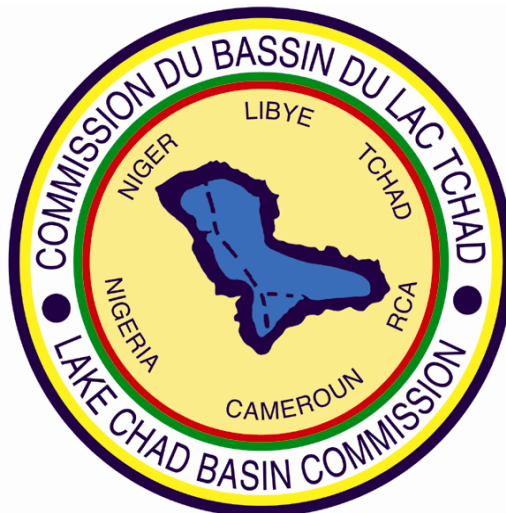


LAKE CHAD BASIN COMMISSION



**SPEECH
OF**

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AT THE HIGH LEVEL CONFERENCE ON AFRICA:

Towards a renewed partnership with Africa.

Organized by the European Parliament

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PROTOCOLS

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and great pleasure for me, to participate in this special occasion, “the High Level Conference on Africa: towards a renewed partnership with Africa” Organized by European Parliament.

I would like to express my gratitude to the President of the European Parliament and the High Representatives of the European Commission for inviting me to participate at this important gathering to present Lake Chad basin initiatives, challenges and opportunities during this roundtable.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Lake Chad, once known as “the Pale-Chadian Sea”, was the fourth biggest lake in Africa in 1963 with a surface area of 25 000 km². Situated in the Sahel region of Africa and bordered by four countries – Chad, Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon, and dependent on a basin that includes six countries covered by the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), including the Central African Republic and Libya, this lake was one of the largest bodies of fresh water on the African continent.

Lake Chad Basin belongs to the tropical lakes faced with the challenges of environmental degradation and poverty in a context of global warming and increasing population pressure. The area has high potential (food exporting hub, employment). Lake Chad and its ecosystems are of immense strategic relevance for the entire region. It provides in effect water and a livelihood to more than 30 million people, of which the majority earn their living through agriculture, animal husbandry and fishing. This region was also a food exporting hub, playing a key role for food security. The entire basin includes an estimated 47 million people.

Recognized by the Ramsar Convention, the Lake Chad is being classified a World Natural Heritage Site by UNESCO. The value of Lake Chad resides in the ecosystem services it provides, and these are particularly precious in a sahelo-saharan regional environment characterized by aridity and the erratic availability of water resources.

It is also a fragile and vulnerable socio-ecosystem, exposed to hydrological shifts, of which climate change is the key parameter, high population growth, poverty and insecurity. The Lake system is also highly vulnerable to a significant change in the water inflows from its tributary rivers (either up or down). The continuous shrinking of the lake, compromises all the activities on which the livelihood of Lake Chad people depend and by extension a threat to the food security and stability of the whole region. The drying-up of the Northern half of the Lake cause migration to the Southern shores, intensifying pressure on resources for agriculture, fishing, and livestock breeding in the rest of the lake area and related conflicts with spill over migration to Europe.

In 2014-16, the Lake Chad region was struck by extensive violence, associated with the Boko Haram movement, in the whole region. Million of persons have been displaced, trade has been disrupted and the regional economy destabilized. These challenges have strengthened the integrative dynamics developed in recent years between the States bordering the Lake: border agreements, joint mobilization and solidarity to restore security, and provide joint development projects to create employment and wealth. It is now expected to become more concrete and effective in the field of economic development to guarantee and sustain stability.

Today, thanks to the collective resolve of our sub-regional leaders, political and tactical support of our strategic partners and the efforts/ gallantry of our military and other security agencies, boko haram has been sufficiently degraded. The

terrorists are no longer in a position to hold territory or to wage large scale attacks as they used to do. However the remnants that roam the bushes are still capable of carrying out surprised attacks against isolated military and civilian targets in search of food, arms and other supplies. To remain in the headlines they use women and children under the influence of drugs to carry out suicide attacks in vulnerable areas.

The operationalization of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) two and a half years ago to wage war against the terrorists, changed the security architecture of the Lake Chad region and has yielded fruitful dividends as the region is now largely freed of boko haram elements.

With the support of the international community sustainable stabilization strategies are being developed to among other issues address the underlying drivers of armed groups, unemployment, poverty, migration, poor governance, water resources and environmental degradation management issues in the effort to stabilize the region to attract investors to partake in the creation of jobs to enable our youth to have hope for a better future and forget the option of migrating from the region as a post crisis all-inclusive stabilization program.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the context of climate change effects, the future is uncertain in this basin, population in the basin is expected to double in the next 30 years while future changes in precipitation are unknown and unpredictable. Thus, among the priorities in the Lake Chad region today, is to find ways and means of putting a stop to the gradual but fast drying-up of Lake Chad. Studies carried out by LCBC and its partners have shown that the present levels of Lake Chad have almost reached the limit of sustainable development in the plains of the major tributaries

of the Lake. Further depletion of the water resources would have catastrophic effects not only on the economy of the tributaries but also of the Lake; these effects would, to a large extent, be irreversible or they could be mitigated only at a high cost.

In order to assist the increasing populations and demand for improved livelihoods especially of the rural communities who are the most vulnerable and the policy makers to take decisions which will have long term developmental/environmental and social impacts, the Executive Secretariat of LCBC is currently carrying out studies on the untapped waters in the Congo Basin where it is available in large quantities to benefit the Lake Chad in accordance with the principles of international law, including the protocols agreed and those to be concluded between the riparian States.

However, it is also pertinent that concerns and issues that are continually being expressed regarding inter-basin water transfers should be appropriately addressed to guide policy and decision makers, particularly in LCBC member States. For instance, there is a lingering perception that water could be siphoned from Congo basin to support continued growth in Lake Chad basin, resulting in harm to the water resources, the economy, the environment and the people of the source basin. The project is being planned to be a win-win scheme for both the Congo basin and the Lake Chad basin and will involve all stake holders in the preparation and execution.

Let me also assure those who are skeptical about this project that the proposed project on inter-basin water transfer from Oubangui River to Lake Chad constitutes one of the water management strategies intended for addressing the challenges to save Lake Chad Basin, combined to other efforts done or to be done by the Commission in line with the Integrated Water Resource Management and the

Ecosystem Management Approach mentioned in the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) for the Lake Chad Basin adopted as a regional policy framework document. It is also said that in Africa more needs to be done in investing in the development of its water resources at all levels and for all uses. We know that most of our countries are not sufficiently prepared for climate change and have not succeeded in mitigating the floods and droughts cycles it causes because of lack of adequate data and statistics available on Climate Change and Variability. Thus, IBWT schemes for various purposes are now receiving increased interest as adaptation strategy to climate change; they exist on all continents and have a long history as a means of addressing the critical problems of water resources by transferring water from areas where it is relatively abundant to those water-scarce regions.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Global warming risks, combined with the current geopolitical crisis have prompted the preparation by LCBC of a Lake Chad Development and Climate Resilience Action Plan (for immediate, medium and long term actions), Emergency Program for youth empowerment and poverty alleviation for women as the most vulnerable groups, LCBC's five-year investment plan, as well as recent national planning documents for LCBC member States. Additional proposals such as the regional stabilisation strategy for areas affected by the boko haram insurgency in particular, and socio-economic rehabilitation projects generally are under preparation in order to restore hope and return to normalcy in the Lake Chad basin and achieve the LCBC Vision 2025.

I would like to conclude by stating that Africa's contribution to global warming is insignificant, yet Africa suffers the most from the negative effects of climate change as a consequence of global warming , thus I am appealing to the European parliament to continue to sustain its role of supporting the EU to provide the necessary support to Africa for the creation of development projects to create jobs and wealth for youth thus investing in the youth, mitigating migration and insecurity for Africa and Europe.

I am also calling on the International Community for urgent support, for immediate humanitarian assistance as we make efforts to return our refugees and internally displaced persons back to their communities.

To the private sector, opportunities abound in all the different sectors of agriculture, infrastructure, real estates for urban and semi-urban areas, mineral exploration and solar energy for them to invest on.

We are eager and willing to collaborate closely with all Development Partners who are willing to save the Lake Chad to revitalize the basin's ecosystem for sustainable livelihood, security and development thus empowering the people in the Lake Chad basin and curtail migration to Europe..

I wish to thank all here present for your kind attention.