



Notes from the round table “International action by local authorities & biodiversity” of the event “*African/European perspectives – Connecting development, climate and conservation actors*”

Description:

Today, the visible impacts of climate change and the loss of biodiversity represent a major challenge for local authorities. We need to combine global adaptation and conservation efforts and harmonise our local policies for the benefit of local populations. In this context, it is crucial to look at the most appropriate tools available to local authorities to meet these challenges. Decentralised cooperation, which involves partnerships between local authorities in different countries, is proving particularly effective. In Africa, for example, experience with this tool has shown that it can be a catalyst for expertise to benefit biodiversity and the climate. This round table explores how these partnerships facilitate the sharing of knowledge and technologies, and the implementation of concrete projects to promote biodiversity-climate resilience.

Moderation:

- **Virginie Rouquette**, General manager, Cités Unies France

Speakers:

- **Michèle Rubirola**, Vice-president of [CUF](#), First Deputy Mayor of Marseille
- **Ronan Dantec**, Senator for Loire-Atlantique and President of Climate Chance
- **Adja Aïssatou SY**, Programme coordinator, Observatoire Biodiversité et Aires Protégées Afrique de l'Ouest (OBAPAO)
- **Mamadou Diawara**, Executive Director, Guinée Ecologie
- **Virginie Bineau**, Director, [Guinée 44](#)
- **Guillaume Choisy**, Director, Agence l'Eau Adour-Garonne
- **Mathilde Leymarie**, Project Manager LIFE Biodiversité, [Bordeaux Métropole](#)

Notes:

| Speaker | Subject |
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| Michèle Rubirola | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Marseille, a coastal city rich in biodiversity, is home to a number of natural treasures, including the Parc National des Calanques and its 54km of coastline.● In 2021, Marseille hosted the IUCN World Conservation Congress, bringing together 10,000 participants and producing 148 resolutions and recommendations.● Local biodiversity is rich but threatened, with endemic habitats and species such as posidonia.● Marseille has developed a strategy to protect its biodiversity by 2021, including the creation of a red list of ecosystems with the French IUCN committee.● International cooperation: Partnerships with cities such as Gorée (Senegal) and initiatives such as Smilo (landscape biodiversity label for the Frioul islands). |



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Commitment through the “One Health” programme, for a greener, fairer and more sustainable city. Mobilising young people through mobility programmes to partner countries. ● Working with AFD (the French Development Agency) to protect island and marine environments, in line with the SDGs. ● The need to link biodiversity and climate in local policies, as the two are inseparable. |
| Ronan Dantec | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The importance of finding ways for all the players to act in a coordinated way on the ground. ● Presentation of the project “Biodiversity corridors in Guinea”, supported by AFD and launched by Bordeaux. This project aims to integrate biodiversity and water issues in a region of critical biodiversity. ● Corridor mapping: Creation of a map of linked biodiversity areas to avoid geographical, cultural and genetic fragmentation. Involvement of local communities and institutions in concrete conservation and development actions. ● Key figures: 60,000 hectares involved, capturing around 300,000 tonnes of CO2 per year, with potential revenues of €15 million. ● Contractualisation phase with the Guinean authorities to validate the mapping of stakeholders (105 projects and 100 stakeholders identified). |
| Adja Aïssatou Sy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● OBAPAO (Observatoire de la biodiversité en Afrique de l'Ouest) was created as part of the European Union's ACP biodiversity programme. Since its launch in 2020, the observatory has reached a stage of maturity and is playing a key role in supporting the biodiversity policies of the 15 West African countries. ● One of OBAPAO's missions is to set up capacity-building activities for local players in the field, to equip them with the tools and knowledge they need to protect biodiversity. ● A major challenge is the observatory's lack of legal status, which limits its sustainability. Institutional capacity building is essential to ensure the long-term viability of conservation efforts. ● OBAPAO also emphasises the use of standardised information systems for biodiversity inventories. These systems make it possible to collect accurate and reliable data, which is essential for assessing the state of ecosystems. ● One of OBAPAO's major contributions is the creation of a capacity index and ecosystem health indicator, in collaboration with a Belgian coalition and the IUCN. This tool makes it possible to measure biodiversity loss at different scales, and to integrate economic and ecological data provided by various local stakeholders. ● Finally, OBAPAO insists on the vital role of local authorities in implementing public environmental policies. The natural capital provided by ecosystems, particularly in Sahelian countries prone to desertification, needs to be protected in a sustainable way, as restoring these environments is costly and even impossible in some regions. |
| Mamadou Diawara | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Director of Guinée Ecologie, is a biodiversity conservation NGO. ● Guinea: 300 km of coastline under heavy mining pressure. Participation in the creation of the Tristao Islands marine protected area. ● A project to protect mangroves and support small-scale fishing, which is essential for local communities, particularly women. ● Restoration of 1,400 hectares of mangroves, with support for women in the sustainable management of resources and the development of economic |



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| | <p>activities (salt production, fish smoking).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The importance of decentralised cooperation in supporting these initiatives and mobilising financial resources to protect biodiversity. |
| Virginie Bineau | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guinée 44 is an association founded 30 years ago by the Loire-Atlantique département to support decentralised cooperation projects with the Kindia region in Guinea. Today, Nantes Métropole is the main player in this cooperation, following the withdrawal of the département.• Historically, Guinée 44 has worked on agricultural and rural development, as well as access to water and sanitation. Today, the focus is on protecting the environment, in relation to biodiversity issues.• Guinea 44 also runs awareness-raising and training initiatives in schools in Guinea and France, to educate the younger generation about the challenges of biodiversity.• Guinea is a country with complex governance and partial decentralisation. This poses challenges, as local elected representatives often lack training, particularly in rural communes.• Guinea 44 supports local authorities in the implementation of local development plans, in line with climate, environmental and biodiversity issues. These plans must be coherent, inclusive and firmly rooted in local realities.• Decentralised cooperation plays a crucial role in supporting local authorities over the long term, as resources and financial means are often limited. It is therefore essential to have intermediary players, such as Guinée 44, to ensure that projects are implemented on the ground.• Another major challenge is transparency in the mining sector in Guinea. Guinea 44 highlights the need for local stakeholders to better understand the implications of mining projects and to strengthen their capacity to demand social and environmental compensation. This includes land management and the distribution of financial benefits from mining activities.• The work on improved stoves to reduce wood consumption is a concrete example of Guinea 44's commitment to sustainable resource management. The project also involves building the capacity of local elected representatives and public services to anticipate the consequences of current uses on the future of these areas. |
| Guillaume Choisy | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The project led by Guillaume Choisy concerns the restoration of wetlands in West Africa, a crucial issue for biodiversity and the management of water resources.• A key initiative is the Senegal River programme, where a basin diagnostic system has been put in place to effectively manage water resources, protect biodiversity areas and improve local livelihoods. This project is part of a drive to rehabilitate wetlands, which are diverse habitats rich in species.• This project is of regional importance because it concerns the protection of biodiversity in critical areas such as Guinea, which is a major source of major sub-regional rivers.• In Mauritania, efforts have been made to combine the protection of biodiversity with local policies for rational livestock rearing and regional planning, creating a more sustainable local economy that is consistent with conservation issues.• The 1% Water programme, which consists of allocating 1% of the budget of French local authorities to water access projects in developing countries, has been identified as a major lever for action to manage aquatic environments and protect ecosystems. |



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects in West Africa, such as those on the Senegal River and in Mauritania, demonstrate the importance of decentralised cooperation, where several local authorities work together to implement more coherent and effective actions. |
| Mathilde Leymarie | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bordeaux Métropole, made up of 28 municipalities, is supporting the LIFE Biodiv Resilience project, a European programme that funds concrete actions in the field of ecological restoration and biodiversity. The project comprises five restoration actions, divided between urban and rural areas. These include the agro-ecological restoration of degraded land, the renaturation of watercourses and the reduction of noise pollution. These actions have a dual dimension: they aim to restore biodiversity, while at the same time providing ecosystem services that benefit local residents. For example, the renaturation of watercourses not only restores aquatic ecosystems but also reduces the risk of flooding. The financial aspect is also an important pillar of these projects: by investing in ecological restoration, local authorities can obtain long-term returns in terms of ecosystem services, which benefit the community and local infrastructure. The project is funded by the Région Nouvelle-Aquitaine, the Agence de l'eau Adour-Garonne and the European Union's LIFE programme, reflecting the multi-partner and inter-regional dimension of the initiative. Bordeaux Métropole is also putting the emphasis on sharing experiences: for each of the actions undertaken, failures and successes are analysed and disseminated, to inspire other local authorities through toolkits available in French and English. This enables inter-community cooperation within the EU, with the aim of promoting similar practices in other European territories. |
| Virginie Rouquette | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conclusion: Thanks to the City of Bordeaux and Climate Chance for organising the round table. CUF is committed to strengthening the capacity of local authorities to act on the global issues of climate and biodiversity. Need for greater recognition of local authorities in international bodies for their crucial role in achieving the SDGs. |

A key quote from each speaker:

| Speaker | Verbatim, key phrases, operational proposals |
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| Michèle Rubirola | "The importance of data and shared data." |
| Ronan Dantec | "Today's climate-biodiversity-environment issues between Europe and Africa are much closer than is often assumed." |
| Adja Aïssatou Sy | "The cost of restoring an ecosystem is far greater than preserving our natural capital." "Civil society is an essential link in the implementation of public policy." |
| Virginie Rouquette | "The issue of decentralisation is essential, in all its dimensions. The strength of decentralised cooperation is that it can adapt and act over the long term, enabling us to overcome local and national crises. It also allows us to think in a reciprocal way, to give impetus to new public policies in France." |

Question and answer session with the audience :



Suzanne Cotillon, Biotope Guinée :

- The **Combo programme**, implemented by Biotope Guinée with Guinée Ecologie, aims to integrate **biodiversity protection** into **Guinean public policies**.
- Before 2019, there was no legal obligation for mining companies to carry out **impact assessments**. Since then, Biotope has been working with the Guinean government to strengthen legislation and introduce biodiversity requirements into environmental impact assessments.
- The importance of **involving local communities** in conservation projects, because biodiversity is not limited to protected areas. The Combo project, and other programmes such as **Biodiversity 2030**, aim to involve these communities in the management and conservation of ecosystems.

Clara Fontana (Parcs régionaux de France)

- **The areas classified as protected areas** in France benefit from international and European cooperation. A project in Guinea, near Sierra Leone, is funded by the World Bank and aims to create **16 protected forests**.
- A major obstacle: Guinean local authorities do not have the resources to carry out such projects on their own. **The code for protected areas** in Guinea is currently being drafted, and it is essential that local communities are involved from the outset, particularly in terms of awareness-raising and expropriation.

Tania (ONG Migrations et Climat)

- **Biodiversity** is seen as a concern of the North, but in local communities the issues are often more immediate, such as **feeding** themselves or adapting to climate change.
- Although civil laws are in place, **customary laws** continue to be forgotten in the management of local resources, and this has an impact on the most vulnerable populations.

Mamadou Diawara's reaction (Guinée Ecologie)

- **Local populations** are now more aware of the need for sustainable resource management.
- It is important to promote **endogenous practices**, because historically, some communities already had natural preservation mechanisms, for example by protecting **sacred forests**.

Mireille (Action contre la Faim)

- From a **humanitarian** point of view, it is crucial to develop an approach that integrates both the **conservation of ecosystems** and the improvement of **living conditions for local populations**.
- The example of **mangrove protection** in Guinea shows how local populations, although aware of environmental issues, need to be involved in the decision-making process. **Guinée Ecologie's** work with local communities has resulted in a **high level of involvement**, thanks to the direct economic benefits for them.

Aude Fleumy (Les Deux Arguins)



- The city of **Marseille** has cooperation agreements that always respect the principle of reciprocity, i.e. working together on priority areas such as **gender equality, international mobility, biodiversity** and **health**.
- For example, in **Koumbay** (Cameroon), the inhabitants are cutting down the forest in an uncontrolled way for heating and cooking, which is causing major flooding. Marseille has offered to intervene within its remit, in particular to support the fight against **drought**.
- Another crucial point is the role of the **diaspora**, such as the Comorians in Marseille, who could play an active role in these projects.

Ronan Dantec (Climate Chance)

- In France, there is a real **weakening of decentralised cooperation**, mainly due to crises and an inward-looking attitude. Local authorities are reluctant to allocate international resources when they themselves lack the means.
- And yet, in the face of major environmental challenges, **decentralised cooperation** needs to move away from the logic of **development aid** and adopt a logic of mutual benefit. This means using international cooperation to solve common problems, such as climate change, with benefits for all parties involved. This **change** is necessary to make cooperation more effective.

Virginie Rouquette (CUF)

- Today, a local authority that commits to **decentralised cooperation** is demonstrating its **courage** in an increasingly complex world that is turning in on itself.
- Global issues such as climate change and pandemics, such as **Covid-19**, remind us that what happens elsewhere is our direct concern. It is therefore crucial that **decentralised cooperation** projects are well conceived and implemented on a systemic basis, in order to meet these transnational challenges.

Anonymous participant

- Although we are in favour of **decentralised cooperation**, it is important to take into account the **poverty** of African populations and the fact that Africa's **CO2 emissions** are much lower than those of Western countries.
- It is essential to set up projects that include a **holistic and high-quality approach**, as without this, these initiatives will have little impact. **Decentralised cooperation** must be accompanied by the **sharing of best practice, local capacity-building** and appropriate financial resources.

Conclusion

- The crucial issue is to educate people about biodiversity issues. Understanding precedes action, and this is not just an African issue.
- Decentralised cooperation is an important lever, but it must involve all local players. It's not about giving lessons, but about sharing experiences and learning together.