



**DECLARATION OF THE SECOND ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL
FORUM ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LAKE CHAD
REGION
23 - 25 MAY 2023
NIAMEY, NIGER REPUBLIC**

The 2nd edition of the Annual International Forum on the Development of the Lake Chad Region was organised by the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) in partnership with the governments of Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria. The Forum took place from 23 to 25 May 2023 in Niamey, Niger. In attendance were over 300 participants representing stakeholders working in the Lake Chad Region, including governmental institutions and agencies, Civil society organisations such as women and youth associations, traditional and religious leaders, experts from development projects and programmes, and research institutions and universities of the Lake Chad Region.

The Forum discussed the status of the basin in terms of sustainable natural resources development, climate resilience, mobility and regional integration for peace and stability.

Preamble:

1. Recognising that the vulnerability of the Lake Chad Region to multiple security risks, such as conflicts and livelihood insecurity, is worsened by climate change with consequences on natural resources and well-being. The Far North region of Cameroon, the Hadjer Lamis and Lake provinces of Chad, the Diffa Region of Niger, as well as the States of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa in Nigeria, are particularly considered most devastated by the ongoing security challenges

caused by non-state armed groups.

2. Considering that shared historical and socio-cultural interconnections intensified by economic (commercial and trading) interactions in the region are challenged by weak mobility across the countries that comprise the Lake Chad Basin.

3. Recalling that the Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of the Areas of the Lake Chad Basin affected by the Boko Haram crisis, which was officially adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) in August 2018 and endorsed in December 2018 by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (PSC-AU), aims to address the root causes of the conflict and ensure the long-term stabilisation, recovery and resilience of the region.

4. Acknowledging the tremendous efforts of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and the defence and security forces in the national portions of the basin, as well as those of the local communities, leading to gradual improvement in the security situation and progressive return of displaced populations to their ancestral homes.

5. Conscious that achieving sustainable peace and development in the basin requires effective and continuous coordination of humanitarian, peace, and development actors at the local, national, regional, and international levels, which is critical for effective regional integration.

6. Recognising the invaluable contributions of development partners in the Lake Chad Basin in supporting projects and programmes that promote stability, recovery, and resilience in the region, as well as the role of academic and research institutions in generating knowledge that enhances peace, stability, and long-term development.

The Second Annual International Forum on the Development of the Lake Chad Region adopts the following conclusions:

Conclusions

1. Participants expressed their appreciation for the efforts of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) in promoting transboundary collaboration between Governmental, Technical and Financial Partners, and Civil Society Organisations in the implementation of the Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of the Areas of the Lake Chad Basin affected by the Boko-Haram Crisis. They also commended the invaluable contributions and commendable efforts of the various Lake Chad Basin region governments and the MNJTF to stabilise, secure, and improve mobility, trade, and community resilience.

2. Participants urged Member States to take comprehensive actions to enhance protection and respond to the most urgent needs of refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and other affected populations in the region.

3. Participants encouraged member states to continue and increase efforts at empowering civil society organisations focusing on women, youth, and vulnerable groups so that they can play a stronger role in decision-making.

4. Participants emphasised the importance of taking a more local approach, such as collaborating directly with local leaders and communities and providing opportunities and services to them. They underscored the need for people at the centre of decision-making to work towards reducing needs, risk, and vulnerability and involving civil society organisations, international financial institutions, and the private sector as critical actors in the search for sustainable development solutions in the Lake Chad Basin. They remarked that funding from international partners should be provided in a flexible, multi-annual manner to allow for an effective transition from humanitarian assistance to sustainable development.

5. Participants acknowledged the need to respond to the Boko Haram crisis more effectively using local practices and knowledge. They emphasised the importance of engaging traditional and religious leaders in the communities from the beginning. They recognised the importance of collaborating with local partners and discussed ways to support localisation and strengthen local response capacities to climate change and food insecurity.

6. They stressed that the challenges in the region could not be solved by military means alone and that a comprehensive approach that addresses underlying issues such as poverty, lack of education and opportunities, and poor governance is critical.

Participants formulated the following recommendations during the Forum:

1. Member States of the Lake Chad Basin region need to identify new strategic mechanisms to make the Lake Chad Basin a viable and secured economic space. They should strengthen and sustain their support to the MNJTF to ensure the consolidation of security gains. The MNJTF should also strengthen community outreach activities through multiple civil-military cooperation interventions.
2. Member States should further strengthen the role of LCBC in promoting crosscutting and transboundary approaches and interventions in the basin.
3. LCBC should collaborate with Member States to improve investments in

interconnectivity, especially in the sustainability of roads, and remove barriers to the movement of people in the Lake Chad Basin.

4. Member States should support traditional and religious leaders in their efforts to restore trust between people and the government. They should develop strategies to improve coordination and collaboration, strengthen their capacities, and facilitate knowledge sharing for improved social cohesion in the LCB.
5. Researchers in the Lake Chad Basin should capitalise on existing resources, including local knowledge, to generate information leading to irreversible changes in good governance and resilience, connectivity, trade, and natural resource management.
6. Regarding the challenge of climate change, there is a need to support better the capacity of local, national, and regional institutions in collecting and managing data for effective predictions and planning.
7. Governments and donors must increase flexible funding mechanisms for disaster preparedness and anticipatory action, using forecast-based financing where appropriate to support resilience and prevent crises.