



THE MBOUMBA CALL OF LOCAL ACTORS FOR ACCESS TO WATER, LAND AND EMPLOYMENT TO ENSURE PEACE IN THE SENEGAL RIVER BASIN

We, actors of the local socio-economic organization of the Senegal River Basin, representatives of users of natural resources in the fields of agriculture, forestry, fishing and livestock, custodians of culture and traditions, representatives of local authorities in the basin,

Gathered in Mboumba on February 26 and 27, 2022 as part of the Open Sahel Festival, at the invitation of El Hadj Baaba Maal, sponsor of the «Voice of the river, path to peace» initiative led by the Senegal River Basin Development Organization (OMVS) with the support of a consortium of partners,

Concerned about the impacts of climate change and the degradation of the ecosystems of the basin through which water flows, a source of life and stability for our rural economy, cradle of the proliferation of our cultures and our traditions,

Concerned by the increase in rivalries over access to water, land and natural resources, and by the deterioration of the security situation which is particularly affecting the Upper River Basin, the scene of violent local conflicts,

Aware that any vision of development and any response to the problems of the basin must be built on the fundamental values of our societies, built upon a solidarity that transcends the various regions and countries of the basin,

Aware of the merits of water and land resources as well as our communities in the basin, which for more than four centuries have lived together peacefully, finding the strength in their social cohesion in the socio-economic complementary production methods,

Conscious of the merits of our determined and engaged youth, who demand to be trained and accompanied in the development of their professional knowledge in line with the actual needs of the rural economy and the ecology of the basin,

Aware of the crucial role that women play in our societies in water and natural resources management, and in forging social cohesion, which requires their involvement in the decision making in these areas,

Aware of the particular role of the fishing community, bearers of traditional water knowledge, and mediators of relations between all the communities along the River, and whose interests must be defended through the protec-

tion of the right of fish reproduction, the development of spawning areas and the appropriate infrastructure for fish passage through OMVS dams,

Convinced that there is a path to peace and development based on the food security and sovereignty of the populations which will enhance the socio-economic potential of the Senegal River Basin, contributing strongly to local and national economies,

Convinced that this path is achieved the recognition of the role our basin communities in the control of natural resources, and consequently, development models must be designed through the consultation with and the empowerment of our communities, and in line with the evolution in our mode of socio-economic organization,

Aware that culture, innovation and finance are not mutually exclusive, and that innovative financing mechanisms responsive to local needs will provide solutions in the basin and can enhance traditional knowledge, including methods for preventing soil degradation which is strategic for adaptation to climate change,

Convinced of the urgency of walking down this path of peace and development in order to prevent the proliferation of socio-economic fragility areas in the basin, from which armed conflicts arise and tear the social bond between our brothers and our sisters in the Sahel region, and in order to counter the rural exodus in our basin,

Noting thanks to the Mboumba meeting the need for dialogue between local actors, institutions and experts, which is an essential key to designing a path for peace and development, noting the fundamental need for scientific evidence to guide our decisions and, therefore, the need to bring to the attention of our local authorities and our communities the challenges and opportunities for territorial development,

Welcoming, in this sense, the establishment of agropoles by the State of Senegal which organize in a decentralized form the sustainable and inclusive industrialization of our rural economy and calling upon the countries of the Senegal River basin to implement similar mechanisms

Taking note with interest of the evaluation of surface and underground water resources which are sufficient to support our rural development and which require the creation of infrastructures for the valuing of these waters,



Recognizing the structural importance of the OMVS Rural Electrification Fund to support our rural development, and welcoming any similar mechanism that could facilitate access to water and employment for our communities,

Noting with satisfaction and appreciation the willingness of high-level experts and the consortium of partners of the «Voice of the river, path to peace» initiative to support us in the implementation of the commitments that arise,

Recalling the scope of the 2003 Nouakchott Declaration on the strategic orientation framework for the OMVS, designed in particular to « structure and strengthen concerted management, and involving, in an iterative manner, all stakeholders in the basin, to guarantee legitimacy of the process », and providing in particular for the development of drinking water supply and sanitation services, the response to the demand for rural electrification, the development of agro-sylvopastoral activities, as well as the « implementation of micro-subsidies for income-generating activities in order to strengthen poverty reduction dynamics »,

Call on the leaders of the four countries within the Organisation for the Development of the Senegal River to :

- Implement, on the basis of the Basin Water Charter and National Water Codes, a Water Policy for rural development that defines the potential and means to develop land while ensuring territorial equity;

- Adopt the Senegal River Basin Land Charter aimed at harmonising land tenure tools and procedures at basin level; and provide the means to facilitate local land tenure agreements to meet the challenge of access to land for our communities;

- Support the functioning of, local water committees in all four OMVS countries and any political consultation platform that works towards equitable and sustainable water use;

- Introduce, while ensuring gender parity, the representation of local authorities, agro-sylvanian, livestock and fishermen's socio-professional organisations, and youth, in OMVS decision-making bodies, such as the Permanent Water Commission; and give them a voice in decision-making;

- Support and accompany, through sustainable technical and financial mechanisms, community initiatives and local entrepreneurship in the basin, with a view to enhancing our productive uses of water, meeting priority needs within production sectors and supporting the resilience strategies of our communities;

- Replicate and diversify meetings within the framework of cultural events, such as the Mboumba Open Sahel Festival, with a view to facilitating dialogue and commitments on socio-economic issues in the basin while ensuring follow-up of their implementation.



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This initiative is made possible thanks to the support of

