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FOCUS ON THE DETERIORATING VULNERABILITY SITUATION IN COUNTRY

OVERVIEW

- President Yoweri Museveni and UN Secretary-General António Guterres met at the sidelines of the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, where they agreed to co-host a Solidarity Conference to mobilise resources for refugees in Uganda in March 2017.
- UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation, Forest Whitaker, the acclaimed film actor, along with a UNESCO delegation visited Uganda from 7th to 12th February 2017, to consolidate the Harmonizer Programme of Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative (WDPI), which was launched in Uganda in 2012. Whitaker who is a member of the Advocacy Group for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasized the need to support young people's ideas, especially those that are in line with the SDGs.
- Uganda's National Wetlands Atlas – detailing the location and current state of wetlands in the country was launched on 2nd February during the national commemoration of World Wetlands Day in Kalungu District. This is the second volume of the Atlas and it showcases all of Uganda's wetland systems in visual form. Research and mapping for the Atlas was carried out by the Ministry of Water and Environment, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) following a request by President Yoweri Museveni to have data to address the growing devastation of the wetlands as a result of industrialisation and development.

PRESIDENT MUSEVENI AND UN SECRETARY-GENERAL ANTONIO GUTERRES TO HOST UGANDA SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE ON REFUGEES

President Yoweri Museveni and the new United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, met at the sidelines of the 28th Ordinary Summit of the African Union in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 29th January 2017.

During the meeting, President Museveni urged the United Nations to help Uganda sustain its support to the growing number of refugees finding safety in its communities every day. The President reiterated Uganda's commitment to keep its borders open to the African brothers and sisters seeking refuge and invited the UN and international partners to help mobilize resources to address emergency needs and the increasing pressures on land, basic

services, the environment and livelihoods that are arising. Uganda is now home to more than 1 million refugees.



President Yoweri Museveni and UN Secretary-General António Guterres at the sidelines of the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, where they agreed to co-host a Solidarity Conference to mobilise resources for Refugees in Uganda in March 2017

The two leaders agreed to host a solidarity conference in Uganda in March to mobilise resources to support the rapidly growing number of refugees and its impact on its Ugandan hosts. Uganda and the United Nations are the conveners. The Solidarity Conference during which participants can make pledges of support will be preceded by visits to refugee districts and a policy forum to increase awareness of the challenges and opportunities in Uganda. Heads of State and Government as well as Ministers from Member States of the United Nations, development and humanitarian agencies, as well as business leaders and NGOs will be invited to share how they can contribute to Uganda's inclusive refugee approach that aims to protect and empower refugees and Ugandan citizens alike. This Conference builds upon President Museveni's call to humanitarian and development partners to ensure that refugees and host communities acquire the necessary skills to provide for themselves. This would help refugees be better equipped to support their country's development the day they are able to return and it will ensure that they are able to contribute to development of the communities where they currently reside enabling Ugandan communities to benefit from hosting the refugees. The Solidarity Conference is an opportunity to witness how the 2030 Agenda principle of leaving no one behind is being implemented in Uganda.

As part of national efforts to ensure that humanitarian and development action are informed by environment protection, President Museveni has also requested the United Nations to support Uganda's efforts to protect and restore its wetlands including in districts hosting refugees. A comprehensive approach to development in refugee hosting districts is currently being developed that will provide a clear outline of activities to empower communities living next to wetlands and forests on how to gain an income without destroying these important ecosystems. A particular focus will be on employment and learning opportunities for the youth including refugees and host communities. Public Private Partnerships will be sought to mobilize investments in vocational training, equipment and personnel for health services, access to secondary and tertiary education as well as support for small emerging entrepreneurs in eco-friendly businesses sectors. If Uganda is to successfully promote the sustainable use of its ecosystems, halt biodiversity loss while it continues to host refugees and strives to achieve its development aspirations support from international partners is critical now.

According to UNHCR Uganda Operational Update on the South Sudan Emergency response dated 25 -31 January 2017, the total number of South Sudanese refugees in Uganda is was 698,030 and the daily average of new arrivals during this period was 3,468. While humanitarian actors deal with the response to displacement, for example, by setting up refugee settlements and providing food and other essential services, the United Nations also works with local and national authorities to help them support refugees and host communities in other key area such as livelihoods and economic recovery, social cohesion and inclusive development. UNDP has finalized preparations to implement an Emergency Response and Resilience Strategy that aims to strengthen the resilience of refugees, host communities, local governments and relevant national institutions to cope with and recover from the impact of the large influx of South Sudanese refugees. This contribution to the UN Country Team and World Bank led Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHoPE) strategy developed to complement the Government of Uganda's Settlement Transformation Agenda. UNDP is engaging with other UN agencies such as ILO and UNCDF to increase the diversity of options that can be offered in these sectors. Outreach to development partners and private sector leaders will commence shortly.

AGENDA 2030 GOALS ARE LIFE GOALS – UNSECO SPECIAL ENVOY FOREST WHITAKER

UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation, Forest Whitaker, the renowned multiple award winning film actor, along with a UNESCO Delegation led by UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences, Ms. Nada Al-Nashif and the Director of Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative (WDPI) Ms. Caroline Descombris are visiting Uganda from 7th to 12th February 2017.

The purpose of the visit is to consolidate the Harmonizer Programme of WDPI, which was launched in Uganda in 2012 and to advocate for the SDGs. The Programme, which trains young people in conflict resolution, leadership, peace and community building as well as mediation skills to promoter inner healing, is currently being implemented in Northern Uganda and will now be extended to Kiryandongo District. The delegation was welcomed to Uganda by the United Nations Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, Rosa Malango who accompanied the delegation during the visit to Hope North to meet young peacemakers from Uganda and South Sudan as well as to Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement. The Special Envoy will meet youth, partners and stakeholders including NGOs, Government Officials and development partners in Kiryandongo, Gulu and Kampala.



Mr. Forest Whitaker, UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation (standing 5th from left); Ms. Rosa Malango, UN Resident Coordinator (centre with hat); and Ms. Nada Al- Nashif, UNESCO Assistant Director General for Social and Human Science (standing fifth from right), with youth from Northern Uganda and South Sudan at a training one Peace & Conflict Resolution in Kiryandongo District on 8th February 2017.

“I am excited to be here to see the work we are doing with the young people. We try to support the ideas that the youth in Uganda and other parts of the world have to improve their lives,” said Mr. Whitaker at media briefing at the UN Offices in Kampala on 8th February 2017. Considering the youth bulge in Uganda and the African continent, Whitaker

who is a member of the Advocacy Group for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasized the need to support young people's ideas, especially those that bring to life the SDGs. "People need to understand that they share the responsibility in each of these goals. These are goals of life," he said. Mr. Whitaker's work with young people is particularly significant in Uganda given that Uganda has one of the youngest populations in the world with 70% of the population below 30 years of age.

UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences, Ms. Nada Al-Nashif emphasized that young people have to be part of national dialogues and interventions drawn from the demand side. She also hailed Uganda for the commitment to refugees and the model that looks after refugees with dignity.

With Uganda currently hosting over a million refugees and with a settlement approach that has become a global model, the UN Resident Coordinator, Rosa Malango, noted that different SDGs are about improving the quality of life at national, regional and global levels. She recognized the importance of involving young people as economic stakeholders who can contribute to an African continent where youth will see no reason to leave to continent as they will be able to freely move among the African States to learn, work and for tourism. In this context supporting emerging entrepreneurship among the youth is important especially taking into consideration that in Uganda alone, according to the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development, 80% of graduates from tertiary institutions are not able to find work. "We need an African continent where young people are born in Uganda, study in Tanzania and can work in Nigeria," Malango said.

The United Nations system in Uganda programmes in support of youth in Uganda is undertaken through the following 10 agencies: UNCDF, FAO, UNWOMEN, ILO, UNFPA, UNDP, UNV, UNAIDS, OHCHR and UNIDO. As of December 2016, these agencies had a combined core investment of \$30 million in Youth Programming in Uganda in the following thematic areas: a) Entrepreneurship and Financial Literacy; b) Sexual Reproductive Health; c) Agriculture and Livelihoods; d) Skills and Employment; e) Governance and Participation; and f) Data, Statistics and Policy. Additional investments have been made in other areas through core interventions.

UGANDA WETLANDS ATLAS LAUNCHED

Uganda's National Wetlands Atlas– detailing the location and current state of wetlands in the country was launched on 2nd February during the national commemoration of World Wetlands Day in Kalungu District. This is the second volume of the National Wetlands Atlas and it not only maps the location of wetlands nationwide but also indicates the trend of their

degradation and makes recommendations on their restoration. Volume I, which was launched in 2015, focused on Kampala, the Capital City and the surrounding wetland system in Wakiso and Mukono districts. A public version of Volume II of the National Wetlands Atlas will be shared with schools and various institutions to ensure that the young generation is educated on the importance of Uganda's wetlands and they participate in their protection.

Ms. Rosa Malango, the UN Resident Coordinator/ UNDP Resident Representative said the Atlas, a collaboration between the Government of Uganda and the United Nations, will be key for Uganda's fight against environmental degradation and climate change as it works towards achieving middle income status.



Hon. Vincent Sempijja, the Minister of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries (holding microphone) launched the Uganda Wetlands Atlas during celebrations to mark World Wetlands day in Kalungu District. Looking on (left) is Ms. Rosa Malango, the UN Resident Coordinator/ UNDP Resident Representative. The Atlas was a collaboration between the Government of Uganda and the United Nations (Photo credit: UNDP Uganda 2017)

Research and mapping for the Atlas was carried out by the Ministry of Water and Environment, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) following a request by President Yoweri Museveni to have

data to address the growing devastation of the wetlands as a result of industrialisation and development.

"I appreciate the assistance provided by UNDP and UNEP in the production of the National Wetlands Atlas. This Atlas will play a major role in allowing us to protect and manage our wetlands better and helping us to plan the restoration of our wetlands around the nation," said President Museveni in a speech read for him by Vincent Sempijja, the Minister of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries. The President expressed concern over the rapid loss of wetlands in the country particular around urban centres and some rural areas in Busoga, Tororo, Kigezi as well as Lwera in Kalungu district where sand mining was destroying the Katonga wetland system in central Uganda. "These activities are carried out by misguided people and we need to educate them so that they can stop. In this way, we can all continue to enjoy the many benefits our wetlands give us," the President said.

To protect these wetlands, Ms. Malango called on all Uganda's to become wetlands' conservation ambassadors as a way of curbing their degradation. She added that wetlands act as natural sponges absorbing and storing excess rain water hence reducing flooding. In the dry season they release the stored water delaying the onset of drought and water shortages.

Scientists estimate that at least 64% of the world's wetlands have disappeared since 1900. In Uganda, the national wetlands area has been on a downward slide from 15.6% in 1994 to 10.3% in 2015. These trends indicate the country's increased risk and vulnerability to natural disasters and other effects of Climate change evident from the prolonged drought in the Country.

Uganda loses about 2% of the wetlands annually, which is equivalent to 751.7 square kilometres countrywide. This affects the population as well as the animals that depend on these wetlands for food and sometimes shelter. It is for this reason that H. E. President Museveni undertook with Ms. Malango a guided tour of some of the degraded wetland areas in Eastern Uganda in December 2016. After the tour, they committed to have both the Government and the UN partner on a Presidential Initiative for Wetlands that will help to accelerate the delivery of a comprehensive response including alternatives to meet the needs of the people in communities who utilise wetlands. The initiative will look at how to improve the livelihoods of those who live close to wetlands by promoting alternative livelihoods such as eco-tourism, by improving access to climate smart approaches to water for drinking and for climate resilient farming among other activities.

To curb their degradation, Ms. Malango also made a call to all Ugandans to take actions to restore and conserve wetlands and reduce the risk of disaster in this country. She invited individuals to become a wetlands ambassador, use water sparingly and participate in activities to conserve and restore wetlands such as planting trees in catchment areas. She encouraged

communities to organise themselves into groups to protect and minimise the amount of waste released into the wetlands and to educate children. Civil Society Organisations were encouraged to support efforts by creating awareness about the importance of wetlands and working with local governments to mobilise resources. The Government's efforts to designate wetlands as protected areas, restore degraded wetlands and enforce the laws put in place to protect them need to be shared across all Ministries, Departments and Agencies. A renewed partnership with local governments and civil society will help these efforts and accelerate action in key areas such as housing, agriculture and industry. Ms. Malango invited Members of Parliament, as the law makers and the eyes and ears of the people, to increase their efforts to ensure that their constituencies as well as mandated government agencies are protecting wetlands. As Public Private Partnerships are key, the Private Sector was invited to protect wetlands by carrying out Environmental Impact Assessments and engaging communities in their areas of investments.

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