



The environment has often remained the unpublicized victim of war. Today the United Nations marks the International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict.

"[W]e stress the critical importance of protecting the environment in times of armed conflict and restoring the good governance of natural resources during post-conflict reconstruction. We also recognize the important role that natural resources play in supporting the livelihoods and resilience of all members of society, especially women, and the implications of sustainable natural resource management for conflict prevention and peace." - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

Though 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.

Furthermore, 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.

Additional links

[Documentary 'Scarred Lands and Wounded Lives: The Environmental Footprint of War'](#)

[United Nations Environment Programme \(UNEP\)](#)

[Post-Conflict Environmental Assessments](#)

[UNEP: Protecting the Environment During Armed Conflict An Inventory and Analysis of International Law](#)