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Drought Preparedness and Management Training Seminar Conducted for West Africa

All of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) member countries of western Africa were represented at a seminar conducted in Banjul, The Gambia, 4–9 September 1995. The *Training Seminar on Drought Preparedness and Management for Western Africa* was conducted to improve awareness of drought and appropriate mitigation and preparedness technologies to reduce impacts. The seminar was organized by WMO and sponsored by WMO and the UN Sudano-Sahelian Office.

Main lecturers of the workshop were Dr. Donald Wilhite of the International Drought Information Center and Professor E. O. Oladipo of the Department of Geography, Ahmado Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria. Participants also made presentations on their experiences at the national level in drought monitoring and mitigation.

In the conclusions adopted by seminar participants, the following needs were noted:

- Increased awareness and understanding of the economic, social, and environmental impacts and vulnerability associated with drought in West Africa.
- Increased knowledge of alternative assessment, mitigation, and response strategies and available methodologies for improving the present level of drought preparedness in West Africa.
- Research to address effective means of drought mitigation.
- A better understanding of the scientific issues associated with climate change as well as desertification and the role of climate in this process.
- A defined role for international and regional organizations in reducing vulnerability to drought in West Africa.
- A regional climate/drought network.

Workshop participants also adopted the following recommendations:

- Meteorological and hydrological services should actively participate in the national action program elaborated in their representative countries in the context of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification.
- Develop and reinforce the research capacity at the national and subregional levels, including the development and reinforcement of appropriate institutional capacities, particularly in countries where research infrastructure is weak. To do this, African researchers should fully use existing centers such as the African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development, AGRHYMET, and the DMCs. The developed countries should make their centers as accessible as possible to researchers from developing countries.
- Inventory and use technologies and traditional/local knowledge and know-how to mitigate drought.
- Enlist the assistance of international organizations involved in activities to combat desertification and mitigate drought (such as UNDP/UNSO, UNEP, WMO, UNESCO, and FAO) to support the efforts of countries in the region to develop and implement appropriate drought mitigation strategies.
- Define and establish mechanisms to facilitate information exchange—in particular, the experience of countries in the region in the field of drought management (planning, monitoring, and forecasting).
- Invite ECOWAS, in collaboration with subregional organizations such as CILSS, to facilitate the exchange of information and lessons learned.

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