Eastern Sahel Union Mission office

Photo courtesy of Emmanuel Kra.

Eastern Sahel Union Mission

EMMANUEL KRA

Emmanuel Kra is executive secretary of Eastern Sahel Union Mission.

Eastern Sahel Union Mission, formerly known as Sahel Union Mission, is an administrative unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, located in the territory of the West-Central Africa Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

Territory: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Niger, and Togo; comprising the Cote d'Ivoire, and Togo Conferences; the Benin, and Burkina Faso Missions; and the Niger Region.[1]

Statistics (June 30, 2020): Churches, 214; membership, 27,711; population, 91,755,000.[2]

History

Prior to 1981, all the French and Portuguese speaking countries of West Africa, namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Togo belonged to the West African Union with headquarters in Accra, Ghana.[3] As the Church in the French and Portuguese speaking countries of West Africa grew, a need arose to have the churches in these countries organized in a separate union. The leaders of the Africa-Indian Ocean Division approved the plan to organize a union for the French and Portuguese speaking countries. The resulting union was the Sahel Union Mission (SUM) that was organized in 1981. It was composed of the following eleven

countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Togo.[4] The headquarters of the new union was in Dakar, Senegal. Pastor Malton Braff was the first union president,[5] and Kai Busk Nielsen was appointed the union secretary/treasurer.[6]

In 1991, with the arrival of Pastor Robert Peck as the new union president, the SUM headquarters was transferred to Lomé, Togo in order to bring the office closer to the area where there were most Adventist members.[7]

The following nine church administrative units became part of the Sahel Union Mission:

Ivory Coast Mission, officially established in 1946, attained the conference status in 2002 and was thus the first mission to become a conference in SUM.

Cape Verde Mission, established in 1981, became a conference in 2005.

Togo Mission, established in 1966, became the third conference in SUM in 2017.

Benin Mission, established in 1964, became a conference in 2019.

Senegal Mission, established in 1981.

Guinea Bissau Mission, established in 1973.

Mali Mission, established in 1981.

Burkina Faso Mission, organized in 1971.

In Niger, the church started in1964.[8]

In 2013 the Sahel Union Mission was divided into two separate entities: the Eastern Sahel Union Mission and the Western Sahel Union Mission. The reorganization of the Sahel Union Mission was realized after a team led by the Associate Secretary of the General Conference Rosa Banks visited Loméon, Benin, on January 22, 2013. The first administrators of the new Eastern Sahel Mission Union were: Pastor Assiénin Salomon, president; Pastor Sessou Selom, secretary; and Elder Agabus Bello, treasurer.

One of the main reasons for the division of SUM was the size of the union. SUM consisted of 11 countries and comprised half of the territory of the West-Central Africa Division. Another reason was the need to bring the union administration closer to the churches and the members. The geographical distances within the SUM contributed to financial challenges, cumbersome reception of progress reports, and difficulties in bringing people together for training and congresses.[9]

The Development of Eastern Sahel Union Mission Since 2013

The East Sahel Mission Union has continued to develop with the accession to the conference level of the Togo Mission in 2017 and Benin Mission in 2019. The East-Central Africa Division's Year-End Meeting in 2018 made an adjustment in the administration by appointing Pastor Djossou Simon and Pastor Emmanuel respectively as president and executive secretary of the East Sahel Mission Union. This team is underpinned by the dedicated work of five departmental directors.

Administrative Leaders

Presidents: Assienin Salomon (2013-2018); Djossou Simon (2019-).

Secretaries: Sessou Selom (2013-2015); Djossou Simon (2016-2018); Kra Emmanuel (2019-).

Treasurers: Bello Agabus (2013-2015); Apedoh Claude (2016-).

SOURCES

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NOTES

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4. "Sahel Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1982), http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1982.pdf.
5. Ibid.
6. "Sahel Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1983), http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1983.pdf.

7. Sahel Union Mission (N.D.), Secretariat Archives, Lome, Togo.

8. Ibid.

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