



EMERGING CHALLENGES March 2018

Shortage of Water Supplies: the Lake Chad Basin problems

Recently, the Lake Chad Basin has lost 90% of its water. The basin itself has shrunk from 25,000 square kilometres to 2,000 square kilometres. This this led to one of the most serious humanitarian crises in the entire African continent. This region comprises four countries: the Western Chad, the South-Eastern Niger, the Northern Cameroon and the North-Eastern Nigeria. One of the most serious effects of climate change affects that region; the process of desertification is a mixture of drought and anthropic causes; moreover, that process has strong repercussions on agriculture, on fishing, on pastoralism and of course on water supply with serious socio-economic and politic consequences exacerbating internal struggles, especially among jihadist armed groups and local governments.

The lack of work, the lack of water and food and the wars looming over the region, affect more than 17 million people, who try to emigrate when possible. Otherwise, they often end up in the clutches of jihadist groups, who are among the few who they manage to make up for the crisis by taking all that remains of the resources that the region offers. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, food security has deteriorated, with more than 7 million people facing the threat of famine and a million children suffering from severe acute malnutrition. It is estimated that in 2020, the number of people depending on the lake and its resources will reach 35 million.

Sanusi Abdullahi, executive secretary of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, which oversees the use of water and other natural resources, said they were running out of choices. He said: “we are faced with the possibility of the Lake Chad disappearing and that would be catastrophic to the entire African continent.” UNESCO has launched a new 6.5 million dollars research and conservation programme involving Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, as well as the Central African Republic.

France supports the reforestation solution, as part of the commitment made at COP 21 and COP 22 climate conferences. 1,7 million dollars are assigned to restore vegetation cover around the lake and to support the economic initiatives and help adapt agricultural practices to climate change. Nevertheless,

youth, women and men together are involved on a daily basis to protect young plants and fight against the threat of desertification. Over 4000 hectares will be planted with drought-tolerant seedlings on five vulnerable sites to protect the polders from silting. Nearly 40000 acacia trees have already been planted at Merea, Liwa and Tantaveron sites. About 140,000 dollars have been donated by UNDP to more than 400 households around the lake to boost community food production and fight poverty, but perhaps this cannot be enough.

The Lake Chad Basin problem remains one of the most disaster over the world and the international community, in particular UN and African Union absolutely have to do their best to fight climate change on the one hand and fight jihadist extremism on the other hand, in particular Boko Haram, which worsens the most serious current situation day by day.

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