanced and synergistic dialogue with the G5 Sahel on climate and environment programmes and actions.

The Great Green Wall Initiative, approved by the African Union in 2007, is implemented by the Pan-African Agency of the Great Green Wall (PAGGW) and national agencies in 11 countries². It aims to facilitate inter-state cooperation in tackling environmental and climate challenges. *The Great Green Wall: Implementation Status and Way Ahead to 2030*³ highlights the fact that 17.8 million hectares of land are being restored and that 335,000 jobs have been created since 2010. However, looking at the targets set for 2030 - 100 million hectares of restored land, 250 million tonnes of carbon sequestered in the soil and 10 million jobs created - significant efforts must still be made.

Therefore, **the Great Green Wall Accelerator** was created to support the activities carried out by the PAGGW. Its objective is to give a new impetus, to mobilise additional financial resources, to harmonise the efforts of the technical and financial partners and to accelerate the implementation of the Initiative's projects. The *One Planet Summit*, held in January 2021 in Paris, provided an opportunity to raise the level of ambition of the international community with regard to nature protection and the fight against climate change. Total pledges by several

¹ Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad

² Burkina Faso, Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sudan

³ https://catalogue.unccd.int/1551_Revised_French_Final_040920.pdf

donors, such as the African Development Bank, the European Investment Bank, the FAO, France, the Green Climate Fund, IFAD, the European Union, among others, have since made it possible to raise \$19 billion, representing one third of the financing needs necessary to achieve the targets set for 2030. Hosted by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Great Green Wall Accelerator builds on 5 priority investment areas: Pillar 1 - Investment in small and medium-sized enterprises and strengthening of value chains, local markets, export organisation; Pillar 2 - Land restoration and sustainable ecosystem management; Pillar 3 - Climate-resilient infrastructure and access to renewable energy; Pillar 4 - Favourable economic and institutional framework for effective governance; and lastly Pillar 5 - Capacity building.

The Sahel Alliance reaffirms its alignment with the GGW's objectives in terms of strengthening environmental and socio-economic resilience and wishes to intensify cooperation with this initiative in order to pool efforts and increase coordination in the implementation of ambitious and innovative national and regional projects, working towards land restoration and sustainable management in the Sahel-Saharan region, job creation, support to agricultural value chains, training of youth and women, development of resilient infrastructure and renewable energy.

I. Potential synergies between the Sahel Alliance and the Great Green Wall

The Sahel Alliance and the Great Green Wall, in particular the latter's Accelerator, present a strong potential for synergies.

The Sahel Alliance and the GGW Accelerator bring together the same community of donors and partners, committed to tackling climate change and desertification, as well as the same beneficiary countries. The G5 Sahel countries are among the 11 countries involved in the implementation of the Great Green Wall, as are Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali, which together benefit from a significant allocation of funds within the GGW (more than \$2.5 billion). The Sahel Alliance and the GGW Accelerator share common objectives related to sustainable rural development, better natural resource management, resilient and remunerative production systems. Therefore, they express their wish to intensify their cooperation in order to pool efforts and capitalise on their mutual achievements. Several concrete avenues of collaboration have been identified and should be further explored:

- **The Sahel Alliance could provide political support to the Great Green Wall Initiative**, recognising that many of the Alliance's projects contribute to the objectives pursued by the GGW, within the framework of the high-level dialogue it maintains with the G5 Sahel member states. The Sahel Alliance and the GGW could therefore **craft common public policy messages to the G5 countries**, based on the urgent sectoral reform needs identified under the two initiatives.
- The various **permanent Sahel Alliance coordination groups** could enable a greater leverage effect for the projects and initiatives carried out by the GGW. These groups offer spaces for dialogue and sharing of tools and good practices among donors, to raise

awareness about the GGW and its emblematic projects among Alliance members and thus contribute to (i) an increase in commitments to the GGW in the region, and (ii) a stronger alignment of the sectoral portfolio of the Alliance members with the GGW's priorities. The coordination groups Agriculture, Rural Development and Food Security, Climate, Energy, Education and Youth Employability, Gender and Private Sector, could be called upon for this purpose.

- Both initiatives could benefit from **sharing expertise**, particularly in terms of coordination, intervention modalities and absorption capacities in the fragile areas of the G5 Sahel (prevention zones and crisis areas). The Sahel Alliance aims to strengthen the coordination of partners working in these areas through common approaches, analyses and tools, in order to increase the relevance, coherence and effectiveness of the funded projects.

II. Recommendations

The Sahel Alliance and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification make the following recommendations:

- Strengthening synergies between the Great Green Wall Initiative and the Sahel Alliance, using the Accelerator of the Pan-African Agency of the Great Green Wall and the Alliance's permanent coordination groups;
- Crafting common messages to be taken to the highest level within the framework of the political dialogue with the G5 Sahel, promoting the inclusion of environmental challenges and the effects of climate change in the structural and sectoral reforms of the G5 countries;
- Organising the sharing of expertise between the two platforms, particularly on the modalities of intervention, coordination and implementation in the beneficiary countries, in order to accelerate the implementation of projects common to both initiatives, including in fragile areas;
- Jointly increasing communication efforts to improve the visibility of the two platforms' action and increasing resource mobilisation, in line with the One Planet Summit of January 2021 and the prospect of the 15th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP-15), to be held in Abidjan in May 2022.