

News release

Conservationist with French nongovernmental organization honored as biodiversity 'Hotspot Hero' by Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund

Awatef Abiadh is being recognized for achievements in protecting species and ecosystems in the Mediterranean Basin Biodiversity Hotspot

Arlington, Virginia, USA (22 May 2020) – On this International Day for Biological Diversity, the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) announces that Awatef Abiadh and nine other conservationists from around the world have been named "Hotspot Heroes" for their efforts to protect the world's biodiversity hotspots. The honorees were chosen from the hundreds of civil society organizations that have received grants from CEPF in the 10 global biodiversity hotspots where the fund is currently active.

CEPF is recognizing these heroes as part of the celebration of its 20th anniversary. The fund empowers nongovernmental organizations, indigenous groups, universities and private enterprises to protect the world's biodiversity hotspots—the world's most biologically diverse yet threatened terrestrial regions—and help communities thrive. CEPF does this through grants and technical support for conservation, organizational strengthening and sustainable development.

The Hotspot Heroes and the nongovernmental organizations they work for are making outstanding contributions to the conservation of the hotspots. They exemplify the kinds of dedicated, dynamic people who work to ensure that intact ecosystems can continue to sustain flora and fauna and provide clean air, fresh water, healthy soils, sustainable livelihoods, resilience to climate change and much more.

Dr. Abiadh serves as the North Africa program officer for CEPF's [Mediterranean Basin](#) Biodiversity Hotspot Regional Implementation Team (RIT). She is based at Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux/BirdLife France. In this role, she has worked with more than 50 CEPF grantees in Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya and Cabo Verde. She also serves as the CEPF gender focal point for the region, helping grantees consider gender when developing their projects.

In Libya in particular, where conservation is nascent and particularly challenging, Dr. Abiadh has been instrumental, helping CEPF grantees receive funds and adapt their projects when security risks are involved.

"Awatef has put enormous energy into the hotspot and has been instrumental to CEPF's success in this part of the world over the last seven years," said Pierre Carret, CEPF grant director for the Mediterranean Basin Biodiversity Hotspot. "Nobody from the region would object to her being called a hero."

Dr. Abiadh was raised in the Tunisian countryside and formed a close bond with nature at an early age. She began her career as a teacher, first at schools and then with the University of Tunis, where she established an environmental club.

"The Hotspot Heroes represent the many tenacious, committed conservationists who are taking action every day to ensure the future of the biodiversity hotspots and the people who depend on these vital ecosystems," said CEPF Executive Director Olivier Langrand. "They endure a multitude of challenges—long hours, grueling travel, difficult working conditions, political hurdles and even threats to their lives—in pursuit of a healthy, sustainable world."

"It has been an enormous boost to biodiversity to have Dr. Abiadh guiding emerging organizations and conservationists in North Africa," said Langrand. "Her knowledge and compassion are vital resources that are helping to build the future of conservation in the region."

Read more about [Awatef Abiadh](#) and the other [Hotspot Heroes](#).

CEPF is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan and the World Bank.

Since 2001, CEPF has catalyzed enduring, locally led biodiversity conservation through US\$250 million in grants to more than 2,400 organizations in 98 developing and transitional countries. Results include more than 15 million hectares of formal protected areas established, at least 890 globally threatened species supported, and more than 3,500 communities benefiting. Learn more at www.cepf.net, [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

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Download a photo of Awatef Abiadh [here](#). (*Note: you will need to read through Conservation International's terms of use document before downloading.)