Kenya reaffirms its commitment to the maintenance of peace and security globally

The chief guest was the Cabinet Secretary for Defence, Ambassador Raychelle Omamo who was joined by other guests including the Kenya Permanent Representative to the UN Office at Nairobi (UNON), Ambassador Martin Kimani, representatives of the National Police and Kenya Correction Services, the country Director for Global Peace Foundation and President in Charge and Representative of the Soldiers of Peace International

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Upcoming Events

- 1 July  Launch of the MDG Report 2013
- 6 July  International Day of Cooperatives
- 11 July  World Population Day
- 18 July  Nelson Mandela International Day
Against all odds

Fifty four year old Rhoda Vata Kitalu’s life has not been easy. A fire accident at the age of three years left her with severe burns down the left side of her body and four fingers missing from her left hand.

This turned out to be a blessing in disguise because her father broke the tradition of the time to send her to school since she was not able to help with most of the household activities. However, fate came calling again and she dropped out of secondary school due to ill health and lack of school fees.

Rhoda was soon married off, but in 1982, only six years into her marriage she got divorced. She returned to her parents’ home with her three children. Later Rhoda moved to Thika where she did menial jobs and in 2000 she used her savings to purchase a small plot of land in her home village of Ilelambyu in Kyuso Association.

The ceremony commenced with a procession and a march-past by former UN Peacekeepers, led by the military band.

In her speech, the Cabinet Secretary for Defence, Amb. Raychelle Omamo, reiterated Kenya Government’s commitment to continue participating in UN peacekeeping operations. “I wish to assure you that the defence forces shall continue to support the international community as and when called upon under the overall superintendence of the commander in chief, President Uhuru Kenyatta.”

Rhoda is the proud owner of a water tank donated to her under a WFP/FAO/IFAD/ActionAid initiative. © WFP, 2013

The Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Amina Mohammed represented by Ambassador Martin Kimani emphasized: “multilateral engagement for Kenya, particularly with the United Nations is a key pillar of our foreign policy and as such, we identify closely with the UN’s peacekeeping efforts and operations, which play a critical role in the maintenance of peace and stability around the globe.”

The Director General of UNON, Ms. Sahle-Work Zewde welcomed the guests and presented the Secretary-General’s message, in which he noted how the UN is adapting to new challenges. “United Nations peacekeeping is increasingly called on to deploy multi-dimensional operations to help countries transition from conflict to peace, with a significant focus on protecting civilians, including the most vulnerable among them: women and children”.

The Guests observed a minute of silence followed by a wreath-laying ceremony in honor of the departed peacekeepers that lost their lives in the line of duty.

As part of the activities for the day, a successful blood donation exercise was carried out where the former peacekeepers, UN staff members and invited guests donated blood.

The programme concluded with an interactive session with in-and out-of-school youths, focusing on the role of young people in maintaining peace. The youth had an opportunity to go through an exhibition on peace and security issues mounted by all the participating partners.

The International Day of Peacekeepers was established by a UN resolution in 2002 and was first celebrated in 2003. The Day is intended to pay tribute “to all the men and women who have served and continue to serve in UN peacekeeping operations, as well as to honour the memory of those who have lost their lives in the cause of peace”. 

A participant donating blood © Josepbat Kariuki / UNEP, 2013
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District, in the marginal agricultural region in eastern Kenya. She put up a modest house and lives there with her two daughters-in-law and her two grandchildren, while her sons live in the urban areas where they do casual jobs.

In 2009 Rhoda was among those who were identified as needing food assistance and was put under the WFP's Food-for-Asset (FFA) programme. Her community selected her as a Village Relief Committee member, a position she still holds. She keeps their records and gives their monthly reports.

In the first year of the programme, the group dug a communal earth water pan to collect rain water which they mainly used as drinking water for their livestock. In 2010, the programme moved to the farms where the community was taught how to make terraces and introduced to zai pit technology. Zai pits are boxlike pits used to enhance soil fertility as well as retain water. They are suitable for growing maize, sorghum, millet, beans and other crops.

“We started by making terraces and were later introduced to zai pit technology. My crop yield has improved even with the little rain we receive. I used to harvest about three 90kg bags of maize but now I get five,” says Rhoda. She is so pleased with the results that she plans to increase the number of zai pits on her farm.

Rhoda and other women in her community work in groups of four members. “Even though we are compensated through FFA for three days in a week, we work one extra day to ensure that we reach every individual’s farm weekly,” she adds.

Recently, Rhoda benefited from a 1,500ltrs water tank, part of in-puts supplied through a joint initiative of WFP, FAO, IFAD and Actionaid that aims at developing the role that women play in the improvement of food security in their communities. “This is a dream come true for me. I am going to harvest water during this rainy season and use it to expand my vegetable growing and tree planting activities," said an overwhelmed Rhoda.

The agricultural sector is the mainstay of Kenya’s economy, accounting for about 26% of the GDP. About 65% of Kenya’s population lives in rural areas with over 70% of the rural households depending on agriculture as the main source of livelihood. Women are a major force in the agricultural sector constituting more than 70% of all agricultural workers.

The poultry industry is a new fast growing sub-sector under the overall agriculture sector; it has potential to contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Kenya’s Vision2030. It is an important income generating activity for rural small farm holders and contributes to about 1.6% of the agricultural GDP.

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Dairy farmers in Rift Valley Kenya have recorded an increased milk production thanks to a radio based training programme funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) through the Dairy Training Institute (DTI) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries.

This is according to the dairy farmers in this region who were delighted to share their experiences in a workshop organized by FAO on 16 May 2013 in Eldoret town. The aim of the workshop was to present certificates and prizes to farmers who had consistently followed the interactive one hour sessions of the radio programme. Over 10,000 farmers registered for the programme and many more followed the interactive sessions.

The programme dubbed “Maziwa ni Mali” (Milk is wealth) has been airing in a local radio station, Milele FM, over the past few months, targeting small holder dairy farmers in Kenya. It is an activity under FAO’s Improved Community Drought Response and Resilience Programme (ICDRR) and is designed for targeted communities to enable them to better prepare for drought through community planning and action. The overall goal is to contribute to improved food and nutrition security for the smallholder dairy farmers.

Mr. Gilbert Lagat, a member of one of the dairy farmers groups in the region, and also a beneficiary of the programme, said the radio based training program is a useful tool whose contents are educative and applicable besides being a very penetrative and accessible medium of communication for small holder dairy farmers. “Most farmers have since made use of the knowledge gained to keep improving their dairy production which ultimately led to better productivity and guaranteed food security,” he stressed.

During the trainings the farmers learnt the value of different fodder species and multi-purpose trees, including methods of establishing, caring, harvesting, conserving and feeding of the different species to dairy cows. “All group members have since recorded increased milk production, with each member having an average of three litres per cow per day. The least received were two litres and the highest being nine litres,” Mr. Lagat added.

Speaking at the workshop, Mr. Dan Rugabira, FAO Representative in Kenya advised the farmers to continue applying those good practices that they have learnt and to ensure they effectively utilize the good relationships they have established with the Government officers that were supporting this programme. “I would like to show my appreciation to the farmers that followed the programme in a very dedicated manner. I am sure you are already practicing what you learnt and are finding it quite beneficial,” noted Mr. Rugabira.

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Community radios make programming more data driven and responsive to people’s needs

In May 2013, UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa, with the support of the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), implemented a programme to support rural radio stations in Kenya in their efforts to engage more listeners in their programming via mobile phones.

The four Kenyan community radio stations in Mitiito Andei, Voi, Tigania and Asembo Bay were provided with mentoring sessions for staff and volunteers in scaling up the use of Frontline SMS (a free and open software) with a focus on how to engage the audience via text messaging, and keep records of all interactions. Frontline SMS turns a laptop into a central hub for sending, receiving and analyzing text messages. Using a phone or modem, even for subscribers in areas with limited internet access can still utilize the software and reach anyone with a mobile handset.

The training sensitized the community radios to learn more about their listeners and allow the audience to have a more active voice in radio programming. Diana Mariwa from Sauti FM comments: ‘We are working to improve our level of engagement with the communities by having multiple channels for audience inputs. Call-ins are the most popular, followed by SMS and social media. We are currently exploring Frontline SMS and I find it useful in helping us organize information about our listeners, contributing to preparation and creating dialogues for our talk-shows. We need to organize information from all our channels. Once we have managed our data on the issues of our community, I believe it will be useful, not only in having a greater voice in sharing this information with our colleagues, but in increasing the number of listeners, and to inform youth on the business opportunities existing in dairy farming.

It was established that radio based training reaches many farmers and stimulates demand for increased and sustained productivity.
from other community radios, but also when communicating with donors and organizations in finding more sponsorship opportunities in making our radio sustainable.”

Radio stations using the Frontline SMS can also encourage listeners to vote in polls, provide feedback on specific programmes, or pose questions to hosts – using even the most basic mobile phones. Over time, radio stations can analyze the messages and learn about important trends in their listenership. “By its nature, radio usually has the widest possible audience outreach,” said Laura Walker Hudson, CEO of the Social Impact Lab Foundation, makers of Frontline SMS.

“Combining this tool with SMS, the largest two-way digital communications platform on earth, creates a powerful loop in which the audience can actively participate in shaping the programming on their community radio station. Radio stations, by extension, can then offer better information to advertisers, creating outreach in a more targeted manner.”

Ultimately, the effort will help local community radio stations engage their audiences on subjects important to them and raise awareness on problems, identify key services needed, and inform local decision-makers that have to be addressed. It can also help the radio stations to better understand their audience, connecting them to more targeted services from advertisers or non-governmental organizations.

George Mwamodo from Mwanedu FM comments, “Participatory radio is important across the board. No matter what you are doing, even if it is a song request. It is an opportunity for people to open up to us. We want to make sure that we give people the opportunity to have their say by integrating their feedback to make programming more data driven and responsive to people’s needs.”

The software is used by thousands of radio stations, health clinics, and businesses in more than 80 countries around the world to engage communities in issues that are important to them.

UNESCO recognizes that the presence of a community radio is a sign of media pluralism, diversity of content, and the representation of a society’s different groups and interests. A community radio encourages open dialogue and local transparency, and gives a voice to the voiceless.

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**UN-Habitat works with a Kenyan University to offer a Masters Degree in Urban Studies**

The Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology is to be the first in the East Africa region to offer a Masters programme in Urban Studies. In a memorandum of understanding signed between the institute and UN-Habitat, the two partners pledged to work together to develop the programme, which will be on offer from September 2013 and which will enable students to undertake advanced studies in this important field, equipping Kenya with a future generation of urban planners.

The signing took place at the University at a ceremony attended by faculty members of the Department of Architecture and Building Sciences, students and several representatives of Government, including the Permanent Secretaries of the Ministries of Public Works, and Higher Education.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Dr Joan Clos emphasized that urbanization provided an opportunity for countries such as Kenya because of the economic and social benefits that it provides. “You cannot have development without urbanization,” he stressed, “nor urbanization without development.”

As part of the agreement, UN-Habitat pledged support to the University in the development of the programme and in the creation of an Urban Studies Centre – unique to Kenya’s academic institutions. In addition, students of the programme will be able to apply for dedicated internship positions at the organization.

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allowing them to put into practice skills learnt during the course.

Earlier in the month, UN-Habitat also signed an agreement with the Kenya Transition Authority to support sustainable urban development and management in the framework of the devolved system of Government.

The agreement outlines collaboration in urban governance at national, county and sub-county levels in Kenya on policy matters. UN-Habitat, along with the Authority and its partners, is looking forward to outlining major challenges of urban management under devolution and to prepare a demonstration project for a selection of counties and urban areas.

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IOM assists Kenyans stranded in Bosaso to return home

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) on 15 May 2013 assisted six stranded Kenyan migrant workers abandoned at the port of Bosaso, Puntland, to return home.

IOM rescued them after they were deserted for over four months by their employer.

The six, who were part of ten Kenyan crew members employed in a fishing vessel, left the port of Mombasa on 8 November 2012 aboard F/V Royce I for a ten day fishing expedition along the Indian Ocean and eventually docked at the Port of Kismayo.

The ship left for Mogadishu, and the Captain identified only as “Abdirahman,” for unknown reasons abandoned the ship and the crew. Days later, the ship steered by a second captain developed mechanical problems and was forced to dock at the port of Bosaso on 10 December 2012.

Stranded without pay for months, the Puntland Minister for Marine Transport, Ports & Counter Piracy, in collaboration with the Bosaso Seaport Immigration Commander, reached out to IOM for assistance and for the crew members to be supported to go back home.

IOM provided counseling sessions for them as they were affected emotionally and psychologically.

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