



**Eighth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development**

***Building forward better: a green, inclusive and resilient Africa poised to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063***

**Institute for Development and Economic Planning – United Nations Economic Commission for Africa**

Side-event on “*Climate change: coastal erosion and environmental migration*”

It comes without saying that building forward better a green, inclusive and resilient Africa calls for climate resilience in a safe and healthy planet – in other words, climate change adaptation, clearly mandated in the Abidjan Convention, adopted in 1984. Unfortunately, as in the case of Bargny, Senegal, climate resilience is far from being a reality. Coastal erosion and industrial pollution affected the community’s local economy - fishery-based – leading to unemployment and, consequently, to forced migration. The documentary of El Hadji Demba Dia – “ Temps de Dire non (Le) » (“Time to say no”) - from 2021 illustrates this reality: the lives of a community of 70.000 people were directly and indirectly affected by the lack of resilience towards climate, adding to this element the pernicious effect of industrial pollution over the sea and arable land.<sup>1</sup> “ Temps de Dire non (Le)” became an update to the 2012 UNESCO “warning” article on the consequences of coastal erosion, stating that “Coastal erosion has devastating effects, inducing the loss of infrastructure such as roads. It also threatens populations, who can no longer live close to the coastline, and the worry is it is expected to increase due to climate change and sea level rise” . Almost 10 years later, the 13’ minutes documentary of Demba Dia proved that these predictions became the reality of not only this Senegalese commune, but that they were already the reality for other coastal communities in the continent and under the same sub-region, such as Varela, Guinea-Bissau.<sup>2</sup>

According to UNEP (2021): “Despite being responsible for only around 3 per cent of global carbon dioxide emissions, experts say that Africa will be the region hardest hit by climate change”. Amongst other consequences, climate change brings, as a negative side-effect, a phenomenon

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<sup>1</sup> Although Senegal contribution to the global carbon emission rate is very negligible and almost nothing (about one metric ton of CO2 per capita in 2014 while the US emits 17 tons per capita in the same year). The data above indicate that Senegal is 150<sup>th</sup> out of 195 countries on the global carbon emission list. In spite of her low level contribution to GHG emission, the country like her west African neighbors continues to experience devastating effect of climate change with surface temperature projected to be 1-3°C BY 2060 and with sea level globally projected to rise in the future by 2m by 2100 (IPCC, 2007), the coastal areas in Senegal and the world over which are major centers of economic and cultural development with rich ecological and environmental resources is being threatened by climate change and coastal erosion (Dennis, Niang, Diop and Nicholls, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> In this regard, UNDP implemented the project “[Adaptation to Climate Change in Coastal zones of West Africa \(ACCC\)](#)”, in 2012, as a tentative response to the problem of coastal erosion in this particular sub-region. It operated in Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde. The national components of the project comprised the development of pilot activities in selected sites “with the aim of reducing the threat of coastal erosion, while increasing biodiversity and strengthening the adaptive capacities of local communities and ecosystems”. Varela was one of the selected sites where the project was implemented. (Source: <https://www.adaptation-undp.org/projects/spa-acc-west-africa>, last consulted 19 January 2022).

called “climate refugees”, featuring the concept of environmental migrants (IOM Working definition 2007): “Environmental migrants are persons or groups of persons who, for compelling reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad”. Taking into account that the coastal communities’ economies are built around fishery and tourism as the main sources of both social and economic development, coastal erosion; (1) excludes the local population from attaining SDG8 “decent work and economic growth” (SDG 8). Finally, coastal erosion pushes the communities’ active labour force to inland displacement or, on a well-known extreme measure, to immigration. For those who have no other option than staying, poverty and social inequality becomes the reality.

It against this background that the Institute for Development and Economic Planning aims at organizing the side event “*Climate change: coastal erosion and environmental migration*”, in order to create a platform of discussion over:

- The effects of coastal erosion in the social and economic development of local communities;
- The issue of environmental migration and respective impact over unemployment and the depletion of active labour force
- The climate change adaptation measures regarding coastal erosion: examples of ecosystem and community-based adaptation, in line with SDGs 13 and 17.

### **Suggested Speakers**

- H.E. The Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development of Senegal
- H.E. The Minister of Environment and Biodiversity of Guinea-Bissau
- Director of the Technology Climate Change, and Natural Resource Management Division – UNECA
- El Hadji Demba Dia – Movie-maker and Director
- UNEP Representative