



**ANDRÉ KANGA FOUAMOUHOUE, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE AFRICAN CENTRE OF METEOROLOGIC APPLICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT (ACMAD)**

## «ACMAD SUPPORTS AFRICAN COUNTRIES TO BETTER PREPARE AND RESPOND TO DISASTERS»

*In the context of global warming, meteorology is an indispensable science. Africans need to monitor the weather in their continent. These last years, trends are worrying: droughts follow floods in diverse regions on Africa. What will be Africa's future climate? How will it affect Africans' economy? What impact on their society? Agriculture is certainly the first victim. A non performing Africa's agriculture is the recipe for further catastrophes in Africa, given the demographic explosion. One may see more climate-refugees.*

*What is the state of Africa's climate? What must Africans do to counter the adversity of climate change in their continent? Nobody can answer those questions better than Mr. André Kanga Fouamouhoue, the Cameroonian who is Africa's top meteorologist. Director General of the African Centre of Meteorologic Application for Development (ACMAD), he attended the 52nd Session of the Economic Commission for Africa, Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, in Marrakech, Morocco, from 20 to 26 March 2019. He travelled from Niamey, Niger, where ACMAD is headquartered, to the Moroccan city, to advocate the renewed importance of African meteorology. ACMAD needs more money, more resources, to fulfill its crucial mission for today's and moreover tomorrow's Africans. Hommes d'Afrique magazine is happy to offer to its readers, the following interview of the ACMAD's Director General.*

**You are attending the 52nd Session of the Economic Commission for Africa, Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, from 20 March 2019 to 26 March 2019, in Marrakech, Morocco. What is that your interest and that of ACMAD in that conference?**

Socio-economic development sectors like



agriculture and water across Africa are impacted by weather and climate disasters. Our common interest is to build resilience by providing weather and climate services to reduce weather and climate-related impacts on sustainable development. This effort is a direct contribution to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal #13 on combating climate change and other related goals including on poverty and hunger.

Improving GDP growth assessment and outlooks using weather and climate monitoring and forecasting products is a strategic axis of intervention under the expected UNECA and ACMAD cooperation.

**Few Africans know ACMAD. How would you present ACMAD to them? What is ACMAD's positive contribution to Africa's development?**

ACMAD was established through the resolution 540 of UNECA Conference of Ministers in 1985 following the devastating impacts of the 1970s and 1980s droughts in Africa. Since 1992, it is headquartered in Niamey, Niger. Its objectives are to provide continental weather and climate information and act as the centre of excellence for the applications of meteorology for Africa's development.

ACMAD provides continental weather and climate watches, develops advanced methods, tools, processes and systems for monitoring, forecasting and long-term climate scenario provision, build capacity of National Meteorological and Hydrological Services on monitoring and forecasting at national level, support and strengthen user interfaces for weather and climate information, develop and deliver climate outlooks for disaster risk management including humanitarian action planning and practices at continental and regional levels.

**In the global debate against global warming, how is ACMAD helping to build Africa's position?**

ACMAD leads the provision every year of an annual state of Africa's climate report and supports African Initiators at UNFCCC Conference of the Parties every year since 2015. The centre provides assessments of warming levels and rates over Africa, which is well above the global icing levels. The centre also gives quantitative information on the seriousness of the climate change threat to Africa's economy and society.

Africa is the continent that has contributed the less to global warming, yet it is the continent that will suffer the most. What is ACMAD's position about this injustice?

The most important position is to organize and implement adaptation and mitigation frameworks established with emphasis on Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) negotiated in the Paris agreement.

ACMAD publishes reports titled: "The State of Climate in Africa." The most recent of those reports is the 2017 one. That 2017 report highlights: "The year 2017 was the fourth warmest year on record over the African land masses since 1950. The year 2017 was the warmest of the La Nina years on record over Africa since 1950. Well above average precipitation with floods were recorded over most parts of West Africa, with mudslides and significant loss of lives reported in Sierra Leone. Drought events were observed over parts of Eastern Africa and precipitation deficit recorded over Cape Town, resulting in critical water shortage and rationing. The drought was observed over parts of northern Morocco and adjacent areas in Algeria with significant impacts reported during the 2017/18 winter season. Below average tropical cyclone activities were observed in the southwestern Indian Ocean with 3 storms and 3 cyclones compared to about 4 storms and 5 cyclones on average."

Those are devastating catastrophes. Who is responsible? How can Africans combat them? What is the amount of the resources needed for that combat? The responsibilities are global but differentiated among nations. Climate adaptation and resilience, climate mitigation are high-level policy options to combat climate change. Recent assessments indicate that several billions of US dollars will be needed to tackle climate change in Africa by the 2020s.

Since the 2017 report, has the state of climate in Africa improved? Are we witnessing an improving trend or not? Trends information supports the persistence of floods, drought and heat waves with an increase in warming levels and rates across Africa during the coming decades.

There's a fear that Africa's forests are shrinking while deserts are progressing, the Saharan and the Kalahari deserts extending southbound and northbound respectively. Is this

fear justified?

Assessments support land and forest shrinking and degradation. Programmes like the Great Green Wall are responses to improve the situation.

Is ACMAD satisfied with the way African governments manage their forests, in particular, the Congo Basin Forest?

Reforestation and fight against forest degradation are areas needing investments.

One of ACMAD's major programs is SAWIDRA. What are SAWIDRA's objectives? How, when and with what resources will you reach those objectives?

The objective is to contribute to building resilience to disasters in Africa by strengthening weather and climate centres, improving access to data, providing high performance computing capacity for modeling and forecasting, providing services for disaster resilience and strengthening interactions with

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disaster management, humanitarian agencies and other socio-economic sectors facing negative impacts of weather and climate events.

Meteorology is a highly scientific field. To succeed in that field qualified human resources are the first prerequisite. In terms of quality and quantity, what is the state of Meteorology studies and research in Africa? Are they sufficiently attractive to the best African students? How many Meteorologists does Africa train per year? Is that enough? How to boost that number?

Research capacity in Africa needs improvements by attracting and better motivating the young workforce. In Africa, it has a great potential. The structural adjustment programmes halted the training and

recruitment of meteorologists in several African countries. Recently, the situation has been improving, given the deepening of the climate crisis. Expectations are high for more staff during the upcoming years. International cooperation on capacity development in Africa is a major priority.

A second prerequisite to succeed in meteorology is adequate equipment.

What do you say about African countries' meteorology equipment? What is ACMAD's annual budget? Who contributes to it? For what percentage? The observing networks are currently sub-optimal. However, advanced technologies (automatic weather stations, commercial aviation soundings, satellite observations...) are being applied to upgrade observation and data exchange infrastructure in Africa. SAWIDRA project will support the installation and the use of satellite data collection and retransmission systems in four regions of Africa. Over the past few years, the budget often fluctuates between one and two million US dollars per year. UNECA member countries who ratified the constitution of the Centre are members with assessed annual contributions based on GDP. Twenty-four (24) countries have ratified the constitution. Efforts are being made to mobilize contributions and support for countries to ratify the constitution. Partnership and collaboration with AUC and UNECA are being strengthened to facilitate advocacy and resource mobilization. From countries and development partners.

The « D » in ACMAD means « Development. » How does ACMAD define development? Is Africa on the right development track? Why?

Because weather and climate impact major development sectors like agriculture, ACMAD provides monitoring and forecasting information for climate resilient development planning and action.

If you were to advocate for more resources to ACMAD, what would you say to African governments, businesses and civil society?

Prevention and preparation against disasters are better than post-disaster response and recovery. Past drought in 2015 in southern Africa reduced by half the hydropower production capacity in some countries and led to significant inflation in commodity prices. Standing at the continental level, ACMAD supports African countries to better prepare and respond to disasters, and optimize benefits in case of favorable weather and climate for development sectors.