

Our Environment, Our Wealth



ENVIRONMENT FOR PEACE AND REGIONAL COOPERATION

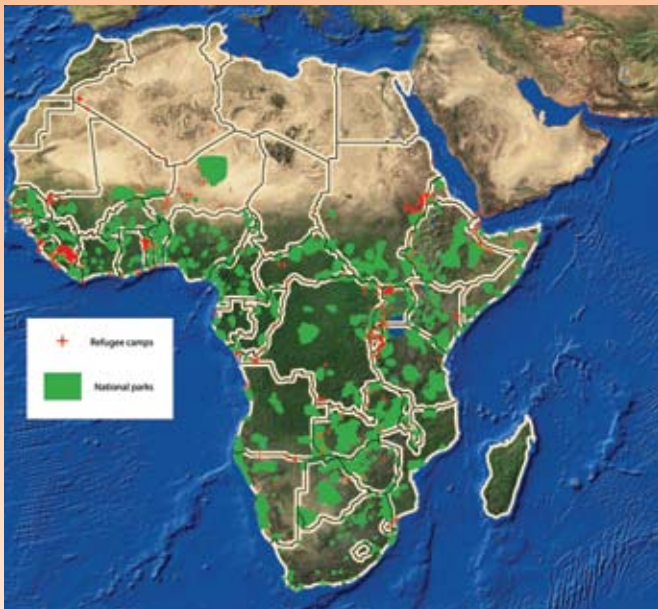
"Safeguarding the environment is... an essential component of poverty eradication and one of the foundations of peace and security." KOFI ANNAN, UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL, 1997

Conflict

Conflict is a major driver of environmental change, and it has significant implications for development and human well-being (Ghobarah and others 2001, Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf 2002, Luckham and others 2001). Many of the conflicts in the region are internal and cross-border disagreements often relate to natural resource use. There is a strong negative correlation between conflict and human development: in 2005 most of the countries with the lowest Human Development Index (HDI) rankings were also those immersed in conflict or had recently emerged from it.

- Since 1970, more than 30 wars have been fought in Africa. Severe military conflict in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is reported to cut life expectancy by 4-6 years. Between 1980 and 2000, Africa lost over 50 per cent of its infrastructure to conflict.

Refugee influx adjacent to national parks



Source: UNEP/DEWA/GRID 2005; data from UNHCR 2004

- Since 1960, more than eight million people have died directly or indirectly as a result of war in Africa, and projections suggest that by 2020 injuries caused by war will have become the eighth most important factor placing a disease burden on society (DfID 2001). Specific groups, such as

women, who rely on the collection of natural resources (firewood or water) or farming as many people in rural Africa do, are targeted. War can lead to forced displacement and the destruction of homes, crops and food stocks.

- In 2004, there were almost 2.9 million officially-registered refugees in Africa, and many more people living outside of their country of origin without legal protection. By 2005, this number had risen to 4.9 million. Armed conflict is a major expense, resulting in the diversion of essential resources from human and economic development.
- It is estimated that one in three African city-dwellers lives in life-threatening conditions. In Angola, for example, a combination of war-related factors resulted in rapid and unplanned urbanization. The population of the capital city, Luanda, doubled from 1990 to 2001. This was in part due to the effects the war had in rural areas, including reduced access to agricultural land because of landmines, related chronic food insecurity and isolation from markets
- According to the World Bank, the diversion of resources to finance war was about US\$1 000 million annually in Central Africa, and more than US\$800 million in Western Africa. Additionally, refugee assistance is estimated at more than US\$500 million for Central Africa alone.
- Food production is drastically affected by armed conflict. According to some studies, areas affected by conflict suffer annual losses of more than 12 per cent of production. In the extreme case of Angola, for example, production was reduced by 44.5 per cent, and less than 4 per cent of arable land was under commercial or subsistence production in 2000.
- Peace breaches make it more difficult to achieve cooperation, including cooperation over the environment. Women, in particular, become vulnerable to attack as they access natural resources such as firewood and fresh water in

periods of war. The cultural fabric that constitutes communities can be torn apart. Management of natural resources is an important part of this cultural fabric, and one which is also vital for the provision of basic needs such as food, warmth and shelter.

- Countries with a high dependency on oil and mineral exports tend to have high mortality rates for children under five. In Nigeria, annual oil revenues are around US\$40 000 million. Despite this, the per capita income is only about US\$290 per year (Douglas and others 2003). Botswana, on the other hand, has adopted socially responsible reinvestment systems reinvesting most of its mineral revenues in accordance with criteria explicitly aimed at sustainability and the development of physical and human capital, guided by a series of six-year National Development Plans (NDPs) and, more recently the objectives of Vision 2016.
- In several parts of Africa, timber has become associated with violent conflict. In Liberia, some timber operators doubled as middlemen in arms deals and in the trade in “blood diamonds” (Global Witness 2002). Illegal logging on public lands is estimated to result in annual losses of US\$4.2 million in Congo and US\$10.1 million in Gabon (World Bank 2003).

Regional cooperation

- Africa has a long history of cooperation in wildlife management, dating back to agreements such as the 1933 London Convention Relative to the Preservation of Fauna and Flora in Their Natural State. The management of wildlife has evolved since then – from preservation to sustainable utilization. Southern Africa has adopted and implemented a wide range of Transboundary Natural Resources Management initiatives, from transboundary parks, to integrated management frameworks for shared marine ecosystems.
- The regional impacts of conflict are in many ways an incentive for regional solutions and cooperation, and there have been multiple regional responses that seek to improve cooperation around the environment. The African Union (AU), along with sub-regional bodies, plays a critical role in peace-building and cooperation. There is enhanced openness on the part of many African governments to discuss problems of conflict which were

previously treated as “internal” and to seek regional or international solutions.

- Regional processes, such as the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) and African Ministerial Council on Water (AMCOW) provide leadership on environment and freshwater. AMCEN has been in existence since 1985, while AMCOW was launched in 2002. Both mobilize political and technical support to address diverse environmental issues, such as land degradation and desertification, chemicals management, access to safe water and sanitation, and integrated water resource management (IWRM).
- It is becoming increasingly common to address key sustainable development and environmental management in conjunction with other issues during peace negotiation processes. The various protocols signed during negotiations for the end of the conflict in southern Sudan are good examples of this trend. The Protocol on Wealth-sharing, governs the sharing of oil revenues.
- African ministers have also pursued cooperative initiatives on critical environmental issues, such as energy use, the phase-out of leaded fuel, and chemicals. They have also adopted an agricultural initiative (Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme) to boost production and help the region attain food self-sufficiency (See Chapter 3: Land). Through the NEPAD process, African governments have also produced a health strategy, which among other issues, recognizes the centrality of health to development, and that poverty cannot be eradicated, or substantially alleviated, as long disease, disability and early mortality continue to burden Africa’s people.

Africa has made considerable progress towards building peace. In 1998, there were 14 countries engaged in armed conflict or civil strife; by August 2005, the UN Secretary-General reported that only 3 countries were engaged in major conflict although many more countries were involved in civil strife of a lower intensity. Most countries have greatly improved their governance systems, yet a combination of historical, external and internal factors continue to contribute to conflict.

For More Information Please Contact: Nick Nuttall, UNEP Spokesperson, Office of the Executive Director, on Tel: 254 20 623084, Mobile: 41 79 596 5737, e-mail: nick.nuttall@unep.org or Angèle Luh - Sy, Information Officer at the Regional office for Africa on Tel: 254 20 624292, E-mail: angele.luh@unep.org

African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN),

c/o UNEP Regional Office for Africa
P.O. Box 30552, Nairobi 00100, Kenya

Tel: (+254) 20 7624616, Fax: (+254) 20 762392



United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

P.O. Box 30552, Nairobi 00100, Kenya

Tel: (+254) 20 7623287, Fax: (+254) 20 7624309

E-mail: Africa.Coordinator@unep.org