



Forest cover to protect livelihoods

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The 2019 International Day of Forests, celebrated on 21 March, will address the theme “Forests and Education”. It will seek to raise awareness on how sustainably managed forests provide a wide array of contributions in this area. Forests are the lifeblood for many communities on our planet and particularly in developing countries where many depend on crops, forest extraction and other income sources for their livelihoods. According to the sixth edition of the Global Environment Outlook report released on 4 March 2019, humanity is already seriously affected by ongoing systemic ecological changes such as climate change and land use change—especially deforestation. “These have reached the point that the ecological foundations of human society and natural systems that support other species and provide invaluable ecosystem services are in great danger,” says the report. The Outlook notes that the poor are more exposed to extreme climate conditions and experience greater rainfall fluctuations, while the poorest in dry regions experience the greatest forest loss. Poor people are often disproportionately exposed to droughts and floods, particularly in urban areas, and in many countries in Africa. South Sudan is a case in point. According to the country’s first-ever State of the Environment and Outlook Report, launched in June 2018, more than 90 per cent of the country’s population directly depends on forests for fuelwood and charcoal production, timber for construction, and non-timber forest products for food and nutrition security. There is no reliable data on the extent of forests in South Sudan, since a detailed forest survey and inventory has never been carried out. Depending on the source, estimates of the proportion of forest cover in the area vary from 11 to 35 per cent. And this resource is fast disappearing. “Sustainable management of South Sudan’s forests offers South Sudan an opportunity to provide jobs and income, and to maintain the ecological goods and services they provide. The Government of South Sudan is cognizant of the need to stem deforestation, and there are several policy frameworks, including the comprehensive 2015 National Forestry Policy which the Government is planning to implement. However, the main gap is availability of the Environment Act, which is still pending in the Ministry of Justice for review,” says Arshad Khan, UN Environment’s South Sudan Country Programme Manager. UN Environment, the leading global environmental authority that sets the environmental agenda, has been active in South Sudan since independence, creating and developing environmental awareness on a national scale to support the government and the people of South Sudan. The 2018 State of the Environment Outlook Report was the result of a study jointly undertaken by UN Environment and South Sudan’s Ministry of Environment and

Forestry. Photo by Ollivier Girard. According to the Global Environment Outlook Regional Assessment for Africa, the continent's forest cover is projected to continue shrinking, declining to less than 600 million hectares by 2050 due to increasing conversion of forests to agriculture to support the rising population and growing demand for firewood. Internal conflicts in most African countries have prevented the existing forests from being developed and sustainably managed to ensure the availability of these goods and services for future generations as well as to cope with the vast range of human-induced damages, including climate change, deforestation, desertification, loss of biodiversity, scarcity of natural resources, pollution, and the consequent natural and the associated environmental impacts. UN Environment, with the support of Member States and other partners, is up for the task of raising awareness and providing technical guidance on how to prevent or reduce the rate of deforestation. It also stresses the importance of good environmental governance and the development and implementation of effective policies to limiting conflicts over forests and other natural resources.

SOURCE:- <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/forest-cover-protect-livelihoods>

