

At COP21, Africans aim to restore 100 million hectares of forest

December 6 2015



An exhibition about the Great Green Wall project anchors the Chad booth at the COP21 United Nations Conference on climate change, running through December 11 2015 in Paris. Campaigners on December 2, 2015 pointed a finger at the rich for dangerous warming of the planet as negotiators from 195 nations fought a grinding battle over the text of a pact to avert climate disaster.

A coalition of African countries and donors unveiled an ambitious initiative on the sidelines of a crunch UN climate conference Sunday to

restore 100 million hectares (250 million acres) of degraded and deforested land by 2030.

Called the African Restoration Initiative (AFR100), the project aims to nurture the regrowth of forests that would become a powerful "carbon sink," absorbing climate-altering carbon dioxide and providing a livelihood for the rural poor.

Ten African [countries](#), nine financial partners and 10 technical-support partners have pledged support.

Backers include the African Union (AU), the German ministry for economic cooperation and development, and the World Resources Institute (WRI), a US nonprofit group.

"The scale of these new restoration commitments is unprecedented," said Wanjira Mathai, chair of the Green Belt Movement which is seeking to combat desertification and forest degradation in Africa, and daughter of the movement's founder, Nobel Peace laureate Wangari Maathai.

"I have seen restoration in communities both large and small across Africa, but the promise of a continent-wide movement is truly inspiring. Restoring landscapes will empower and enrich rural communities while providing downstream benefits to those in cities. Everybody wins."

WRI said 10 African countries had agreed to join the AFR100 initiative: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Niger, Rwanda, Togo and Uganda.

These countries have already committed to restore more than 30 million hectares, "and partners, including the World Bank, are earmarking more than \$1 billion (920 million euros) in development finance and \$540 million in private-sector impact investment to support these activities,"

the WRI said in a statement.

The AFR100 initiative also backs the 2011 Bonn Declaration of restoring 150 million hectares of land by 2020, and the 2014 New York Declaration on Forests, which extends the objective to 350 million hectares by 2030.

The scheme was announced on the sidelines of a conference of the 195-nation UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris.

After a rest day, negotiations will resume on Monday with the aim of forging a post-2020 pact by Friday to roll back emissions of greenhouse gases—the first time that rich and poor countries will stand in the same arena of commitments.

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