

ABSTRACT:

WATER DIPLOMACY AND CULTURE OF SUSTAINABILITY:

The Lake Chad Basin

The project ‘Water Diplomacy and Culture of Sustainability: The Lake Chad Basin’ is the second instalment promoted by the CSA with a multidisciplinary approach regarding water diplomacy and sustainability. In November 2018, an international conference (preceded by two round tables) took place in Turin, along with various other activities (a concert, a film screening, etc.) aimed at sensitising, engaging and informing the general public to issues relating to the river Nile. Within the context of this year’s project regarding Lake Chad, an analytical comparison will be drawn between the river Nile and Lake Chad, given the geopolitical and diplomatic similarities they share, as well as the underlying problem of water management.

As the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has underlined (2017), the Lake Chad basin is one of the most important agricultural heritage sites in the world and it provides a lifeline to around 30 million people in four different countries – Chad, Cameroun, Niger and Nigeria. Nonetheless, as the UN points out, in the past decades the Lake Chad has shrunk by 90 percent, going from 25,000 km² in 1963 to less than 1,500 km² in 2001. In order to reverse this process, already in the 1970s, Bonifica’s engineer Dr. Marcello Vichi, came up with the *Transacqua* project with the aim to bring a constant water supply from the Congo’s river to the Lake Chad. Although this plan was initially abandoned, due to political and economic reasons, it was finally approved in 2018 by the Lake Chad Commission and it will allegedly be financed by the Chinese enterprise *PowerChina*. Nevertheless, this project has also encountered critiques from various experts who not only claim that the shrinking of Lake Chad has made more fertile land available around the

lake shores, which can now be cultivated, but also that the shrinking process itself is part of the historical evolution of Lake Chad.

In this context, the project ‘Water Diplomacy and Culture of Sustainability: The Lake Chad Basin’ has the objective to set up various online events, each of which will have a particular focus: several events will focus on the scientific aspects surrounding the Lake Chad, taking in consideration both climate change and its impact on the Lake as well as scientific answers to this problem. Other events will instead focus on the socio-economic and political elements such as the environmental human migrations and the cooperation among the various states around the Lake Chad. It is envisaged that high-level representatives from the four countries around Lake Chad and from the Italian government will be invited to participate at one event exclusively focused on the institutional dialogue. In addition, an important place is dedicated to the Diaspora representatives who will be able to give a first-hand insight on the problems linked to the migration not only towards Europe but also within the Lake Chad territory because of the new opportunities given by the new fertile lands emerged or because of the conflicts in nearby states and terrorist activities carried out by Boko Haram. Furthermore, the aim of the present project is to raise awareness to the larger public to the problems related to the Lake Chad, taking it as an example of how these issues are of global interests. Ultimately, the CSA aims to engage, inform and sensitise entirely new audiences to these issues. In order to do so, CSA will adopt a multidisciplinary approach, promoting different activities that can convey scientific facts and socio-economic and political information through a ‘contemporary language’ and cultural exchange.

In the framework of promoting awareness over the Lake Chad’s challenges, both within the larger public as well as at an institutional level, the CSA will implement and coordinate the project’s communication. All online activities will be made available through the CSA’s main social networks (Facebook and Twitter) and the website. Various events will also be shared on the project partners’ websites. All live (or in presence) activities will be recorded and they will be available through the CSA website. Moreover, researchers and experts will produce various reports as well as articles for publication.