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**CONTRIBUTION OF THE SAHARA AND SAHEL
OBSERVATORY TO THE FIRST MEETING OF THE
COMMITTEE OF DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION**

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ABSTRACT

The countries of circum-Sahara Africa adversely affected by desertification, their sub-regional organisations, their Northern partners and the concerned international organisations of the United Nations System have created the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) in May 1992.

OSS's mission is conducted within the international framework of the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) and Agenda 21 and aims to favour the development and the optimisation of its African partners' information wealth, for an optimal use of the means for combating desertification.

Among the **OSS programmes**, the following ones are more relevant to the Committee of Development Information /

- **Contribution to the implementation of a mechanism for the observation, monitoring and evaluation of desertification (DOSE)** which presently comprises three components :

- ◊ The Programme ROSELT : The Long Term Ecological Monitoring Observatories Network (ROSELT). ROSELT is a network of observatories located in areas representing the main bioclimatic zones, major ecosystems and various natural resources uses within OSS region. The goal of ROSELT is to collect and exploit ground and remote sensing data on the basis of harmonised and reliable methods in order to improve the basic knowledge on desertification mechanism, elaborate indicators on the causes and effects of desertification and on impact of management policies, provide products contributing to the rational management of natural resources, ensure training and demonstration duties.

For the first time, ROSELT brings together African countries involved in the implementation of a common transborder monitoring tool for the circum-Sahara area at a general level (OSS's region) focusing on national, sub-regional and regional interests.

- ◊ The programme IMAGES : In order to strengthen exchanges in the OSS region, the main objective of the IMAGES programme is to provide the different African data processing centres located in the OSS area with standard tools and methods to work out low resolution satellite images acquired by sensors such as NOAA/AVHRR and Spot 4/VEGETATION. This programme offers technical support to develop operational applications involving products derived from low resolution images, in order to help local technical and decision-making staff with critical matters such as food security, management of natural resources, environment monitoring...

With this aim in view, a standard data pre-processing software (the SPACE II/OSS software) was developed for the OSS region and installed in several African Centres. Its adaptation to the pre-processing of the VEGETATION data is in progress. Pilot projects are about to be implemented in partnership with centres in order to develop products and services derived from the pre-processed data.

- ◊ A methodological study on the integration of satellite data (high and low resolution) in a global system for desertification monitoring in circum-sahara Africa.

- **Initiation of the concept and support to the implementation of systems for the circulation of information on desertification (SID).**

The objective of the SIDs is to facilitate access to the data and information required for the implementation of the CCD Action Programmes at the national, sub-regional and regional levels. They are built as a series of items accessible in dedicated kiosks through the use of Internet services : Institutional kiosk, thematic electronic forum, virtual library and cartotheque, metadata bases. Prototypes have been developed at national and regional levels and are in progress at sub-regional level.