



## Words of Gratitude

I wanted to say thank you to every single person who made the 5th edition of Taragalte Festival from 15-17 November 2013, possible. We all knew it would not be easy to organise such a big event in M'hamid, let alone make it a great “**Caravan of Peace**” including participants from Mali, Mauritania, Algeria, The Netherlands, India, France and Italy. Peace that we lack nowadays because of the threat of the International terrorism. As was mentioned during one of the conferences, terrorism has no religion, no border and no meaning. The Taragalte Festival made it possible for artists, members of big and small organizations, tourists, journalists, visitors and many others with different backgrounds, religion, colour and language, to come and celebrate peace in the Taragalte festival.

**AZALAI**, supported by UN together with The Cultural Caravan for Peace, achieved a fantastic job in gathering artists from Africa and Europe and gave them the opportunity to exchange their culture and as well as giving work shops. It was great pleasure to see how these two continents were connecting with each other. There were no differences, no borders and no limits because these two cultures were melted in each other during the amazing days in Le Petite Prince bivouac. We enjoyed the fascinating African and European music. We were dancing and singing on the tunes of the different musical instruments from both continents. The last concert was a symbol of this cultural enrichment. At that moment we, despite our differences, we were united because of the music. We were saying to terrorism: look: you will never defeat us. We are a strong united family.

Taragalte Festival was not only about exchanging culture and listening to music. We were there to challenge another threat which is as dangerous as terrorism! It is the danger that threatens our environment, our planet, our home: the earth. The global warming, pollution, desertification, climate change are becoming the new enemies of human beings. So we have to fight two wars, one against terrorism and another one against the threats to our home. Another theme of the festival was: **The Green Desert**. And **GREEN** is one of the solutions to the threats to our environment. It is worth mentioning that we were very surprised to see cleaner and greener M'hamid



this time. We were told that there was a project initiated by his Highness King Mohammed with the goal of having a **Green Morocco**. As long as green is concerned, our organization **Sahara Roots** can contribute to this project. I do firmly believe in the saying: small actions can make big differences. The two important organizations that play an important role as far as our environment is concerned, are: **Mater-Bi** from Italy and our modest role as **Sahara-Roots** from Holland.

What **Mater-Bi** has presented during Taragalte festival was something very much needed, not only in the desert, but everywhere in the world. We in Holland begin to have problems with thrown plastic bags all over the streets. These flying plastic bags are taken by wind from land in to the sea. The same plastic bags are eaten by fishes. Human beings eat fishes and the plastic returns back eventually into our bodies. When I saw some of the plastic bags flying in the sky of Amsterdam, I had to think of the desert of M'hamid. The wonderful biodegradable plastic table ware of **Mater-Bi** has spared the desert and our planet much damage and pollution. These wonderful table wares which were used by every person during the festival and then collected to be tested later on, was an invention that leads to big positive effects. If one just thinks for a moment and considers how useful these biodegradable table wares were, we would be able to appreciate what **Mater-Bi** has presented. **Mater-Bi** has spared the festival and the region much water, electricity, effort and time. As we all know there is lack of water and electricity in the desert and when one can spare this, not only in the desert but every where, we ought to be grateful to **Mater-Bi** for this invention.

I have to mention Mr. Hicham Lahayni who was doing his best to present, explain and show how important this stuff is and to make the participants and the local aware of their environment by using this type of plastic. Mr. Hicham spent most of his time working with volunteers to keep the region clean, giving instructions, hold meetings, explaining how the biodegradable materials works. He was the real man of the environment. Amid his busy schedule he could find some time to enjoy the magical music during the festival. **Mater-Bi** gave us hope that our planet is in good hands and that there are people who can take care of her.





As for our **Sahara Roots**, I am very proud to say that we have managed to touch the hearts of a lot of people especially the locals. With the booklet “**Me and my Sahara**”, by **Wanda Hebly**, we could reach the school children, adults and even the teachers and helped to make them aware of the importance of giving information on the environment. In addition to our educational goal, we have started another project: planting trees with the **Groasis Waterboxx system**. It is amazing, hopeful and beyond imagination to see how these trees are growing bigger and bigger in the sand with not so much water.(see [www.sahara-roots.org](http://www.sahara-roots.org)) It was so wonderful to see the kids pointing to Wanda Hebly and shouting: “look, there is the lady who plants trees, the lady of the trees”. I was surprised and asked them whether they knew why Wanda was doing this. “Yes’, was their answer, “she wants to stop desertification”. If I may speak on the behalf of Wanda, I would say: I could not be happier, I am the lady of the tree. **Sahara-Roots** will keep educating people, planting trees, holding Nettoyage, (cleaning activities), donating waterboxx’s and working with the local people whether there is a festival or not. Our planet does a lot for us. We ought to pay her back.

There is someone who was not always in the picture. Maybe a lot of the participants have not noticed her. It was because she was mainly in the background. She was working hard and in silence. But it does not mean she was not important. On the contrary, without her hard work, we would not have witnessed such a good festival. She was the motor that gave life to this huge event. Thank you. Her name is **FRANCESCA Perrazzelli**, Project Management Culturale.

The second person who needs our gratitude and our thanks is a person who also was working hard but again in the background. She is the one who was taking care of our stay, departure, transport, payment and many many other things, She was the artery which gave blood to the people to feel good and relaxed. I say Thank you to her. She is **MARIKA BARTHELEMY**.

Finally, my gratitude to the brothers **Sbai, Halim and Ibrahim** for their efforts, hard work, hospitality, generosity, warm welcome and for this wonderful festival. These two brothers and their Zaila Association (the members and all those who work in Le Petite Prince) are the founders and the beating hearts of the Taragalte.

Ilham Al-Attar- Noor Translations and Sahara-Roots.