

2024

The Africa 21 African
Journalists Network (A21-NAJ)
Specialized in Sustainable
Development & Climate Change

Five years of achievements: 2019-2023

AFRICA 21

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Introduction: Origins of the program

The Africa 21 Association was founded in Geneva in 2011. It is recognized as a non-profit organization by the Swiss authorities, has ECOSOC status and is accredited with the WTO, UNCTAD and UNEP.

One of the Africa 21 Association's major mandates and objectives is to promote the issues involved in implementing sustainable development in Africa, and to highlight the actors, programs, innovation and initiatives involved in implementing the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A "stakeholder" approach has been chosen to achieve this mandate.

Journalists are the primary conduit for information and outreach on sustainable development in Africa. They represent an essential element of counter-power and democracy promotion. They play an important civic role among African populations, contributing to public debate and promoting a new way of life and new opportunities for young people in their countries. This is why Africa 21 has launched the Network of African Journalists Specialized in Sustainable Development and Climate Change initiative in 2019-2020.



Network activities from 2019 to 2023

The Network is based on a series of activities aimed at strengthening African journalists by developing expertise on sustainable development and climate change, facilitating access to reliable and quality sources through networking with international experts, encouraging excellence by organizing competitions and producing a monthly press review, but also offering them opportunities as part of their work, in particular by organizing delegations to cover major international events as well as organizing special events with international organizations.

Workshops

The workshops have been set up to help journalists develop basic expertise on themes related to sustainable development, and in particular the [17 Sustainable Development Goals](#). Registration is by selection following a call for applications within the Network. Each year, a different thematic cycle is set up. We have already worked on climate change, biodiversity and ecosystem services, water and the circular economy. The workshops take a multi-disciplinary, multi-angled approach, involving as many international partners as possible, in order to address the complexity and diversity intrinsic to each theme.

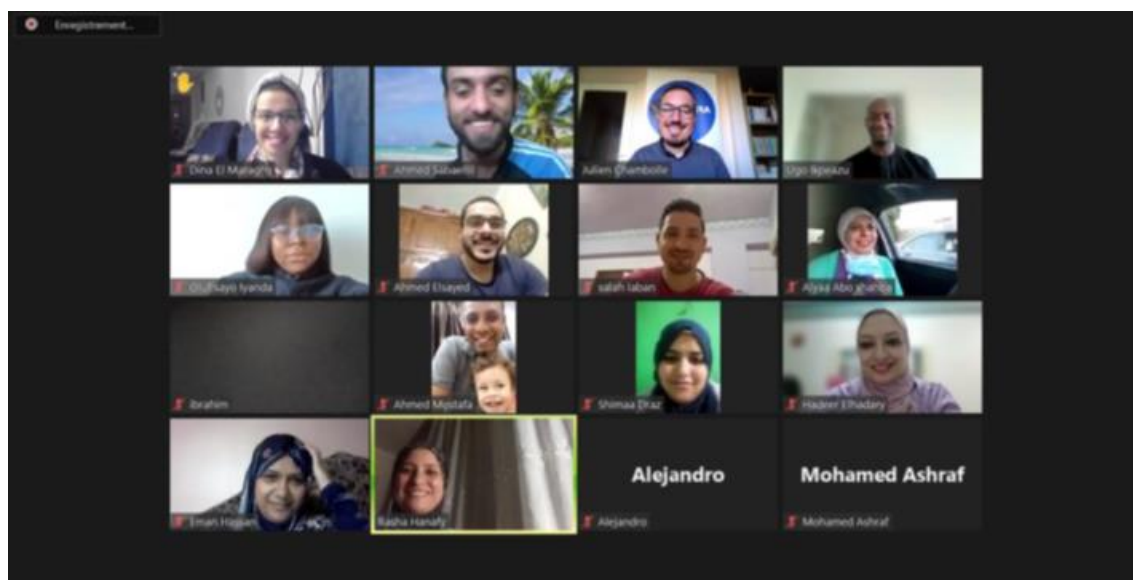
A workshop takes place over a week, combining a seminar part with field visits to meet the players and discover initiatives related to the issue. During workshops participants develop his or her network with peers and with the experts present. The journalist is also there to gather as much information as possible, conduct interviews and produce as much journalistic content as possible at the end of the week. Workshops are usually coupled with journalistic competitions to further encourage journalists to work during the week.

- October 14-18, 2019, [Media & Journalism days in Africa](#), at the Palais des Nations and World Meteorological Organization headquarters in Geneva.





- September 21 to 23, 2020, organization of an [online workshop for journalists from the Maghreb \(Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia\), in French, on the challenges of climate change in the Mediterranean region](#).
- From October 14 to 16, 2020, organization of the [Online Media & Journalism Days in Africa 2020 on climate change](#) in English.



- October 25-27, 2021, organization of [the Hurghada virtual workshop in Egypt on the theme of biodiversity and ecosystem services](#) in English.



- From August 15 to 19, 2022, organization of a [hybrid workshop dedicated to water issues, in Dakar](#), Senegal, for journalists from French-speaking West Africa.



- January 30-February 3, 2023, organization of a [hybrid workshop in Nairobi, Kenya on water issues](#) for East African journalists in English.



- November 6-10, 2023, organization of a [workshop on the circular economy in Nairobi](#), Kenya, for journalists from English-speaking East and West Africa, in partnership with UNCTAD.

Journalistic competitions

Journalistic competitions aim to encourage excellence and promote themes in the African media. They are generally organized in parallel with workshops. Africa 21 has also prepared competitions at the request of partners. Criteria for judging entries are based on a) compliance with instructions, b) the quality of the proposed work, c) the use of quality data and its relevance to the proposed work, and finally d) the pedagogical quality and accessibility of the proposed content to the general public.

- Organization of the [1st Journalism competition in Tunis on climate change in french](#), September-October 2020.
- Organization of the [Journalistic competition on climate change, as part of MJDA 2020, in English](#), October-December 2020.



- Organization of the [journalistic competition « What are the environmental emergencies in your country ? »](#), January-February 2021.
- Organization of the [journalistic competition on African forests](#).
- October-November 2021, organization of a [journalistic competition on biodiversity and ecosystem services for Egyptian journalists](#), April-May 2021.
- Organization of a [journalistic competition on COP 26](#), November-December 2021.
- Organization of a [journalistic competition in French on water issues in Africa](#), August-September 2022.
- Co-organization with UNRISD of a journalistic competition on social issues worldwide, November 2022-February 2023.
- Organization of a [journalistic competition on water issues in Africa, aimed at journalists in English-speaking Africa](#), February-May 2023.
- Co-organization of an [international video journalism competition, in partnership with PARM/IFAD, the "#PARMStoriesChallenge"](#), on the resilience of farming communities to the effects of climate change, October-December 2023.

Special events for partners

This program aims to build bridges between journalists and international organizations, particularly those based in Geneva, raising awareness among journalists aware on what is happening within the multilateral system. This is why Africa 21 supports the organization of online events, press conferences and debriefings for the African press. This type of activity also gives African journalists privileged access to first-hand information, often on an exclusive basis.

- February 4, 2021, special event co-organized with UNEP and the participation of UNECA, on "[the 2021 green agenda in the Covid context](#)".
- February 3, 2022, organization of a special online event for the African press in partnership with the IPCC, as part of the publication of the IPCC 2nd Working Group report.



- May 6, 2022, organization of a special online event for the African press in partnership with UNDP, on the socio-economic consequences of the Ukrainian crisis for African countries.
- August 1, 2022, organization of a special online event for the African press in partnership with UNECA, entitled "Press briefing ahead of COP27: African regional dialogue on climate initiatives to finance climate action and the SDGs".
- October 21, 2022, co-organization of a special event in hybrid format with UNRISD on the occasion of the [launch of UNRISD's 2022 flagship report, "Inequality Crises: A Power Shift for a New Eco-social Contract"](#).
- November 3, 2022, organization of an online briefing for the African press in the run-up to COP 27, with the co-chairs of IPCC Working Group II (adaptation and impacts) and Working Group III (mitigation). It reviewed the two reports published earlier in 2022.



- November 7-11, 2022, co-organization of daily online debriefings on COP 27 with UNECA.
To watch the debriefings videos :
 - [Monday, November 7, 2022](#)
 - [Tuesday, November 8, 2022](#)
 - [Wednesday, November 9, 2022](#)
 - [Thursday, November 10, 2022](#)
 - [Friday, November 11, 2022](#)
- November 25, 2022, co-organization of a special online event for the African press with the Commission of the European Union, entitled "Towards the United Nations Conference on Biodiversity COP15: EU and African positions".
- November 25, 2022, co-organization of a special online event for the African press with the Commission of the European Union, entitled "Towards the United Nations Conference on Biodiversity COP15: EU and African positions".

- May 2, 2023, organization of a special event on behalf of UNEP-Barcelona Convention (in French), entitled "[Treatment of environmental issues relating to marine and coastal environments in the Maghreb media, the case of the Barcelona Convention covering the Mediterranean](#)" aimed at Maghreb journalists.
- May 9, 2023, organization of a special online event, in English, on the follow-up to the UN Water Conference (March 22-24, 2023 in New York), entitled "[New York, towards a new water action agenda for Africa?](#)".
- July 19, 2023, co-organization of a special event with UNECA, as part of the [UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in New York](#), followed by a press conference.
- September 28, 2023, organization of a special event (in English) on behalf of the ITU, on "[how digital can accelerate the achievement of the SDGs in Africa](#)".

Journalist delegations to cover major international events

African media, can face challenges in sending journalists to cover international events. That's why, since 2022, Africa 21 has been working with its partners to organize delegations to help journalists from the African continent cover major international events related to sustainable development and climate change. It takes charge of all the logistics, the relationship with the partner and sets up a work program (including organized interviews for journalists) for the duration of the event. At the end of the event, a press review takes place to assess the impact of the work carried out.

- March 3-5, 2022, organization of the first delegation of Network journalists to attend the [8th UN African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in Kigali](#), Rwanda.



- February 28-March 2, 2023, organization of a delegation for the [9th UN African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development](#), in Niamey, Niger.

- September 4-8, 2023, organization of a delegation to the [African Climate Week](#) in Nairobi, Kenya, on behalf of the African Development Bank.
- November 30-December 12, 2023, organization of a delegation of journalists to cover [COP 28 in Dubai](#), United Arab Emirates, in partnership with the AfDB and UNECA.

Network monthly press review

The Journalists' Network monthly press review is a barometer of their commitment to our activities, an assessment of the quality produced, but it's also an invaluable source of information on the implementation of sustainable development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals on the African continent. Press reviews are available free of charge on our website:



2021

[April 2021](#), [May 2021](#), [June 2021](#), [July 2021](#), [August 2021](#), [September 2021](#), [October 2021](#), [November 2021](#), [December 2021](#).

2022

[January 2022](#), [February 2022](#), [March 2022](#), [April 2022](#), [May 2022](#), [June 2022](#), [July 2022](#), [August 2022](#), [September 2022](#), [October 2022](#), [November 2022](#), [December 2022](#).

2023

[January 2023](#), [February 2023](#), [March 2023](#), [April 2023](#), [May 2023](#), [June 2023](#), [July 2023](#), [August 2023](#), [September 2023](#), [October 2023](#), [November-December 2023 \(special COP 28\)](#).

Review since 2019

Creation of a space for discussion and exchange between journalists

From the outset one of the ideas was to create a space for dialogue and exchange between journalists. To this end, in 2021, two WhatsApp groups were created for French-speaking and English-speaking journalists. In each group, journalists can publish their work, exchange views on topics related to the network's themes, forward professional opportunities, etc... Today, a real group dynamic exists within these WhatsApp loops.

Disseminating knowledge, best practices and initiatives on development and climate change

The first five years of the Network's operation led to the dissemination through the work of journalists, presentation and follow-up of initiatives, valuing of project leaders, highlighting of innovations, promotion of role models and best practices in sustainable development. Thanks to the themes chosen in each cycle, it has been possible to raise awareness among African populations through positive journalism and solutions. In 2019-2020, we explored the theme of climate change, in 2021 that of biodiversity and ecosystem services, in 2022 water issues, and today the question of the circular economy and new modes of production and consumption (ODD12). All this production can be evaluated and can be found in the press reviews published monthly and available free of charge on our website, as well as on the pages dedicated to journalistic competitions.

Developing a solid membership base in Africa

Here is some data on the evolution of the Network's membership since its launch:

- ✓ 2019, 318 members;
- ✓ 2020, 494 members, including 190 women (38.5%) and 304 men (61.5%) in 40 countries;
- ✓ 2021, 545 members;
- ✓ 2022, 650 members;
- ✓ 2023, 827 members, including 293 women (35%) and 534 men (65%) in 43 countries.

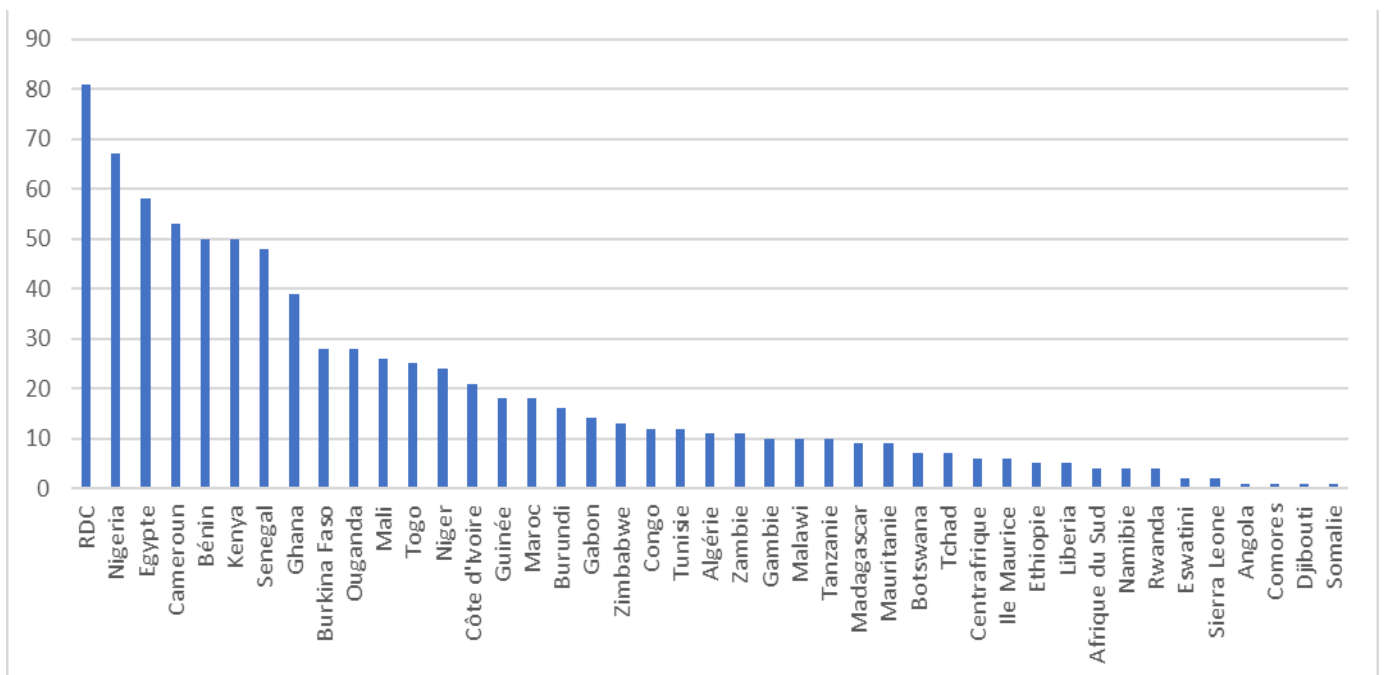
By the end of 2025, the network should have 1,200 to 1,500 members.



Geographically, journalists currently come from the following countries:

- ✓ Out of a total of 43 countries represented, 23 have French as their language (official language or commonly spoken language - 496 people, or 60% of the total workforce) and 20 countries have English or another language as their language.
- ✓ The 5 largest contingents at the end of 2023 are: Democratic Republic of Congo (81), Nigeria (67), Egypt (58), Cameroon (53) and Benin (50).

Geographical distribution of Journalist Network members in 2023.



Multilateral players: participation and visibility

Actors in the UN system, and more broadly in multilateralism, have a particular interest in participating in our activities by contributing expertise, facilitating the organization of, or helping to finance the budget for, events organized by Africa 21.

In return, they can communicate on their activities, programs and initiatives, organize visits by partners or beneficiaries (in the case of workshops), and share the results of their research.

For example, recently, UNCTAD, through its new [SMEP program](#), joined forces with our first workshop on the circular economy, in Nairobi (November 2023), by covering a large part of the budget, facilitating contacts for a meeting room in Nairobi, involving some of its in-house and partner experts, and facilitating the organization of a field visit to one of the program's beneficiaries (Mr. Green Africa in Nairobi).

Teams in charge of the program or in charge of communications or public relations find in the Network available journalists, selected on merit, productive and competent, and a team of organizers at their disposal, reactive, flexible and who take care of all the logistical aspect, the selection of journalists and the follow-up during and after the events.

In addition, Africa 21 has chosen a particular approach incorporating a strong multilateral dimension, which is reflected in the organization of workshops and delegations, where it generally enjoys involving numerous local, regional and global players on the same cross-cutting theme.

This is why more and more institutions are interested in organizing one-off or recurring activities with Africa 21 and the Network's journalists.

Here are the entities with which Africa 21 has collaborated or received support, to organize an event or workshop since 2019:



The other equally important aspect was to put journalists in touch with international organizations in order to facilitate access to reliable, quality sources of information. This is particularly important at a time when false information and manipulation are commonplace. It contributes to a better understanding of the mandate, functioning and activities of UN-related organizations, at a time when the multilateral system and the institutions that embody it are increasingly disparaged.

We can see from these press reviews, and especially those produced by workshops and delegations, that references to international experts and the activities of international organizations are working better and better.

Promoting the work of journalists and improving reporting on sustainable development and climate change



The promotion of journalists' work is based on two pillars:

- The monthly press review (see above), which highlights the best work received from the Africa 21 community.
- The organization of regular journalistic competitions with our partners, which motivate members to work harder on their articles or reports.

Its objectives are to encourage the production of content (press articles, radio and TV reports) and the improvement of quality by aiming for excellence. The quality of data and information production is a long-term task, which can only be achieved through networking and the regular organization of online decoding events (with partners) and the organization of thematic workshops. The results can only be analyzed through the sampling proposed in the monthly press review. This is the result of a selection process organized by the Secretariat following an internal call for content.

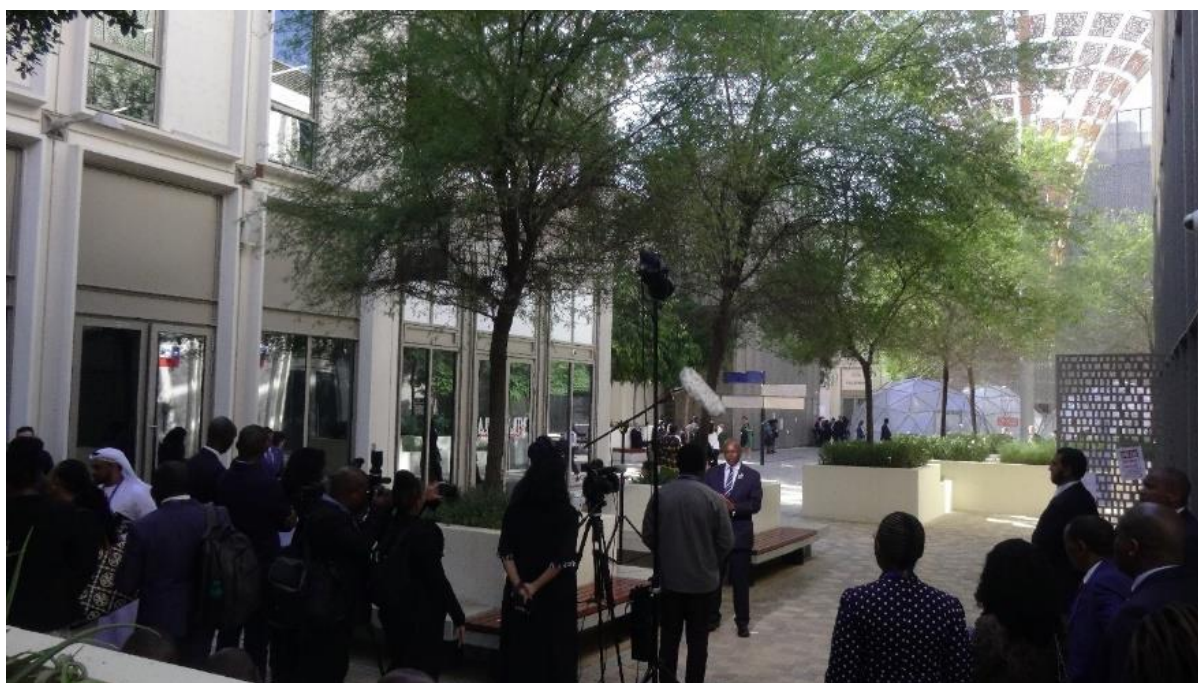
The incentive mechanisms for working more on content are based on the psychological springs of recognition, merit and reward. The most deserving journalists are rewarded by being invited more regularly to our workshops and delegations. Their work is recognized and included in the press reviews published for our community, by becoming our national representatives as [goodwill ambassadors](#), and by winning prizes in our many journalistic competitions.

Africa 21 is proud to be included in our Network's relevant professional experience.

A reference information platform on sustainable development and climate change

This part of the project has been implemented step by step. The target audience for this content is, of course, journalists and partners, but above all - and we mustn't forget this - the African public interested in the issues of sustainable development and the effects of climate change on their continent.

The content is of the highest quality. The press review highlights high-quality articles, reports and recurring programs that deserve a much wider audience.



Press reviews are promoted on the Africa 21 website and through the association's social networks. Our platform also includes a section dedicated to publications by international organizations related to our preferred themes.