First, I am so delighted to finally be in Johannesburg to be able to put faces behind the names @ ARC after months of “Teams and Zoom” calls. The “Meet & Greet” sessions were particularly special as they reminded me of what I already knew about our team: a mix of talent, camaraderie dedication and commitment to making our organization ‘The Partner of Choice’ in the DRM field in Africa.

My appreciation of the onerous task facing us as a Group is much clearer to me now than in September when I formally resumed duties. The last 80 days have been both intense and rewarding in every sense, considering our impressive achievements. This is despite the very challenging COVID-19-imposed constraints under which we have continued to deliver our mandate to our Member States. The diligence, professionalism and sacrifice of the ARC Group staff clearly personify ‘genuine passion and commitment’ to the mission of our noble institution. For this, I am unreservedly grateful, as every leader should be.

‘@ARC’ is about celebrating our achievements and appreciating the valuable support of our African Union Member States, past and current partners (Canada, France, USA, UK, EU, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, IFAD, WFP and Rockefeller), AU-DIC and #ARCAdvocates (media, academia, CSOs) across the region and globally. Without the support and encouragement of these individuals and institutions, our successes in building Member States response capacity and providing them with the necessary tools for disaster risk adaptation, mitigation and resilience would not have been as impactful.

As COVID-19 wreaked untold economic hardship, crippled livelihoods, and worsened vulnerability across the region, the German Government, through BMZ/KfW committed to provide Euros 19 million to support insurance premiums for ARC Member States for the 2020/2021 agricultural seasons. We are truly grateful and indebted to our Board Chairperson, Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala for her leadership, and Dr Maria Flachsbarth for the urgency of their response. KfW has remained consistent in the support to the ARC Group. We have every reason to be optimistic that our collaboration will become stronger as we continue to build Africa’s mitigation, resilience and adaptation, mechanisms against climate disaster risks.

Also, we thank the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (FDFA) for their ongoing support to our Outbreaks & Epidemic (O&E) programme. Particularly, we appreciate the additional grant of US$2m to be exclusively used for subsidy premium support to the African Union Member States that will purchase ARC’s first O&E products.

It is pertinent that I salute the devotion of our Strategy Refresh team led by Eva, Ange, Abou and other colleagues, in the true #OneARC spirit. It was a very rewarding exercise that tasked every one of us; and I am confident that we will show even more resolve and mettle in the delivery of our set objectives and targets as laid out in my 100-day plan and beyond.

It is with genuine excitement that I present, the maiden edition of ‘@ARC’ Newsletter; and I thank all of you for making this possible. With your support, this will be a regular newsletter and platform for us to mirror our achievements. The mandate given to us by our Member States is challenging but not daunting. We have Africa’s best minds among us. We are the innovation; and I believe that our best moments are yet ahead of us!
LESOTO MOU SIGNATURE

The African Risk Capacity (ARC) Group and the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to address persistent climate risks and scale up national disaster risk management and financing efforts.

The MoU serves as a framework to facilitate cooperation and collaboration between ARC Group and the Government and sets out the terms and conditions under which the Government and the ARC Group will work together to address the impact of extreme weather events in country.

The Government of Lesotho has taken significant steps in addressing its drought disaster risk over the years and in 2016, Lesotho’s drought response efforts were supported following the approval of $20 million in additional financing by the World Bank Group. As the newest signatories of the MoU, the official statement from Government added that “The Government of Lesotho is eager to join efforts with the African Risk Capacity Group to address the persistent climate risks faced by the country, especially in the context of drought”.

SENEGAL PAYOUT PROCESS EVALUATION

The ARC Group, in partnership with the Government of Senegal and its REPLICA partners, Start Network, conducted the process evaluation of the 2019 payout.

The Government of Senegal and Start Network have almost completed the implementation of the FIP related to the 23.1 million USD payout following the drought of 2019.

The beneficiaries indicated that the food and cash interventions helped them cushion the harsh impact of the drought on their livelihoods which was worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. Other interesting results and lessons learned are contained in the draft evaluation report which is currently under review. The report will be presented to the Evaluation Advisory Committee made of representatives of the Government of Senegal, ARC, OPM, and donors (KfW, DFID, and Canada) on November 25th, 2020.

GCA PARTNERSHIP

On November 12, 2020, there was an introductory meeting held between ARC and the Global Center on Adaptation (GCA). GCA recently launched its Africa office that will be hosted in Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire by the AfDB. The purpose of the meeting was to assess areas of possible collaboration to further our interests in climate adaptation in Africa. The meeting also considered the existing relationship between ARC and the AfDB and how this could be leveraged to form a tripartite to drive flagship adaptation projects.

Key meeting highlights included agreement on four workstreams that will be further explored: (i) Premium financing, (ii) Innovative insurance mechanisms (i.e. CAT and Green Bonds), (iii) Building local capacity - risk profiling and (iv) Insurance for development - Advocacy, policy and sensitization at the level of RECs and also for policy makers. The Climate Adaptation Summit is set for January 25, 2020 and we expect to announce the tripartite and present the flagship initiatives during the summit. The meeting was led by GDG Ibrahima Diong and Patrick Verkooijen, CEO of GCA.
On November 16, 2020, there was a virtual meeting between GDG Ibrahima Diong and the AfDB Ag VP for the Agriculture and Human Development Complex, Wambui Gichuri. The meeting centered on reviewing the status of the ARC-AfDB partnership and providing strategic guidance to the teams implementing activities under the partnership. Opportunities were identified that would promote process efficiencies within the ADRIFI program and also garner more support and financing for the program through the use of ARC’s storytelling products.

The countries in the pipeline to join ADRIFI include Burkina Faso, Chad, Sudan, Mozambique and Zambia. ARC and the AfDB will be working together to devise a joint resource mobilization strategy for the ADRIFI Multi-donor Trust Fund. This will enable countries to access premium support for new products (i.e Flood, TC and O&E).

/NEWS FLASH/

- Malawi is joining back the pool! The country’s participation in pool VII, with premium support from KfW/BMZ, is in line with the 2019-2024 DRF Strategy which aims to consider other key financial instruments to complement government efforts, towards reducing impacts of climate and weather variability on the vulnerable population.

- The African Risk Capacity Insurance Limited (ARC Ltd) has appointed new Board Directors:

  Ms. Jennifer Blanke  Ms. Ladé Araba  Ms. Sarata Koné-Thiam

- On November 18, 2020, the Prime Minister of Niger signed four Ministerial decrees related formalizing the establishment and the functioning of ADRIFI program in the country.

- The African Risk Capacity (ARC) Group has organized in September 2020, its first press conference in Dakar during which the new Director-General of the Group, and United Nations Assistant Secretary-General (UN-ASG), and the CEO of ARC Ltd have presented the institution, its strategy, its areas of activity and its impact on vulnerable populations across the continent.
**ARC Rally** initiative – Do you want to keep healthy and boost your mood, especially under the circumstances? ... Join the ARC Rally this **Saturday 21st November at 08:00 AM**. Interested colleagues can contact Chinedu or Benard via the @ARC WhatsApp Group. The walk / run will start from the Sunninghill Garden to the Mall of Africa and back.

**SWISS (FDFA) USD $2M GRANT**

On November 19, 2020, the ARC Group Director General signed an amended funding agreement from Swiss (FDFA) which starts the process of an additional $2m funding for ARC to finance O&E premium for next year. The agreement is yet to be signed by WFP and finally by SDC in the next week.

**SOCIAL CORNER**

**COMING UP**

- ARC Culture Town Hall meeting on November 23, 2020.
- SOC 2nd meeting on November 30, chaired by Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala.
- Joint Board on December 8 in Johannesburg (A farewell will be organized for Dr Okonjo-Iweala at the event).
- 3rd Africa Galien Forum on December 10, 2020. The GDG will be co-chairs a high-level panel on “Multisectoral and Community Participation: Strengths, Weaknesses and Recommendations”.