

Environmental recovery key to post-conflict development in Colombia – UN agency

24 March 2017 – Concluding a mission to Colombia, a multi-disciplinary team of United Nations environment experts have highlighted that the country has a unique opportunity to promote sustainable and resilient livelihoods in which the nature serves as the foundation for long-lasting peace.

In a news release today, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) said that different rebel groups and criminal gangs, which controlled large parts of the country for decades, illegally extracted and exploited natural resources leading to major environmental damage, including illegal cropping, deforestation and the unregulated use of hazardous chemicals.

The UN team's visit and aerial inspection of the Quito and Atrato rivers uncovered the scale of environmental challenges brought by large scale and mechanized illegal operations.

"The environmental destruction in the Quito river basin is significant in terms of scope and magnitude, due to a combination of illegal mining and deforestation," read the release.

Also, the release of Mercury (one of the most hazardous chemicals used in mining) into the environment has added significant challenges given the potential that the heavy, toxic, metal can reach the community through air, water and food chain.

The UN team was invited by the Colombian President, Juan Manuel Santos, to identify priority actions towards mitigating the health and livelihood risks from the environmental damage in priority areas for post-conflict development.

"Environment is at the heart of post-conflict development in Colombia," said Leo Heileman, the Director of the UNEP Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, noting that the UN agency "will unwaveringly stand by Colombia during the post-conflict phase."

Initial support proposed by UNEP includes technical recommendations and training for the effective implementation of environmental peace-building projects; strategic environmental assessment of key post-conflict interventions; advice on measures to improve social, economic and environmental conditions for the extractive sector and to remediate damage caused by illegal operations; and strengthening of the institutional and technical capacities.

On its part, the Colombian Government emphasized the importance of strengthening the environmental dividends of peace and fostering green growth

as pillars for sustainable development, noted the UNEP news release.

Notice: DT2 8QR, Mr Jonathan Walsh: environmental permit application advertisement

The Environment Agency consults the public on certain applications for waste operations, mining waste operations, installations, water discharge and groundwater activities. The arrangements are explained in its [Public Participation Statement](#)

These notices explain:

- what the application is about
- which Environment Agency office you can visit to see the application documents on the public register
- when you need to comment by

The Environment Agency will decide:

- whether to grant or refuse the application
-

New EU project to enhance coastal infrastructure in Wales and Ireland

More than €3m of EU funds is being invested in the Ecostructure project, which will develop and trial new methods to enhance the quality of coastal structures, including sea-walls and tidal lagoons, through more ecologically-sensitive design.

The project has been funded through the Ireland-Wales co-operation programme, which is helping to strengthen economic links and collaboration between the two countries.

Welsh Government Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

“Cross-border projects between Wales and Ireland are important because they bring together expertise from both nations to meet shared challenges and opportunities from our Irish Sea border.

“Aberystwyth University and its partners will benefit from more €3m of EU funds to deliver this project. It’s another example of the advantages to Wales of continued access to EU co-operation programmes after the UK leaves the EU.”

The investment in Ecostructure will help to modernise future coastal development, create new business opportunities for local companies and improve the protection of wildlife and local ecosystems.

The project will be led by Aberystwyth University, in collaboration with University College Dublin, Bangor University, University College Cork and Swansea University.

Dr Joe Ironside, from Aberystwyth University’s Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences, said:

“In response to increased storminess and rising sea levels, as well as the need for sustainable renewable energy generation, hard coastal infrastructure is likely to increase along Irish Sea coastlines.

“In Wales and Ireland, we currently rely on man-made sea defences to protect many of our most important cities, towns and transport links from floods and storms.

“These artificial structures tend to provide poor habitats for wildlife, but the eco-engineering we’ll be trialling through this project has huge potential for improving coastal infrastructure and better protecting ecosystems and marine life.”

Press release: Foreign Secretary Statement at the UNSC Briefing on Somalia

I’m grateful to President Farmajo for making his first address to this Council, to Michael Keating, the Special Representative, and Special

Representative Madeira for their words.

Last week, I was fortunate enough to visit Somalia at a time which the Secretary-General has described as “tragic and hopeful”. Today has been a chance for President Farmajo to describe how the Federal Government plans to bring peace and stability. And, I hope you will take a clear message from this meeting that while you work for the benefit of Somalia, Mr President, the Security Council will stand with you.

But we meet at a moment when Somalia faces the daunting prospect of its third famine in 25 years. We cannot forget that the last time Somalia was blighted by starvation, in 2011, no fewer than 260,000 people died. Today, over 6 million Somalis need help. The crisis also risks undermining the hard-won political and security progress that has been made.

The good news is that if we learn the lessons of 2011 and act early and decisively, then the famine can still be prevented. Britain has contributed over \$135 million of emergency aid to Somalia this year. This UK aid will provide more than a million people with food, water and emergency health care. I would urge all our partners to support the relief effort that is now underway. And I urge the Somali Government to deliver the commitments they have made to improve access and to remove logistical blockages, as part of their welcome focus on this issue.

In Mogadishu last week, I witnessed a military training session for the Somali National Army and AMISOM troops. A heavy responsibility rests on these brave soldiers to guarantee the security, the security on which every other form of progress depends. This is a critical time for security in Somalia. We must work together to agree a clear and long term plan for international security support in Somalia. We hope to make progress on a Security Pact during the forthcoming Somalia Conference in London.

The most urgent requirement is for a political agreement between the Federal Government and Federal Member States on the security architecture of the Somali security forces. Once this has been agreed, the international community should set out its comprehensive and coordinated support to Somalia on security sector reform.

We also need to agree on the shape of a conditions-based transition away from AMISOM to the Somali security forces. I cannot commend highly enough the prowess and bravery of AMISOM soldiers and their Somali counterparts in the struggle against Al-Shabaab. They have made a real difference to Somalia and to the security of East Africa as a whole – and we are all conscious of their sacrifice.

It is precisely because we must not allow their sacrifice to be in vain that we need to ensure a successful transition. The African Union is a central partner – and the forthcoming joint UN-AU review will be central in setting the future direction of that partnership. I hope that all members of this Council will be open minded, particularly as regards funding, so that Somalia’s progress is not jeopardised by a hasty transition. Security is one urgent aspect of the broader constitutional settlement that a stable federal

Somalia needs.

The Federal Government and Member States will also need to agree on how to share power and resources. Resolving these questions will be crucial for Somalia's long term stability. And I look forward to a one-person, one-vote election in four years time. I also welcome the focus of President Farmajo on promoting economic recovery and creating jobs for a new generation of young and ambitious Somalis.

For this to succeed, the Government will need to continue to make progress on important economic reforms, comply with the current IMF programme and improve the business environment. These steps will also be essential for Somalia to be able to make progress towards its aims of accessing multilateral finance and debt relief.

At this crucial time, Britain will join the UN and the Federal Government to host a Conference on Somalia in London in May. The Conference will assess the response to the humanitarian emergency, accelerate progress on security and adopt a new partnership agreement that sets the terms of the relationship between Somalia and the international community for the coming years.

A peaceful and prosperous Somalia is the aim we all share. And let me say to President Farmajo that the Security Council will stand alongside you as you strive to achieve that goal.

Press release: Foreign Secretary **Statement at the UNSC briefing on** **South Sudan**

As we sit safely in this Council Chamber, villages in South Sudan are being raided and plundered and set ablaze. Thousands of men, women and children are being driven from their homes, separated from their families and forced to endure terror and hunger as they seek safety in squalid camps.

The toll of suffering in South Sudan has grown inexorably. At the close of 2015, some 2 million people had been displaced. Today, that figure has risen to 3 million, almost half of whom are refugees in neighbouring countries, including up to a million in Uganda. Last month alone, the brutal cycle of raiding, retaliation and counter-retaliation compelled another 80,000 people to flee. And, most tellingly of all, famine has been declared in areas of Former Unity State – the first famine in the world for six years.

Any visitor to that region of South Sudan will know that its green and fertile plains are watered by the tributaries of the White Nile. Nature and geography therefore cannot explain why famine has struck; only the avarice

and folly of human beings are to blame. And I'm reminded of the hymn of Bishop Heber: "Though every prospect pleases, only man is vile." And we should be in no doubt that famine could blight other areas if the fighting does not stop. Against this background, no member of the Security Council can escape our responsibility to renew our efforts to restore peace in South Sudan. Today and each day afterwards, we must demonstrate the unity of this Council over what needs to be done.

The Peace Accord of 2015 must be revived in order to deliver a genuine political process, embracing all the people of South Sudan, and beginning the task of reconciliation and healing. There are three key steps to achieve this. First, there can be no real dialogue for as long as South Sudan is ravaged by fighting. All parties must respect an immediate cessation of hostilities. As President, Salva Kiir is responsible for taking the first step – and others must follow. Second, there must be impartial leadership of the effort to revive the political process.

Finally, any talks will only bring long-term peace if all South Sudanese are represented. That means including not only the opposing forces, but also other armed groups, political parties, displaced people, refugees, youth and women. President Konaré, the AU High Representative for South Sudan, Prime Minister Hailemariam, the Chair of IGAD, and António Guterres, the Secretary General, have resolved to drive this forward together. I also welcome President Mogae, the Chair of the Joint Management and Evaluation Commission, who is responsible for enforcing implementation of the peace agreement.

We, as the Security Council, must demonstrate our wholehearted support for their efforts. And those responsible for atrocities must be brought to account through the establishment of a Hybrid Court. Given the scale of the suffering, all of the opposing forces have special responsibility to allow the delivery of aid wherever required, anywhere in the country. I am deeply concerned by reports that the Government of South Sudan has denied its own citizens the help they so desperately need by blocking humanitarian deliveries – including in Unity State, where famine has struck. We should all make clear that denying food to the starving is simply unconscionable. Nor can we accept a situation whereby the Government or any armed group obstructs the efforts of aid agencies to deliver emergency supplies or of UNMISS to protect civilians.

We should also spell out, with unity, clarity and conviction, what progress we expect from the Government. And we need to back this up by resolving that this Council will consider alternative measures – including an arms embargo and targeted sanctions on individuals – if this progress fails to materialise. The UK remains convinced that an arms embargo would serve to protect ordinary South Sudanese from the worst excesses of military power and on a future occasion we will ask the Council to reconsider this measure.

Our strength of feeling arises, partly from Britain's profound ties of history and friendship with the people of South Sudan. We were a guarantor of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005 which paved the way for South Sudan to achieve independence. The UK was a witness to the Peace Accord of 2015 that sought – unavailingly – to end the current conflict. We are now the

second biggest bilateral donor to South Sudan. And we are strengthening UNMISS peacekeeping by deploying almost 400 British military engineers, medics and a field hospital.

The Council will know that over 200,000 civilians are sheltering inside UN sites across South Sudan, unable to leave these barbed wire confines in case they are murdered for no other reason than their ethnicity. Day after day, UNMISS tries to protect these civilians – and I know that British peacekeepers will help UNMISS fulfil this task. But South Sudan's people should not have to rely on outside protection. And if our efforts falter, the Council should be in no doubt that South Sudan's tragedy could become yet worse. There is an urgent need for collective action, particularly by neighbouring countries who already host 1.4 million refugees. As Ms Sunday has just told the Council today, the innocent and the most vulnerable are enduring the greatest suffering in this war.

We're all here today because we have an obligation to act and we cannot leave this meeting believing that our work is done. And we should acknowledge that a terrible failure of political leadership lies behind the bloodshed. At every level we must therefore place pressure on the leaders of South Sudan – both in Government and in opposition – to act in the best interests of their people. We – the Security Council, the UN, IGAD and the AU – must help the South Sudanese to come together to agree on a common vision of their country's future. And we should all stand ready to make that vision a reality.