



## **Partnership agreement to strengthen the Sahel's most vulnerable communities**

*Dakar / Ouagadougou, 22 June 2015:* The Permanent Interstate Committee for drought control in the Sahel (CILSS) and several United Nations agencies signed today a two-year strategic partnership agreement to strengthen the resilience of communities in the Sahel that are highly vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition.

West Africa's Sahel region is home to some of the world's poorest communities. Families are confronted with chronic food and nutrition crises, exacerbated by the effects of climate change, recurrent natural disasters, and the impact of violent conflicts and displacement. Levels of vulnerability remain unacceptably high. Since 2012, each year an average of over 20 million people face food insecurity, and over five million children under the age of five suffer from malnutrition.

"Many families are more vulnerable today than they were twenty years ago. They are less and less able to cope with the greater frequency and intensity of climate shocks", said Robert Piper, UN Assistant Secretary General and Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sahel who signed the agreement on behalf of the UN agencies. "Today's partnership will deepen our understanding of what drives hazards to become disasters, and who is least equipped to deal with the impact of such shocks. It is an indispensable step if we are to work together with development actors and governments to sustainably address the structural causes behind the Sahel's chronic emergencies."

The 2015-2016 joint UN and CILSS work plan defines six priority areas for cooperation geared to strengthen households' abilities to cope with climate shocks and natural and man-made disasters. The creation of a 'resilience measurement platform' dedicated to analysing communities' exposure to risks and their ability to withstand shocks is at the core of the partnership. Other priorities include the development of policies and practice to strengthen the resilience of the region's pastoralists, partnership on disaster risk reduction, management and governance of natural resources, support to the Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative (AGIR), as well as the development of new communications technology to enable dynamic real-time monitoring and information on the region's markets.

"The added value of such a regional partnership comes from the synergies it creates. It will multiply the efficiency of our activities and ultimately accelerate the socio-economic development in the region" said Djimé Adoum, the Executive Secretary of CILSS and a signatory to the agreement.

UN agencies involved in the partnership include the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Created in 1973, the mandate of the CILSS is to invest in research for food security and the fight against the effects of drought and desertification for a new ecological balance in the Sahel. It is presently composed of 13 member states, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Togo.

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