

POST-CONFLICT ZONE GOURMA-MALI: The future of elephants at the centre of debates!

By Salimata Fofana, Le Combat

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The Gourma is shared by the three regions of Mopti, Timbuktu and Gao, lies at the heart of the Sahel and happens to be one of the most affected by the Malian conflict. Its distinctiveness is due mainly to the presence of elephants whose preservation is a national and international issue. . Its distinctiveness is due mainly to the presence of elephants whose preservation is a national and international issue. Today and the future existence of elephants are threatened, hence the organization of a national workshop on the post-conflict situation in the Gourma.

The purpose of this meeting is to mobilize the relevant stakeholders in promoting the emergency reconstruction of peace in the Malian Gourma, in which an in-depth analysis of the evolution of post-conflict social relations as a priority. The Gourma area derives its distinctiveness from the presence of elephants whose preservation is a national and international issue. Although it is consideration of this particular situation that has led to this high-level meeting, the ourputs should result in principles of relevance to all areas affected by the armed conflict in Mali concerned with the process of social reconciliation and reconstruction.

This workshop of reflection and information-sharing on reconciliation and post-conflict reconstruction in the Malian Gourma will address the following themes: the sharing of, structuring and learning from the information available, the roads to reconciliation; and planning the way forward: who should do what and the elements of an action plan.

The Minister responsible for decentralization and territorial administration, Abdramane Oumarou Toure, said that this meeting was taking place in a context of armed conflict that had undermined the social fabric, exacerbated inter-community tensions and upset socio-political equilibria in the Gourma. He continued that the conflict led to massive displacements of populations within Malian borders and with many refugees in neighboring countries. It also threatens the survival of a species specific to the Gourma, the elephant whose protection alone was a national and international issue. "It is our responsibility to pursue to the very end the war against drug traffickers, terrorists and armed bandits of all kinds, who occupied the northern regions of Mali, to make every effort to restore the social fabric, and to reconcile the communities sp that they might live together in the Gourma" he said.

Reconciliation and reconstruction are prerequisites for the future. According to Dr. Susan Canney, Leader of the Mali Elephant Project, and representing The WILD Foundation and the International Conservation Fund of Canada, "This conflict has destabilized the social equilibrium, and upset the economic environment and the socio-political balance of the affected areas. The resulting displacement of people, and tensions between and within communities, has disrupted the equilibrium that allowed rural populations to use, with care, the Gourma's fragile natural resources for their livelihoods."

This initiative will allow discussion over three days at the former Palais de Congres on this subject, is the work of Ministry in charge of Decentralization and Territorial Administration in collaboration with the Ministry of the Environment and Sanitation with the financial support of The WILD Foundation and the International Conservation Fund of Canada.