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**United Nations
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**United Nations Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment Programme
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Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

**Performance of the programme of work and budget,
including implementation of the resolutions of the
Environment Assembly**

**Progress in the implementation of resolution 2/15 on the
protection of the environment in areas affected by armed
conflict**

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

The present report has been prepared in response to resolution 2/15 on the protection of the environment in areas affected by armed conflict, by which the Executive Director was requested to report to the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme, no later than at its fourth session, on progress in its implementation.

The implementation of the elements of the resolution relating to the United Nations Environment Programme has progressed well insofar as the Environment Programme is concerned. No assessment can be made of the efforts of States in this regard.

* UNEP/EA.3/1.

I. Introduction

1. By resolution 2/15, the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme was directed to continue providing enhanced assistance to countries affected by armed conflict and countries in post-conflict situations for post-crisis environmental assessment and recovery (para. 7). He was also directed, in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), to continue providing enhanced assistance to countries within whose territory natural World Heritage Sites affected by armed conflict were located (para. 8). Lastly, he was directed to continue interaction with the International Law Commission in support of its work pertaining to the protection of the environment in relation to armed conflict (para. 10).

II. Progress in the implementation of resolution 2/15

2. The implementation of the elements of the resolution relating to the Environment Programme has progressed well. The Environment Programme has worked extensively to provide assistance to countries affected by armed conflict and the unintended collateral impact of human displacement. This work is fully in line with the programme of work for the period 2014–2017 and, in particular, the expected accomplishments of the disasters and conflicts subprogramme, relating to improving the capacity of countries to use natural resource and environmental management to prevent and reduce the risk of natural and man-made disasters and to support sustainable recovery from disasters and conflicts. Nevertheless, no additional funds specifically for the implementation of the resolution have been received, meaning that the work undertaken has been done within existing resources.

3. Since January 2016, the Environment Programme has supported environmental protection and emergency response in seven countries currently experiencing conflict: Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan and Ukraine. It is setting up new in-country support structures in Iraq and Somalia, as well as in Colombia, where it was invited by the President to help to support the peace process that, in October 2016, concluded more than five decades of conflict.

4. In addition, it has worked closely with the International Law Commission, in line with paragraph 10 of the resolution. In particular, it provided extensive technical support to the Special Rapporteur on the protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts, Marie G. Jacobsson, in the preparation of her third report on the subject, which was issued in July 2016 (A/CN.4/700).

5. Lastly, the Environment Programme has worked with UNESCO to support the protection of natural World Heritage Sites at risk of armed conflict, in line with paragraph 8 of the resolution. The draft principles proposed by the International Law Commission on the protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts feature two principles on the importance of protecting “areas of major environmental and cultural importance” (see A/71/10, chap. X). Furthermore, the Environment Programme participated in UNESCO consultations in 2016, providing input for a forthcoming publication on the role of the United Nations in the promotion of peace. In addition, the Iraqi marshlands, which have been the subject of a large restoration programme supported by the Environment Programme, were awarded World Heritage status by UNESCO in July 2016. Meanwhile, discussions are continuing between both bodies at the headquarters and regional office levels to determine practical ways in which the organizations can work together to provide assistance to those countries in which natural World Heritage Sites threatened by armed conflict are located.

III. Recommendations and suggested action

6. Resolution 2/15 was an important step in understanding and articulating the impact of armed conflict on the environment. It provides States with a roadmap for integrating the protection of the environment into their own policies and procedures. Nevertheless, it is difficult to gauge the extent to which States have implemented the provisions of the resolution.

7. The United Nations Environment Assembly may wish to consider creating a mechanism, with commensurate resources, to generate an independent review of the efforts by States to implement the provisions of the resolution, or some form of a peer review mechanism for the same purpose.