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Fighting the causes of the drying-up of Lake Chad

May 2015, by Tassilo von Droste zu Huelshoff

Lake Chad has made headlines since violent terrorist attacks have shaken the region in recent years. Whereas efforts have concentrated on increasing military presence and cooperation in the region, too little has been done to address the root causes of violence and instability, and on dealing with a crucial issue in the Sahel: water management. On May 28 2015, an audit report on water management in the Lake Chad basin was submitted to the Chadian President Idriss Déby. Under the auspices of the African Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (AFROSAI) and with support from GIZ, the Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) of Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon have looked at the human causes of the drying-up of a unique ecosystem, and propose concrete recommendations to address poor water resource management at local, national and sub-regional level. This is the first time on the African continent that a joint environmental audit is presented to authorities. Please read the article below and watch this short film for more information (6:39): [Saving Lake Chad](#)

Dougia has seen better days. The hotel 90 kilometers north of N'Djamena overlooks the Chari River and used to attract tourists who wanted to discover the region. From here the auditors had planned to explore the lake one last time, as they had done before. However, now this is impossible – Boko Haram, an extremist islamist group in Nigeria, poses too much of a security threat. While the focus on responding to the increasing number of terrorist attacks has been to enhance security and military cooperation – too little has been done to address one of the root causes of the problem: weak water resource management at a national and cross-border level.

The environmental audit reports compiled jointly by the auditors seeks to address an issue that has been discussed for many decades: the drying-up of Lake Chad. “It’s never too late”, is one of Fatimé Assarah’s favourite sentences when she thinks about this project that she launched three years ago. The Chadian woman has been coordinating the audit since its inception, in cooperation with AFROSAI, and with the support of GIZ through its

Good Financial Governance in Africa programme led by Dr. Matthias Witt. The SAIs of the four bordering countries have evaluated the actions conducted at national and at sub-regional level by the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) for the preservation of the lake's resources.

All departments and public agencies concerned with the problem of water management in the basin (water, environment, fisheries, agriculture, economy, energy) were audited to evaluate the effectiveness of water use control and monitoring measures, as well as the application of existing regulations.

With the support of GIZ, the auditors received advice and guidance from a diverse range of experts in environmental matters and auditing coming from Morocco, Tanzania, Kenya, Belgium and Germany among others.

In a region where temperatures and evaporation are among the highest in the world, managing the resource effectively needs to be a priority. It is a largely rural area and most jobs directly depend on the availability of water. Conflicts can be triggered by droughts, which may lead to migrations and disputes over land. Joblessness and limited economic perspectives are all too common.



The launch of the Joint Environmental Audit Report of Lake Chad took place in N'Djamena from 28 to 31 May 2015.

At the handover ceremony to President Déby, the German ambassador in Chad, Mr Helmut Kulitz, insisted on the fact that "lack of water, poverty, lack of economic perspectives are a fertile ground for all kinds of vulnerabilities." It will not be possible to get rid of extremism without giving perspectives to the populations of Lake Chad and improving water management.

To make sure a broad audience could have access to the findings of the auditors AFROSAI and GIZ have produced a whiteboard film to communicate the findings to people who usually don't read audit reports. Discover the content of the audit report by clicking on this link:

[Saving Lake Chad](#)

For further information please visit <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/15725.html> or contact: Dr Matthias Witt (matthias.witt@giz.de) and Mr Tassilo von Droste zu Hülshoff (tassilo.droste@giz.de)



Representatives from the SAIs of the four bordering countries: Supreme State Audit Office of Cameroon, Court of Accounts Chad, Court of Accounts Niger, Office of the Auditor - General for the Federation of Nigeria along with the organisers.