



Press Release

SOS SAHEL's AFRICA DAYS CELEBRATE 40-YEARS OF ACHIEVEMENT & PREDICT A VIBRANT FUTURE FOR THE SAHELIAN REGION

Dakar, Senegal, May 24, 2017.....AS its 40th anniversary celebrations unfolded in **Senegal** this week , **SOS Sahel** was joined by a team of globally recognized experts in the international food security, nutrition and agricultural fields to deliver a powerful message of hope and opportunity to the region.

While delivered in the country of its' birth in 1976, SOS Sahel's 40th birthday message was for Sahelian governments, farmers, communities, including importantly women and youth, as well as business leaders, across the region.

Senegalese celebrities such as the King of New African Cuisine, **Pierre Thiam**, and renowned pianist, **Cheick Tidiane Seck**, backed the message of hope by demonstrating their magical gifts during **SOS Sahel's AFRICA DAYS** (May 24-26).

Since its' creation by the visionary Senegalese **President Léopold Sédar Senghor**, as a response to the devastating droughts of the 1970s, SOS Sahel has delivered 450 projects and worked with over 1,000 Sahelian communities improving the lives, nutrition and livelihoods of millions of people across the region. SOS Sahel works with four million producers across the agricultural, livestock, fisheries and other productive sectors.

Food Security & Nutrition Initiative 2025:

SOS Sahel's message of hope, captured under the banner of a four-year long “**Food Security & Nutrition Initiative 2025**”, is one of renewal and regeneration for the 11 countries of a region that will reach a population of 500 million by 2050. The newly launched **SOS Sahel** initiative, running from 2017-2020, aims to raise at least US4 million for **SOS Sahel's** future work.

The importance of **SOS Sahel's** on-going work is confirmed, once again, by the rising spectre of drought that is once again gripping wide swathes of the African continent and putting more than 30 million people at risk of severe malnutrition and associated diseases.

Highlighting the achievements of four decades of work in the Sahel, **Philippe Lecomte**, the Chairman of this vibrant, Paris-head-quartered non-governmental organization with operations across the region, said: “ If employed smartly the advances in farm management, science and technology, and land regeneration that we are seeing across **SOS Sahel's** many projects can be replicated and scaled up to ensure the region more effectively ensures food security and, in time, assumes its rightful place in the global economy.”

cont/...page 2



M. Lecomte continued: “With a population growing to 500 million by 2050 the potential of this region is huge and it is significant also for future global growth. Just 20% of Sahelian land is irrigated which means the effective application of sustainable farming methods and technological advances will yield great regional benefits.”

“The greening of the Sahelian land through visionary projects such as the Green Wall initiative, Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration and ensuring the region’s agriculture serves both domestic needs and new international markets is essential to foster sustainable growth for the region,” he explained.

“The proven SOS Sahel approaches can also be used as powerful tools to combat the risks and negative impacts of climate change and other emerging natural and man-made threats,” **Chairman Lecomte** concluded.

To reach its potential **SOS Sahel** believes the region must tackle three, critical priorities:

- Food security, nutrition and resilience;
- Sustainable and eco-friendly agriculture;
- Shared growth, wealth and prosperity.

A Celebration through SOS Sahel’s Africa Days:

SOS Sahel’s Africa Days, amongst a broader range of activities, have included highlights such as:

- A Gala dinner held for 200 plus guests at the Pullman Hotel, Dakar, on Wednesday May 24th to kick start **SOS Sahel’s** US 4 million international fundraising campaign in style;
- A Senegalese cuisine workshop by **Super Chef Pierre Thiam** to highlight how local produce can conquer international tastes and markets to bring new sources of income to Sahelian communities;
- Two days of activities in the field at Ndiawagne Fall, Lompoul and Richard Toll, including clean energy, re-greening and nutrition workshops, as well as policy-focused discussions for local experts and international guests.

Comments from the SOS Sahel International Advisory Council:

Dr Djimé Adoum, Executive Secretary of the Permanent Interstates Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and a member of SOS Sahel’s International Advisory Council, commented: “There is an increasingly urgent need for the SOS Sahel approach and sustainable farming and regeneration methodologies to be replicated and scaled up across the region. Our coming generations will increasingly demand sustainable livelihoods, better employment opportunities and improved security and nutrition.”

/cont... page 3



Dr Adoum continued: “With more than 50% of our current population of 300 million under 25 years we have a great opportunity to benefit from the energy that can be unleashed by this cohort as part of the Sahel’s demographic dividend. SOS Sahel’s work sits at the very heart of a formidable challenge and an even bigger opportunity.”

Remi Hemeryck, Executive Director of SOS Sahel, explained: “We want robust, sustainable growth that creates stability and social vibrancy for communities across the Sahel and brings hope to coming generations.”

“After four proud decades of work we believe **SOS Sahel** has a recipe to achieve this along with our many wonderful partners here in the region and our recently created International Advisory Council with members from Europe, the US, China, Japan and South Africa” concluded the Executive Director.

United Nations Ambassador for the Drylands, Dennis Garrity, the former director general of the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) and a member of SOS Sahel’s International Advisory Council, commented: “Across the Sahel we are seeing increasing evidence that sustainable farming approaches backed by SOS Sahel are game-changing for the Drylands. For example, with Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration more than 7 million hectares of land in Niger have been regenerated in a highly cost effective manner in a closely managed evidence-based project.”

The Ambassador continued: “FMNR is one example whereby income sustaining regeneration and re-greening can be achieved for Sahelian farming families for as little as US 14 a hectare.”

Sponsors and contributors to SOS Sahel’s Africa Day programme included; Hôtel PULLMAN Teranga Dakar, Sococim, Caisse du Crédit agricole du Sénégal, CNART, Les Grands Moulins de Dakar, Nexira, Auchan/Atac, Ethiopian Airlines.

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