

“ The intent of the book is to bring compelling visual and scientific evidence of environmental change derived from the Earth observation sciences to a broader audience; to build the awareness of our rapidly changing environment; and to help us make better decisions together to ensure our mutual future on this ever more crowded globe—our planet Earth. ”

Achim Steiner
*UN Under Secretary-General, Executive Director
United Nations Environment Programme*

“ ... the illustrations in this Atlas will move people at all levels and across the continent to take actions that will mitigate many of the destructive effects on our ancestral home land. ”

S.E. Monsieur André Okombi Salissa
*President of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment
Minister of Tourism and Environment of Congo*



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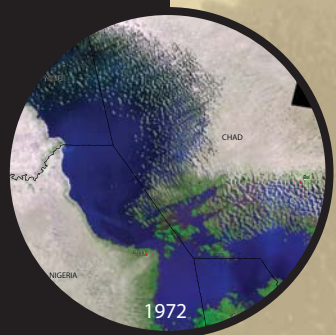
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AFRICA

Atlas of Our Changing Environment





1972



1987



2004



2007



Declining Water Levels in Lake Chad, 1972-2007

Lake Chad, located at the junction of Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, was once the sixth-largest lake in the world and the second-largest wetland in Africa. The lake was highly productive, and supported a great diversity of wildlife. Persistent droughts and increased agricultural irrigation have reduced the lake's extent in the past 35 years to one-tenth of its former size. Despite the lake's large drainage basin, almost no water flows in from the dry north. Ninety per cent of the lake's water flows in from the Chari River.

With a flat and shallow lakebed, Lake Chad is very responsive to changes in rainfall. When rainfall decreases, water levels in the lake drop rapidly. Diversion of water by human activities from the lake and from the Chari River may be significant at times of low flow, but rainfall is still the determining factor in water levels and the lake's extent. As these satellite images from 1972, 1987, and 2007 show, the surface area of the lake has declined dramatically over time. The 2007 image shows significant improvement over previous years, but the extent of Lake Chad is still far smaller than it was three to four decades ago.

Africa: Atlas of Our Changing Environment

As the age-old adages say, "A picture is worth a thousand words" and "Seeing is believing", this stunning 400-page "Africa: Atlas of our Changing Environment" is a unique and powerful publication which brings to light stories of environmental change at more than 100 locations spread across every country in Africa. There are more than 300 satellite images, 300 ground photographs and 150 maps, along with informative graphs and charts that give a vivid visual portrayal of Africa and its changing environment. Using current and historical satellite images, the Atlas provides scientific evidence of the impact that natural and human activities have had on the continent's environment over the past several decades. The observations and measurements of environmental change illustrated in this Atlas help gauge the extent of progress made by African countries towards reaching the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals. More importantly, this book contributes to the knowledge and understanding that are essential for adaptation and remediation. This UNEP publication should be of immense value to all those who want to know more about Africa and who care about the future of this continent.

Afrique: Atlas d'un environnement en mutation

Comme le dit le vieil adage, "une image est plus parlante qu'un millier de mots" et "voir, c'est croire". Cet atlas de 400 pages, "Afrique, Atlas d'un environnement en mutation" est une publication unique et riche qui met en lumière l'histoire des changements de notre environnement dans plus de 100 destinations africaines différentes. Avec plus de 300 photographies satellites, 300 images prises au sol et 150 cartes, les graphiques et statistiques dessinent un portrait vivant de l'Afrique et des changements auxquels elle doit faire face. En comparant images satellites d'archives et photographies actuelles, cet Atlas met à jour la nature et l'importance des conséquences sur l'environnement africain des activités humaines. Les observations et mesures illustrées dans cet Atlas permettent d'évaluer les progrès effectués par les pays africains dans le cadre des Objectifs du Millénaire pour le Développement. Plus important encore, ce livre contribue à la connaissance et à la compréhension qui sont essentielles à l'adaptation et aux choix qui s'imposent face aux changements récents. Cette publication du UNEP est un outil de première importance pour tous ceux qui veulent en savoir plus sur l'Afrique et l'avenir de ce continent.