

Make food systems climate resilient now or future production will be compromised – UN warns

13 February 2017 – Failure to act now to make food systems more resilient to climate change will seriously compromise food production in many regions, which in turn could fail international efforts to end hunger and extreme poverty by 2030, the United Nations agricultural agency warned today.

“Agriculture holds the key to solving two of the greatest problems now facing humanity: eradicating poverty and hunger, and contributing to maintaining the stable climatic conditions in which civilization can thrive,” Food and Agriculture Organization Director-General José Graziano da Silva told a roundtable on climate change during the in Dubai.

The FAO Director-General stressed in particular the need to support small farmers in the developing world adapt to climate change.

Innovative approaches exist that can help them improve yields and build their resilience, he said, noting ‘green manuring,’ greater use of nitrogen-fixing cover crops, improving sustainable soil management, agroforestry techniques, and integrating animal production into cropping systems.

“But farmers face major barriers, such as the lack of access to credit and markets, lack of knowledge and information, insecurity about land tenure, and high transaction costs of moving away from existing practices,” the Director-General said.

For example, he said, 70 countries do not have established meteorological services. FAO is working with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) to develop low-cost, farmer friendly services to address this need.

Ultimately, ‘an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,’ he argued.

One critical front for action is water management, said Mr. Graziano da Silva. Millions of the world’s small-scale farmers are already wrestling with water scarcity, which will likely intensify as a result of climate change, he said.

This is why at the last UN climate change conference FAO and partners launched a global framework on water scarcity in agriculture that aims to support developing countries in bringing stronger policies and programmes for the sustainable use of water in agriculture online, he explained.

UN chief Guterres ‘strongly condemns’ DPR Korea’s ballistic missile launch

13 February 2017 – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today voiced strong opposition to the latest ballistic missile launch by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, calling on Pyongyang to fully comply with its international obligations to denuclearize.

“The Secretary-General strongly condemns the launch of another ballistic missile by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) on 12 February,” his spokesperson said in a statement.

The launch “is a further troubling violation” of Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2321 (2016) which strengthened sanctions against the regime.

The Secretary-General urged the DPRK leadership to return “to the path of denuclearization;” while appealing to the international community to continue addressing the in a united manner.

This afternoon, the UN Security Council will discuss the missile launch behind closed doors.

‘Radio provides accessible, real-time medium to bridge divides,’ UNESCO says on World Day

13 February 2017 – Radio has never been so dynamic, engaging and important in the midst of deep change in ways to share and access information, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) said today, World Radio Day.

“At a time of turbulence, radio provides an enduring platform to bring communities together,” said UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova in her message on the Day.

“On the way to work, in our homes, offices and fields, in times of peace, conflict and emergencies, radio remains a crucial source of information and knowledge, spanning generations and cultures, inspiring us with the wealth of humanity’s diversity, and connecting us with the world,” she said.

Radio is a force for human rights and dignity and a powerful enabler of

solutions to the challenges all societies face, she said, calling for nurturing the power of radio to foster the conversations and the listening needed for cooperation to tackle the challenges all humanity faces.

Radio plays an important role in taking forward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, advancing fundamental freedoms and bolstering good governance and the rule of law. It can help tackle new challenges, such as climate change and discrimination, by providing an accessible and real-time medium to bridge divides and strengthen dialogue.

This requires a new commitment by all, including broadcasters, regulators and audiences, she said, noting that radio can provide “a beacon” for innovative solutions to local problems, and continue to advance human rights, gender equality, dialogue and peace.

In January 2013, the UN General Assembly formally endorsed UNESCO’s proclamation of World Radio Day, 13 February, the day UN Radio was established in 1946.

Amid unprecedented needs, UN and partners launch \$1.6 billion aid appeal for South Sudan

13 February 2017 – Against the backdrop of dramatic deterioration of the humanitarian situation in South Sudan due to a combination of conflict, economic decline and climatic shocks, the United Nations together with relief partners have appealed for \$1.6 billion to provide life-saving assistance and protection to 5.8 million people across the country.

“We are facing unprecedented needs, in an unprecedented number of locations, and these needs will increase during the upcoming lean season,” said Eugene Owusu, the Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan in a news release issued by the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Humanitarian organizations estimate that some 7.5 million people across South Sudan are now in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, including some 3.4 million people who had been forced to flee their homes since conflict began in December 2013.

While disturbing accounts of violence and atrocities, including sexual violence, continue to be reported, food insecurity and malnutrition have skyrocketed. Furthermore, the risk of famine looms over thousands of people in conflict-affected communities and food deficit areas.

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“With needs rising rapidly, we have rigorously prioritized the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan to target those who most urgently require assistance and protection,” added Mr. Owusu.

Under the Plan, 137 aid organizations, including 62 non-governmental organizations (an increase of 55 per cent over the number in 2016) aim to respond to the most urgent life-threatening needs of the target population. The objectives include:

- Saving lives and alleviating the suffering of those most in need of assistance and protection
- Protecting the rights and upholding the dignity of the most vulnerable
- Supporting at-risk communities to sustain their capacity to cope with significant threats

Swift action during the dry season essential

According to OCHA, delivering supplies in the country depends, in a large part, on good weather conditions.

Humanitarian organizations strive to maximize the window of opportunity provided by the dry season to deliver supplies by road. Once rain set in – usually in May – most roads become impassable and supplies must be delivered by air, multiplying the cost of the humanitarian operation, which is one of the largest and most complex in the world.

“It is imperative that this appeal is funded early, and funded fully, so that the aid workers deployed across South Sudan can respond robustly and rapidly,” said Mr. Owusu.

“I appeal to the international community, which has given so generously to this young country, to support us now. If we fail to act swiftly, lives may be lost.”

[UN and partners launch multimillion dollar appeal for DR Congo](#)

13 February 2017 – The United Nations and humanitarian partners in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have appealed for nearly \$750 million to aid 6.7 million people this year.

“It is vital that the world does not forget the urgent and massive

humanitarian needs,” said Rein Paulsen, Head of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the country.

The 2017 appeal is for \$748 million, as part of a new three-year action plan “to respond to the humanitarian needs of millions of civilians affected by one of the world’s most acute and protracted crises,” according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The three-year strategy aligns with development plans created by national authorities, the United Nations system, the World Bank and other bilateral partners.

The appeal also targets the needs of more than 2.1 million displaced people, including half-a-million of children under the age of five suffering from acute malnutrition, according to OCHA. Hundreds of thousands of people are also facing measles, cholera and other diseases.

“While over 60 per cent of the humanitarian needs are located in the eastern part of the country, western and central provinces suffer from generalized poverty that calls for solutions that go beyond humanitarian assistance,” OCHA said.

In addition to the needs of the Congolese, violence in the country is also affecting refugees from South Sudan living the north-eastern part of the country.