



"We must recognize peace and security as a critical "fourth dimension" of sustainable development. We must also acknowledge that durable peace and post-conflict development depend on environmental protection and good governance of natural resources." Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in his message to mark the International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict.

The [United Nations Environment Programme \(UNEP\)](#) has found that over the last 60 years, at least 40 percent of all internal conflicts have been linked to the exploitation of natural resources, whether high-value resources such as timber, diamonds, gold and oil, or scarce resources such as fertile land and water. Conflicts involving natural resources have also been found to be twice as likely to relapse.

The United Nations attaches great importance to ensuring that action on the environment is part of conflict prevention, [peacekeeping](#) and peacebuilding strategies - because there can be no durable peace if the natural resources that sustain livelihoods and ecosystems are destroyed.

Mankind has always counted its war casualties in terms of dead and wounded soldiers and civilians, destroyed cities and livelihoods, the environment has often remained the unpublicized victim of war. Water wells have been polluted, crops torched, forests cut down, soils poisoned, and animals killed to gain military advantage.

#### **Additional links:**

- [Official webpage for the Day](#)

- Six United Nations agencies and departments, coordinated by the [UN Framework Team for Preventive Action](#), have partnered with the [European Union \(EU\)](#) to help countries reduce tensions over natural resource and use environmental management for peacebuilding and conflict prevention.
- [International Observance website](#)