



RÉSEAU ASSOCIATIF DE DÉVELOPPEMENT DURABLE DES OASIS OASES ASSOCIATIONS NETWORK

On the occasion of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (South Africa / 2002), the network of associations oases of the Maghreb (Raddo) launched in August 2002

THE CALL OF OASES



Oases are Exemplary Ecosystems

Oases successfully control approximately **30 % of the landmass** along the extensive arid belt that runs from the Sahara to Mongolia and connects Africa to Asia. Oases shelter approximately **150 million people**, in environments defying the existence of all other living systems.

They are built upon rigorous management of scarce land and water resources, in symbiosis with date palm groves. They are arid environment agro-systems, crafted patiently by their inhabitants' societies into beautifully intricate and complex social, ecological and economic constructions.

In the face of climatic adversity and in an environment hostile to life, living processes successfully optimize interactions between cultural traditions, technical constraints, economic constraints and ecological potential.

Oases are therefore **living, time tested sustainable development models**, as well as unique reservoirs of expertise. They are as much a part of our human heritage as any other human creation safeguarded today.

Oases face severe threats from all sides, and are experiencing significant ongoing degradations as a result of an inappropriate development model built upon:

- Climatic deteriorations, and in particular worsening droughts and their consequences on the availability of the water that is the very wellspring upon which oases are built.
- Demographic pressures and urbanization, that are too acute to be absorbed by limited oasis ecosystem capacities.
- Widespread exclusion of oasis produce and business enterprises from economic transactions and commercial channels.
- Monopolization of the local goods commercialization channels by import-export businesses.
- Evolutions in lifestyles and consumer choices, and in particular the selection of manufactured produce over local foods and crafts.
- A status quo in property law, water law and agricultural law, which is leading to land fragmentation and the apparition of severe incongruities within these intricate organized systems whose very survival is contingent upon harsh limiting factors.
- Geographical isolation and remoteness.
- Inadequate consideration of oasis specificity by public policy, in particular in the areas of research, agriculture, education and continuing education.

All these factors are causing an unchecked loss of life force, in the form of capital flight and of the migration of younger generations away from these rural areas.

Deeming that they are being held ransom unjustly to an inappropriate and imposed development paradigm that threatens their very survival, yet **refusing to die**, the **oases appeal to the world** for the effective implementation of sustainable development.

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Concerning governance, Raddo oasis associations consider it imperative that:

- Oasis specificity be integrated into all areas of local development public policy, as well as into national and international public policy,
- All governing bodies respect oasis ways and customs.
- Oases be involved and participate in development policy decision-making at the local, national and international levels, as well as in the decentralization process
- Women take their rightful positions, and that this be facilitated through capacity reinforcement, the safekeeping of women's rights and social betterment.
- National and international public cooperation policies that support oases be implemented. And, that these policies ensure, in particular, that agricultural incomes be upheld.
- Oasis isolation be breached, through the establishment of specific organisms for oasis safekeeping and development.
- Scientific research be mobilized to resolve specific problems, such as Bayoud disease.

Concerning sustainable development, Raddo oasis associations consider it imperative that:

- Natural resources management be appropriately integrated into oasis management: through date palm management treating date palms as a protected species and a symbol of life in intra-desertic zones and, through water management implementing progressive water rates defined to respect the limitations inherent to oasis survival.
- Oases be considered specifically in the attribution of public development aid.
- The Conventions on Biodiversity, Climate Change and to Combat Desertification be immediately implemented, as they strongly concern oases.
- Appropriate, sustainable oasis tourism - respectful of the ecosystem and generating local income - be promoted.
- Local agenda 21 action plans addressing oases be establishment.
- Oasis culture transmission and awareness raising programs be created and included, in particular, in school programs and recreational youth activities.
- Clean and renewable energy generation technologies be promoted and installed.

The oasis associations refuse:

- Programmed oasis decline, oasis commoditization and oasis idealization.
- Marginal and insufficient oasis integration into key development projects and programs.
- Adverse competition from industrial agribusinesses operating in their vicinity.
- Monoculture projects incompatible with their environment.
- Abandonment.

Furthermore, the Raddo oasis associations consider imperative:

- The creation of an **Annual World Oasis Day** under the aegis of the United Nations.



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