Japan and WHO to establish the first Public Health Emergency Operations Centre (PHEOC) in Juba

The Government of Japan and the UN World Health Organization (WHO) are to establish the first PHEOC in Juba. The USD 450,000 project that comprises PHEOC's infrastructure and equipment comes on top of Japan's multi-year contribution to scale up of blood transfusion services. The PHEOC aims to strengthen preparedness and response capacities for public health emergencies in line with the International Health Regulations of 2005.

The groundbreaking ceremony on 24 May 2017 was presided over by Vice President of the Republic of South Sudan, H.E. James Wani Igga.

The Honourable Dr Riek Gai Kok, Minister of Health (MoH), highlighted the ongoing effort of the Government of South Sudan, facilitated by the contributions of the Government of Japan and the commitments of WHO, to prevent, detect, and control disease outbreaks.

A PHEOC is a hub that brings together, under the umbrella of MoH, all relevant experts, groups and stakeholders involved in preparedness and response. Using an incident management system, the PHEOC promotes structured collaboration and communication, and generates real-time quality information for evidence-based decision-making.

School students, local artists, and diplomatic missions join South Sudan in celebrating World Environment Day

On 5 June, South Sudan commemorated World Environment Day under the theme “Connecting People to Nature.” The event was organized by the UN
Environment Office (UNEP) in collaboration with the national Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF). The event sent messages to the public, politicians, local communities and development partners operating in the South Sudan on the relationship of people with nature and attention to environmental issues while undertaking socio-economic development activities.

Over 1,000 people attended, including the Government officials, diplomats, UN agencies, NGOs, national media houses, schools students and wildlife rangers.

The Guest of Honor was the Hon. Jemma Nunu Kumba, the national Minister of Wildlife Conservation and Tourism, who is also the Acting Secretary General of the ruling party of the Republic of South Sudan. Hon. Nunu expressed the commitment of the Government to protect environmental and natural resources of the country. She said the majority of the population in South Sudan live in rural areas and depend on environmental resources for their livelihoods. She further noted that South Sudan will remain committed to implementing the relevant provisions of domestic and international conventions, including multilateral agreements.

Mr. Arshad Khan, UNEP Programme Manager, expressed support to the government and people of South Sudan to tackle environmental challenges. Mr. Khan said this year’s theme invites us to think about how we are part of nature and how much we depend on it, as well as to understand the relationship between humankind and nature. He further noted that it is important for ordinary citizens to enhance their knowledge and understanding about the link between their livelihoods and the natural resources, which come from the nature around them. Mr. Khan asked the Government to enact the environment law on a priority basis for sustainable utilization of environmental assets and services.

Study launched to determine the potential of a river barge transport system in South Sudan

Government of Japan and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) South Sudan Operations Centre (SSOC) are working on a study to determine the potential of a river barge transport system in South Sudan, which could open up new and more cost-efficient avenues for delivering emergency humanitarian aid.

The USD 1 million project, funded by the Government of Japan and implemented by UNOPS, was officially launched on 1 April 2017 and will run until March 2018. The feasibility study will assess the potential of a full-scale river barge transport system through conducting surveys of major existing ports along the Nile basin including Juba, Malakal and Melut, as well as assessing environmental impact on the Nile River between Juba and Renk.

“There is grave humanitarian need in South Sudan but road access to key humanitarian hubs is limited. Therefore, we are driven to think not only about what aid to provide, but also how to get aid to reach the most needy via the most efficient method,” says Kiya Masahiko, Ambassador of Japan to South Sudan. “South Sudan’s waterways, furthermore, have the potential not only as an avenue for aid delivery but also a springboard for the country’s development and prosperity, when peace arrives.”

“We are delighted to have this opportunity to partner with the Government of Japan to explore how we can improve development and humanitarian aid transport in South Sudan,” says then-UNOPS South Sudan Country Director, Paul Cruickshank. “Compared to air transport at the cost of approximately $2,500 per metric ton, barge transport offers significant savings at an average of $390 per metric ton – thus more resources can be used to assist the people of South Sudan.”

South Sudan holds first roundtable conference to counter hate speech

Under the theme “countering hate speech whilst defending freedom of expression and press freedom” and ahead of the World Press Freedom Day, which is
commemorated every 3rd of May, UNESCO office in Juba hosted the first roundtable conference on Countering Hate Speech for Peace on 2 May 2017.

More than 200 delegates who attended the conference were drawn from academia, CSOs, online activists, youth organizations, UN agencies, diplomatic missions and stakeholders who have looked into various aspects of hate speech, which is increasingly of concern and associated with incitement of violence in South Sudan.

The Undersecretary Ministry of Information, Mr. Justine Alier De Mayen, who opened the event, reminded the delegates that freedom of expression is a human right that everyone must enjoy but there is need to ensure that freedom of one must not infringe the right of others.

UNESCO representative, Mr. Sardar Umar Alam, told the delegates that digital technologies have opened new avenues for freedom of expression, but also cautioned if not properly they can be used to facilitate the spread of online hate speech; combating these ill should not be at the expense of freedom of expression. “There is a fine line between free speech and hate speech. Free speech encourages debate whereas hate speech incites violence” said Mr. Alam.

Conference participants agreed that media can play a central role in conflict and crisis situations and that independent, objective, neutral media can help defuse tension, promote dialogue and counter hate speech in order to contain conflicts. Different speakers urged all media stakeholders to offer counter narratives to challenge violence incitement and urge the government of South Sudan to ensure proportionately responses to counter hate speech in a way that will not curtail freedom of expression and press freedom.

The Government of Japan and UNDP are working with Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning to provide training on transparent public accounts management to State Legislative Assembly members, and establish unified tax systems in Jubeck, Aweil, and Yambio. This March, Aweil State Legislative Assembly signed the first harmonized State Revenue Authority bill into law, formed a Revenue Authority Board and appointed a new commissioner to administrate the body.

“The launch of the Aweil State Revenue Authority is a major milestone and an advancement on the commitment and political will of state governments to establish a transparent, accountable and efficient revenue generation system, which will enable the state government to provide social services to the vulnerable people,” said Hon. Mayuol during the launch.

“A robust non-oil revenue tax collection system will enable the government to mitigate the impact of financial austerity induced by inadequate budgetary allocations from the central government on account of sharp fall in oil revenue receipts and continued volatility in the international oil market,” said Garang Majak Bol, State Minister of Finance.

“Witnessing the establishment of the first-ever South Sudanese local revenue authority makes us proud of our USD 1.2 million contribution,” said H.E. Ambassador Masahiko. “The Revenue Authority inauguration is a testament to the resolve and political will of the South Sudanese authorities to seriously leverage the economic situation to expand social services. Japan looks forward to seeing how other states advance on the Revenue Authority establishment and finance necessary social service to whom they serve.”

Inauguration of South Sudan's First-ever State Revenue Authority in Aweil

On May 26, Aweil State Governor a.i. Hon. James Wieu Mayuol and the Japanese Ambassador to South Sudan H.E. Kiya Masahiko officially inaugurated the first-ever state revenue authority in South Sudan, located in Aweil.

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IOM Responds as Cholera Outbreak Spreads

An IOM Rapid Response Team was deployed to Jonglei, South Sudan, in April in response to a cholera outbreak in Ayod County. The IOM team supported local health partners to rapidly scale up the emergency and contain
the outbreak in a hard-to-reach and often insecure area of the country.

IOM’s response began after 140 suspected cases of cholera were reported in Ayod during the first weeks of April, putting the population of approximately 175,000 people at risk. Access to Ayod is difficult during the rainy season, and its proximity to the Nile River increases its vulnerability to outbreaks of water-borne diseases.

IOM worked alongside the County Health Department and the Christian Mission for Development (CMD) in the town of Jiech to facilitate surveillance, manage cases and improve community outreach to stem the outbreak. The majority of suspected cholera cases come from communities living in cattle camps along the river. IOM established oral rehydration points in three hotspot areas to increase access to treatment. The IOM team also delivered essential medications to treat other common illnesses during the mission.

An IOM water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) team is responding to suspected cases of cholera in Kopoeta, Eastern Equatoria, through hygiene promotion activities, borehole rehabilitation and distribution of non-food items.

UN Country Team concludes a three day training for journalists in Juba

The UN Country Team (UNCT) through the UN Communications Group (UNCG) have completed a three-day training for 30 journalists from 8 different regions in South Sudan at Juba Regency in Juba from 23-25 May 2017. Participants were drawn from 17 television, radio, online and print media houses.

Building on a similar training that was conducted last year in November, this training aimed to promote journalistic competence in reporting, especially in the current context of South Sudan, promote regular publishing of accurate, timely, non-sensational, reliable, and objective UN oriented stories and to strengthen the relationship between the UN and national media houses in the country.

Speaking at the opening of the training, IOM’s Media and Communications Officer and the UNCG co-chair, Ashley McLaughlin, thanked the journalists for tirelessly working to disseminate information to areas that are very hard to reach in the country.

“We rely heavily on your skills and dedication to share information with communities that need assistance,” she said.

Facilitated by a media consultant from Kenya, Ms. Judie Kaberia and a national counterpart, Yokwe Silvano, this training brought together experts from different agencies including UNESCO, UNFPA, UNEP, and UNDP. Sessions included reporting on SDGs and business, sexual gender based violence, environment, investigative reporting and the role of the media in peacebuilding.

As a follow up to this training, the UNCG will continue working with the 30 participants throughout the year to monitor their progress since gaining more skills on reporting under the different thematic areas.

On 25 May, a media forum was conducted to discuss health issues affecting South Sudan and the efforts to prevent and treat cholera. Health experts; Dr Argata Guracha from WHO and Dr. Beldina Gikundi from IOM, made presentations and then facilitated a question and answer session with reporters from various media houses.

The communications group will be implementing two more media forums this year on pertinent issues that the UN is addressing in South Sudan.