

## Transcript of the Video Abdelaziz Afker

Good morning, it is a great pleasure for me to talk about the Arganeraie Biosphere Reserve (RBA). It is a reserve that was created in 1998. It is the first one in Morocco. It covers a territory that extends over 2.5 million hectares and is home to about 3 million inhabitants and which is experiencing a dynamic that is very, very complex and contrasted as well. Why is it so? Because if we take the Reserve, it is a set of territories. We will find each territory has its own characteristics, its dominant functions, we will also find characteristics related to culture, linked to the most dominant production system. If we take the mountain, it's not like the plain, the High Atlas is not like the Anti-Atlas. The coastal part is not like the continental part, even the mountain, the piedmont is where we see more presence of the population, uses and pressure on the resource.

And also, it is a territory rich by its culture, where we will find the identity culture characterizing the Anti-Atlas, but also that of the High Atlas.

It is a crossroads from the climatic point of view of oceanic influences, Saharan influences, but also the dominance of influences characterizing the Mediterranean ecosystems found in northern Morocco. A part of these Mediterranean ecosystems is present at altitude and follows the stages constituted by the Arganeraie. The Arganeraie extends from the ocean to an altitude of 1500 . Beyond 1500 , we will find the Red Juniper, Oak-Green, the Oxycedra and all the accompanying species of the ecosystems based on Oak-Green and Juniper.

But the Arganeraie also consists of many, many associations, it offers many biotopes with Mediterranean species, then with species that we will find in the Canary Islands, especially the three species of euphorbia most known here, but we will find the presence of Saharan species like the acacia. And this is what gives a little more richness in terms of biodiversity to the territories, the Arganeraie and the biotope offer a lot of habitat for a remarkable and interesting fauna, I would say with an important status, very important in terms of numbers. But in terms of the importance of status, I'm going to talk here about the Cuvier gazelle, which has made a significant return, but also the mouflon and a number of species of raptors that have made a comeback.

We are going to talk about the relationship of these biotopes with the dynamics of the territory in terms of use, in terms of population mobility. Over time, we have points of attraction, that is, metropolises, cities that offer more jobs, if not where we have encouraged the development of good agriculture, which needs manpower, especially on the plain, and this has created mobility over time. We have a strong exodus from mountain areas to the plain or to the cities. And all this creates a lot of disturbances in relation to the biotopes. There are areas that receive this mobility, but also, on the other side, we are going to see a return of biotope balances, ecosystems in the mountains that have been more or less overexploited. And all of this is known by everyone in the world.

But overall, we must always keep an eye on these balances or between conservation and development. And that was the initial objective among others in the creation of the RBA: to maintain practices, to maintain production systems that operate on the same space throughout the year, but in such a good balance and a balance where the population ensures the sustainability of this resource and does not go beyond the possibilities of productivity.

And here, over time, we see changes, whether at the level of society or community organization. Well, we've given way to individualistic action, if I dare say so. But also, it is everywhere in the world. Also because we are part of it and we are impacted by the influences that let us go towards a consumer society. So now is the time to change scale. We want to look for return quickly and seek a profit quickly, whereas in these territories where the central point we have to manage is to look at the resilience of these territories. We are in territories with low resilience, ecosystems that need to be made resilient. Why? Because in a territory that is mostly arid and semi-arid, this means that degradation is occurring more rapidly than the return to equilibrium in terms of ecosystem composition and development. And that degradation occurs rapidly if the uses are not adapted to the resource and the loss in relation to the long-term gains is considerable.

Today, the challenge is to bring all actors and users, from afar, to understand that resilience is important to take into consideration in planning whose action or even in the completely normal or simple behaviour, but also to take the RBA as a way of doing, to look at the territory with the presence of all its facets. Whether natural or physical, biotic, abiotic in a general way, but also to review all the gearing of actions that are done on this territory and federate them, put them on a mechanism that ensures a certain balance between the conservation of the natural heritage in general, but also of these ecosystems, these biotopes that the argan tree offers and also be part of a sustainable development where we can not only seek the maximum, the maximum profit, but to ensure a threshold, sustainably.

Why? Because the loss in relation to natural capital is not something that can be easily recovered. And there, the role of the youth of young people, but also of research for me, are considerable. In this sense, it's because tomorrow is for the youth. They must be aware of their way of doing things and their relationship with the territory, but also with scientific research. It is there to bring scientific solutions and technical solutions to help managers, actors and users to better appreciate first of all the territory, but also to better adapt the action to what this territory can give.

Because the will is there, everyone is aware, everyone is committed to the principle in the concept of the Biosphere Reserve. But the translation of the practice of this concept and its scale, it is still a big construction site.

Will the conciliation be able to be conceived in relation to the whole extent of the reserve? Or, in my opinion, we must move towards a territorial unit that is as small as possible, as I said, as small as possible in relation to the scale of the RBA, which is 2.5 million hectares, where we are going to say good, that is where the territorial unit is, where we will really seek conciliation between conservation and development, but also to put in a very precise, very clear manner the role and contribution of scientific research.