

Gourma region of Mali: THE CHALLENGE OF RECONCILIATION AND POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION

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The Minister in charge of Decentralization and Regional Planning, Abdourahamane Oumar Touré yesterday chaired the opening ceremony of the workshop for discussion and information sharing on reconciliation and post-conflict reconstruction in the Malian Gourma. The ceremony was held at the International Conference Centre in the presence of government officials, ambassadors and representatives of international organizations.

In her introductory discourse, the Leader of the Mali Elephant Project, Dr Susan Canney, explained, "This is a subject that concerns all Malians, all friends of Mali, and environmentalists familiar with the affected areas. I speak of the armed conflict that has shaken the northern parts of Malian territory for over a year.

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 caution, the Gourma's fragile natural resources for their livelihoods.

How can urgent humanitarian assistance -- essential in this post-conflict phase -- be quickly deployed to alleviate the sufferings of the present, without aggravating the current tensions that are already threatening a peaceful and sustainable future? This is the question we need to ask - which we are already asking - in the Malian Gourma?"

For the representative of The WILD Foundation, Dr Susan Canney, reconciling the communities immersed in a conflict that has been imposed upon them, requires encouraging them, and motivating them to develop and implement natural resource management plans as a means to bring together the multitude of users, occupations and ethnic groups and unify them in a common cause of benefit to all. It also requires being a true promoter of strengthened local governance systems to create a new sense of citizenship.

In addition to the massive displacement of populations and the many refugees Abdourahamane Oumar Toure believes that the conflict also threatens the survival of a particular Gourma species, the elephant, whose protection is in itself a national and international issue. "With the soon ending of the war against drug traffickers, terrorists and gunmen of all ilk who occupied the

northern regions of Mali it is our responsibility to make every effort to restore the social fabric, reconciling communities so they might live together in Gourma" he suggested. The task of rebuilding of all that has been destroyed is certainly not easy but it is exciting. Reconciliation and reconstruction are prerequisites for the future. This workshop aims to ensure that we can look at ways and means to restore social peace, rebuild infrastructure in the medium and long-term, restore the economic fabric and envision a common future with all the people in general and those of the Gourma in particular.

During the workshop, participants will discuss several topics including sharing, structuring and learning from the information available, the roads to reconciliation and planning the way forward. The workshop was organized with the technical and financial support from Wild-Foundation and the International Conservation Fund of Canada.

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For further information see

For the original article see <http://www.essor.ml/gourma-le-defi-de-la-reconciliation-et-de-la-reconstruction-post-conflit-2.html>