

[Bonn: At UN climate conference, Congo Basin youth spotlight their work protecting fragile forest ecosystem](#)

9 November 2017 – Youth groups working in Africa’s Congo Basin countries are supporting economic progress in isolated rural communities while protecting the forest, and a young woman at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 23) in Bonn, Germany, said it is time their voices were heard.

Youth groups working in Africa’s Congo Basin countries are supporting economic progress in isolated rural communities while protecting the forest, and a young woman at the United Nations Climate Change Conference ([COP23](#)) in Bonn, Germany, said it that is time their voices were heard.

“Young people in the Congo Basin have been doing things on the ground that often go ignored,” explained Marie Tamoifo, President of the Cameroon Green Youth Association (Association de la Jeunesse verte du Cameroun – AJVC) and Regional Coordinator of the Youth Network for sustainable management of forest ecosystems in Central Africa (Réseau des jeunes pour la gestion durable des écosystèmes forestiers d’Afrique centrale – REJEFAC) in an interview with *UN News*.

REJEFAC brings together youth organizations from 10 Congo Basin countries –Burundi, Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe and Chad).

Its aim is to promote the effective participation of young environmental actors in decision-making in the Congo Basin and “to contribute to the emergence in the region of a new type of leadership, more sensitive and open to the requirements of sustainable development.”

“[As for] actions on the ground, there are reforestation, awareness and education programmes for young people. It’s about strengthening the work that is done by governments,” said Ms. Tamoifo.

A solar panel programme in isolated communities

For several years, AJVC has been developing a programme in Cameroon for the electrification of isolated rural areas with solar panels. The programme started in 15 pilot communities in the east, in the center and in the far north of the country with the installation of solar panels in homes and schools. A contribution is made by the community itself, representing 25 to 30 per cent of the cost.

“In these 15 communities, we trained 85 young people in solar installation techniques but also in psycho-socio-organizational methodology,” explained Ms Tamoifo. “When we arrive in a community, we first hold a discussion with that

community. We try to see with [them] what the glaring problems are.”

The youth participating in this programme are from the community. They are trained and they provide maintenance for the solar panels that have already been installed. “For now, they are not really paid. They receive a small allowance,” added Ms. Tamoifo.

The association needs more financial support to maintain and expand this programme. “We have received more than 100 requests from villages and we cannot answer them given [our] modest means. And young people who are trained today also need to make a living to be able to continue this work,” she said.

A ‘climate caravan’ in Cameroon

Among other actions carried out by young people in the Congo Basin region, the REJEFAC Coordinator mentioned a tree planting initiative by volunteers in the Republic of Congo, and a programme focusing on handicrafts and conservation of natural resources in Rwanda.

Before coming to COP 23, the network organized a ‘climate caravan’ in Cameroon with the participation of young people from the ten countries of the Congo Basin to show what youth organizations are doing in terms of sustainable development and protection of the planet.

“We organized this caravan which was named ‘the COP at home,’” said the Coordinator of REJEFAC. Young people have been designated as climate ambassadors.

The ‘climate caravan’ travelled in the Douala region, coastal areas and went to Equatorial Guinea. “It showed how we could talk about the theoretical aspect and go on the ground to experience the realities of conservation parks and conflicts between humans and elephants,” concluded Ms. Tamoifo.

[Yemen facing largest famine the world has seen for decades, warns UN aid chief](#)

9 November 2017 – Yemen will be gripped by famine – one the likes of which the world has not seen in years – if the blockade on basic supplies into the country imposed by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition is not lifted immediately, the top United Nations humanitarian official has warned.

It will be the largest famine the world has seen for many decades, Mark Lowcock, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, told the media late Wednesday, after briefing the Security Council.

Three years into a brutal conflict, Yemen depends on imports amounting to up to 90 per cent of its daily needs and millions in the country are being kept alive by humanitarian aid.

The fighting has also all but collapsed the country's health, and water and sanitation systems. Combined with the lack of food, millions of lives including those of children will be lost as their bodies will simply not have the strength to fight off disease.

What kills people in famine is infections [...] because their bodies have consumed themselves, reducing totally the ability to fight off things which a healthy person can," added Mr. Lowcock.

We need to see is a reduction of blockages on all sides, not an increase
UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock

Underscoring that an immediate resumption of regular UN and relief organizations' air services to the capital, Sana'a, and Aden are critical to save lives, Mr. Lowcock, also the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, said that a clear and immediate assurance is also urgently needed that those services will not be disrupted.

Furthermore, all vessels that have passed inspection by the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism should not be subjected to interference, delays to or blockages so that they can proceed to port as rapidly as possible, he added.

This is really important because humanitarian access through the ports was inadequate even before the measures that were announced on 6 November," said the senior UN official.

He also called for an immediate agreement to the repositioning of the World Food Programme (WFP) the UN's emergency food relief agency vessel in the waters off Aden, assurances that there will be no further disruption to the functions the vessel supports, as well as resumption of humanitarian and commercial access to all the seaports of Yemen.

At the stakeout, Mr. Lowcock, also underscored the Organization's condemnation of the missile attack on the Saudi capital, Riyadh, over the weekend, terming it an outrageous act.

The coalition imposed the restrictions following the attack, effectively closing air, sea and land access to the war-torn country.

Vaccines will run out in a month – humanitarian group

Meanwhile, the humanitarian community in Yemen also warned that the current stock of vaccines in the country will only last one month and if not replenished, outbreaks of communicable diseases are to be expected with fatal consequences, particularly for children under five and those already suffering from malnutrition.

“The humanitarian situation in Yemen is extremely fragile and any disruption in the pipeline of critical supplies such as food, fuel and medicines has the potential to bring millions of people closer to starvation and death,” said humanitarian organizations, including the UN, working in Yemen in a joint statement Thursday.

“The continued closure of borders will only bring additional hardship and deprivation with deadly consequences to an entire population suffering from a conflict that it is not of their own making,” they added.

Calling for the immediate opening of all air and seaports to ensure the entry of food, fuel and medicines into the country, the humanitarian community ask the Saudi-led Coalition to facilitate unhindered access of aid workers to people in need, in compliance with international law, by ensuring the resumption of all humanitarian flights.

“We reiterate that humanitarian aid is not the solution to Yemen’s humanitarian catastrophe. Only a peace process will halt the horrendous suffering of millions of innocent civilians,” they stressed.

[UN migration agency expands HIV/AIDS services in South Sudan displacement sites](#)

8 November 2017 – Thanks to the recent expansion of HIV/AIDS services conducted by the United Nations migration agency, some 171,000 civilians and their host communities have gained benefit from these health facilities in South Sudan.

“The [expansion of services](#) is a crucial development in South Sudan, where internally displaced persons, such as those living in the PoC [Protection of Civilian] sites, are among key populations that are considered to be at higher-risk of contracting HIV/AIDS,” Salma Taher, Global Fund Project Officer of the UN International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)), explained the significance of this roll out.

Last year, along with tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS was one of the leading causes of mortality in the PoC sites, where people are often unable to access to health facilities outside the sites due to safety or weak infrastructure.

Since the roll out began, at protection sites in Bentiu, Malakal and Wau, in July, IOM has tested 213 people, with 16 testing positive and enrolling in antiretroviral treatment.

With timely diagnosis and antiretroviral treatment, the life expectancy of

HIV-positive patients has been proven to improve substantially, for about an additional 10 years, according to a recent study.

The new comprehensive services are made possible for the broader public visiting the sites, rather than previously just services for pregnant mothers.

Moreover, HIV/AIDS awareness-raising campaigns are carried out, and hundreds of peer counselors are being trained across the country.

Mental health and psychosocial support are also provided to people living with HIV/AIDS and those affected by gender-based violence.

This expansion of health services is a joint effort of IOM, the UN Development Fund, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

[ICC prosecutor urges handover of Al-Saiqa brigade commander, others wanted for alleged crimes in Libya](#)

8 November 2017 – The International Criminal Court has issued an arrest warrant for Major Mahmoud Mustafa Busayf al-Werfalli, a commander in the Al-Saiqa Brigade accused of murdering 33 people in the context of the ongoing conflict in Libya, ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda told the United Nations Security Council.

Addressing the Council in New York, the Prosecutor also urged the international community to turn over Al-Tuhamy Mohamed Khaled, former head of the Libyan Internal Security Agency, and Saif Al-Islam Gaddafi.

Mr. Busayf Al-Werfalli, is a commander in the Benghazi-based Al-Saiqa Brigade, who, according to Ms. Bensouda, has been – and possibly still is – active in the Libyan National Army’s (LNA) ‘Operation National Dignity.’

In her remarks to the Council, the ICC Prosecutor appealed directly to General Khalifa Haftar, head of the Libyan National Army, “to demonstrate, by concrete actions, respect for international justice by ensuring Mr al-Werfalli’s immediate transfer to the Libyan authorities so that he may be surrendered to the court without delay.”

“My Office continues to request States Parties, non-States Parties and organizations to assist in securing the arrest of persons subject to an ICC warrant,” Ms. Bensouda told the Council.

The call for accountability comes amidst continued concern over the security

situation in Libya, which has been in conflict since a disputed election in 2014 following the 2011 toppling of long-time leader Muammar Gaddafi.

In recent months, Ms. Bensouda said she noted “with grave concern” reports of unlawful killings, including the execution of detained persons; kidnappings and forced disappearances; torture; prolonged detentions without trial or other legal process; and arbitrary detention, torture, rape, and other ill-treatment of migrants in official and unofficial detention centres.

Reports have also emerged that 36 male corpses were found in the totem of al-Abyar, outside of Benghazi.

“This is also of grave concern,” she said. “The bodies were reportedly handcuffed, showed signs of torture, and displayed bullet wounds to the head.”

The prosecutor also echoed Ghassan Salamé in condemning recent airstrikes in a residential neighbourhood in Derna that appear to have resulted in the tragic deaths of civilians, including at least 12 children and women.

[UN agriculture agency launches handbook to improve safety in banana farming sector](#)

8 November 2017 – The United Nations agriculture agency and the Government of Ecuador launched Wednesday a practical guide for workers in the banana sector – the most exported fresh fruit in the world, both by volume and by economic value – to promote healthier and safer work conditions.

“The banana sector serves as an [essential source of employment and income](#) for thousands of rural households in developing countries and the manual, while initially aimed at workers in Ecuador, can be adapted >for use around the world,” said the Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)) in a news statement.

Presented on Wednesday, at the [Third Conference of the World Banana Forum](#) in Geneva, the [publication](#) outlines a series of recommendations for [trainers](#) and [workers](#) on how to manage banana farm risks and more safely carry out work.

It includes a wide range of guidelines covering topics, including proper handling, storage and use of agrochemicals/pesticides; measures for adequate personal protection, including first aid in emergency situations; ergonomic risk information; and ways to stop gender-related violence and other human rights abuses.

The conference brought together over 300 representatives from the banana

sector along with other stakeholders, including UN agencies, governments, importers, exporters, retailers, producers, consumer associations, trade unions and civil society organizations.

Banana production

After cereals, sugar, coffee and cocoa, bananas are the most traded agricultural product in the world. Attempts to lower production costs often lead to disastrous consequences on the rights of workers and on the environment, according to FAO.

“For example, banana plantations use 10 times more pesticides than conventional plantations in developed countries. Elevated exposure to these agrochemicals can cause serious health problems for workers and neighbouring communities – one of the topics addressed in the manual,” FAO said in the news statement.

The manual also serves as a guide to identify risks and also as a source of information regarding current legislation to report on work-related accidents.

Of the almost 100 million tons of bananas consumed each year globally, around 20 million are exported. Of those, almost 6 million come from Ecuador, the world’s largest exporter and the country chosen by the Banana Initiative for Occupational Health and Safety – coordinated by the FAO-led [World Banana Forum](#) and the non-governmental organizations Solidaridad and Bananalink – as a priority country for the manual’s development.

The guide is the result of an unprecedented consensus between the public and private sectors and civil society, and includes all current legislation applicable to the sector in Ecuador. It is expected to be useful for some 250,000 direct workers and from two to 2.5 million workers related to banana exports in the country.

Given that banana farming is carried out similarly around the world, the initiative can be adapted and replicated in banana producing countries from Latin America to Asia and the Pacific, incorporating their own legislation.