

African Risk Capacity - ARC

Sovereign Disaster Risk Solutions: a Project of the African Union

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CONTACT: Parliamentary Network for Disaster Risk Reduction

THE GOVERNEMENT OF SENEGAL IS PIONNEERING A PANAFRICAN RISK POOL FOR DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT TO LOWER DEPENDENCY ON INTERNATIONAL EMERGENCY AID

Technical workshop - 16-17 July in Mbour

DAKAR – [13 July 2012]

This year, as almost every year, images of drought-stricken women and children appear one after the other on our TV screens: the Sahel drought, compounded by political crises and armed conflicts impacts over 18 million people in 2012, not only in Senegal but also in Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad or Sudan. The food crisis in Sahel follows closely the previous one in the Horn of Africa in 2011, when millions of men and women lost their livestock, their livelihoods and sometimes their lives.

Repeatedly faced with such disasters, African governments are left with little alternatives besides appealing to international emergency aid, which aid is often delayed by between three to six months after the onset of the crisis.

The Commission of the African Union's Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture, with technical assistance from the UN World Food Programme (WFP), has initiated the African Risk Capacity (ARC) Project to design and establish a pan-African risk pool. ARC is envisaged as an African-owned, standalone financial entity that will provide African governments with timely, reliable and cost-effective contingency funding in the event of a severe drought by pooling risk across the continent.

For M. Abdou Sané, Senegalese MP and member of the Parliamentary Network for Disaster Risk Reduction, "this transition from a philosophy of reaction to natural disasters to a more proactive approach of forecast and reduction of climate risks marks a turning point in the policies of African government who aim to protect their vulnerable populations while allowing them to retain their dignity".

The Government of Senegal is one of the pioneers in the establishment of this initiative of Pan-African solidarity based on the efficient use of natural disaster risk transfer and financing mechanisms. "Within the African Union and international organisations, the actions taken by the Government of Senegal and the intellectual, political and material contribution of our country have been key to the design of the Pan-African risk management policies," recalls Mr. Sané.

ARC is part of a broader initiative of management and reduction of natural disaster that the Senegalese government has been setting up in recent years, specifically through the Direction de la Protection Civile (DPC). The DPC, within the Ministry of Interior, is the organ tasked with disaster risk management and response, including risks related to locusts, bushfires, floods, etc.

To this end, the DPC has been using for years innovative technologies in order to improve the efficiency and the speed of its activities, including remote sensing technologies or geographic information systems.

In this line, the technical engine of ARC, *Africa RiskView*, a software developed by the World Food Programme, would strengthen early warning systems of the DPC. The *Africa RiskView* software uses satellite-based rainfall information to calculate expected food security assistance costs for sub-Saharan Africa in near real-time and correlates at nearly 90% to WFP needs assessments over the past decade.

Conducted throughout the year and especially during the harvest season, this analysis would allow the government, to estimate the total cost of intervention, even before the beginning of the lean season. The early detection of drought would automatically trigger the disbursement of funds to the government within two to four weeks. According to the Director of the DPC Mr. Mare Lo, "if Senegal had been insured with ARC in 2011/12, the funds disbursed by the end of September 2011 would have helped to mitigate the negative effects of the drought we are currently experiencing, through financing of early prevention activities and intensification of social safety nets."

In addition to providing quick-disbursing funds, "the ARC would assist participating countries in building capacities for risk management, developing and approving contingency plans as well as monitoring the use of any ARC payouts", said Jean Ping, the Secretary General of the African Union, in a message to G8 countries, who actively support the ARC project.

These actions of capacity building, prevention and risk management of natural disasters would not be sustainable without involving the civil society in member countries. In Senegal, the Network of Parliamentarians for Disaster Risk Reduction is leading the fight against the effects of natural disasters impacting our country.

In the context of Senegal's potential participation in ARC, the government will organise a technical workshop to educate stakeholders about the ARC risk pooling concept, risk modeling and *Africa Risk View* software, and to share ideas on how ARC and the Government of Senegal could collaborate.

This workshop, organised under the patronage of Minister of Interior, will bring together technicians from the Ministries of Agriculture, Livestock, Environment, Economy and Finance, Interior, as well as the major technical and financial partners in Senegal, such as the European Union, the French Development Agency, the World Food Program, and the Japanese Cooperation.

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