UN supports Uganda-Kenya new cross-border initiative for sustainable peace and development in the Turkana, West-Pokot and Karamoja regions.

Entebbe – The United Nations system is supporting efforts of the Governments of Uganda and Kenya, through a new cross-border programme to address chronic vulnerabilities and development challenges in Turkana, West-Pokot of Kenya and Karamoja- Uganda.

So far, the two nations have negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and have agreed on a framework for the implementation of Joint Kenya-Uganda Cross-Border Programme for the Karamoja Cluster for Sustainable Peace and Development. The UNDP has provided seed funding of about 1m USD to kick-start programme activities for June – December 2019.
including the development and finalization of the detailed joint-country programme for 2020-2025 by the joint country technical teams.

The UN Resident Coordinator, Ms Rosa Malango has described the programme as “a game changer for people in the region” that will improve livelihoods, promote eco-tourism, increase cross-border trade and spur development.

“We have the opportunity to transform the Karamoja Cluster into a climate smart corridor where positive traditional values meet technology and smart investments,” Ms. Malango told delegates from Uganda and Kenya plus representatives of various UN agencies at a consultative meeting in Entebbe, Uganda on May 28, 2019.

Ms. Malango pointed out that the programme is not merely about two nations cooperating but placing people at the centre of joint action to improve the quality of life and access to social services. The memorandum lists projects for cross-border collaboration for peace, investment in social services, and sustainable utilisation of shared natural resources as key ingredients for fostering sustainable development in the region.

The direct beneficiaries will be closely related pastoral communities; the Karamajong of Uganda and the Turkana and Pokot of Kenya, that have often fought over resources on this semi-arid region.

The programme will bridge the humanitarian, development and peace nexus for the realization of Sustainable Development Goals. It will therefore bring to life SDG targets related to the elimination of poverty (1), the eradication
of hunger (2), gender equality (5) and the promotion of peace, justice and strong institutions (16).

“"I dream of a prosperous Karamoja community anchored on its values and transformed by new opportunities, where we leave no one behind," Ms Malango said.

Apart from its arable land and a large herd of cattle, the Karamoja cluster is endowed with minerals such as: gold, limestone, uranium, marble, graphite, gypsum and iron ore. The region also boasts of a rich heritage and tourist attractions like the Kidepo Valley National Park. These resources have largely been untapped due to conflict among the pastoral communities in the region over the shared natural resources like water and pasture and the vice of cattle rustling.

According to Uganda’s Minister for Karamoja Affairs, Hon. John Byabagembali, the Karamoja Cluster has appalling human development indicators: high illiteracy, poor health, and high poverty, transhumance pastoralism in search of water and pasture due to arid and semi-arid nature of their environments and cattle rustling.

“The above scenario provides an impetus for all of us to direct our efforts and resolve to mobilize resources and partnerships to raise the living standards of people in these areas. It is my conviction that the new programme will speed up our joint effort to transform the Karamoja Cluster," Hon. Byabagembali said.
The minister commended the United Nations Country Teams of Kenya and Uganda for their support towards the development of Karamoja and other critical sectors in both countries.

The Kenyan minister for Devolution and Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALS), Hon. Eugene Wamalwa, concurred with his Ugandan counterpart, saying the programme will transform the lives and economic status of the people in the Karamoja region.

“I believe that the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding will set a stage for the realisation of sustainable peace and social economic transformation of people in the Karamoja cluster,” Hon. Wamalwa observed.

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