

Session Summary
Ukraine, Environment and Humanitarian Assistance
Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Weeks
1600-1730 CET, 10 May 2022

Introduction

The Ukraine, Environment and Humanitarian Assistance session at the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Weeks (HNPW) was convened by the Ukraine Environment Study Group as an opportunity to share information between interested parties on the environment-conflict-humanitarian assistance nexus in the Ukraine. The summary lists some points for further consideration drawn from the session. These are simply provided for consideration and do not represent official conclusions of the session.

The session involved approximately 80 participants, present in Geneva and on-line. In general, the session and this summary follow the [Chatham House Rule](#).

This summary is being circulated in draft form to the 190 or so individuals who registered for the session via the HNPW meeting portal. Further comments, on the summary and on the environment-conflict-humanitarian assistance nexus in the Ukraine, will be solicited when this summary is circulated. These will, where appropriate, be shared in later communications through the Ukraine Environment Study Group.

The Ukraine Environment Study Group is an ad hoc assembly of individuals who have an interest in the environment-conflict-humanitarian assistance nexus in the Ukraine. Its primary purpose is to serve as a platform for sharing information on this nexus and is not formally affiliated with any organization.

Agenda

The initial session Agenda is provided at right. The Ukraine and International Perspectives segments were in fact merged during the session.

Timing (Geneva time)	Topic
1600-1605	Welcome and Review of the purpose of the session.
1605-1615	Overview of Conflict-Related Environment Issues in Ukraine
1615-1645	The Ukraine Perspective
1645-1715	The International Perspective
1715-1725	Summary of Critical Issues
1725-1730	Closing Words

Presentations

The presentations made during the session were:

- **Overview of Conflict-Related Environmental Issues in Ukraine**, prepared by the Conflict and Environment Observatory (CEOBS).
- **Ukraine Update**, by WWF-Ukraine

The presentations can be found at

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/3f17n9wvyvaopke/AACSubCNn_ZhXM_QBwYwVjzAa?dl=0.

Key Points Noted

- See the CEOBS presentation on current damage affecting the environment in Ukraine.
- As documented by various sources, the conflict has caused considerable damage to the environment in Ukraine.
- Ukraine faced significant legacy and on-going environmental challenges before the conflict.
- Both urban and rural areas have been affected.
- Specific areas of concern include:
 - Damage to industrial sites
 - Damage to nuclear sites

- Wildfires, triggered by the conflict and which are otherwise hard to contain due to the conflict.
- Damage to agricultural lands, facilities and equipment, which will affect food production.
- Damage to the marine environment; mining of coastal areas and mines at sea posing risk to activities at sea and on shores if the floating mines come ashore.
- Mineral mines and water in these facilities, in eastern Ukraine – these locations need to be managed to prevent wider environmental damage, but this is difficult due to fighting and other issues. [Note: extensive information is available on this issue and other environmental challenges in eastern Ukraine.]
[Note: conflict damage to water supply, sewage and electrical systems affecting environmental conditions was not noted in detail, but is likely an issue, particularly for urban areas. A similar point is noted for manufacturing facilities as different from chemical refining or processing sites.]
- There is a wealth of information on environmental issues in the east of Ukraine affected by earlier stages of the conflict while environmental issues for other parts of Ukraine are also relatively well documented.
- There has been a considerable displacement of civil society (incl. environmental groups) due to the conflict which makes coordination and collaboration a challenge.
- See WWF-Ukraine presentation on recovery.
- Concerns were raised about Government decision to not require environmental reviews for recovery/reconstruction programming.
- A National Council for the Recovery of Ukraine from the War has been established.
- The Government has requested Government offices develop recovery/reconstruction plans in near future.
- A need was expressed to incorporate EU-level construction and other standards into the rebuilding process and provide attention to community involvement, participation and mechanism for financing the rebuilding.
- Information is needed on overlaps between humanitarian operations and sites of environmental damage or high risks.
- A significant issue was noted with unwanted/unusable donations – these items are clogging logistics system in and outside Ukraine. [Standard humanitarian practice is to only collect donated commodities based on expressed need.]
- Options to “green” the supply chain should be pursued.
- UNDP:
 - Developing a debris management plan with the Government, including temporary waste laydown locations.
 - Working on debris clearance (Bucha).
 - Working on plans to improve solid and household waste collection, including for IDP sites (organic wastes).
 - Preparing guidelines for asbestos handling and disposal.
 - Developing a mapping of environmental threats across Ukraine incorporating a risk ranking process to identify areas of priority interventions (and presumably highest risk to people).
- UNEP:
 - Planning on assigning an environment advisor to UN Ukraine mission to work with Government on coordination and technical support
 - To support training on site investigations (high risk).
- OCHA – newly appointed Environmental Field Advisor in Ukraine (Lviv).
- EcoAction Ukraine
 - Working to coordinate efforts by Ukrainian environmental NGOs.
 - Initiatives involve damage assessment, fossil fuels, green recovery and reconstruction (seven principles).

For Further Consideration

- There is considerable scope for addressing legacy, pre-conflict and conflict-related environmental issues in the transition to recovery.
- The immediate and expected operational requirements for managing conflict-related debris, interspersed unexploded munitions, garbage and sanitation requirements is significant and is an area where more organizations should be involved.
- Efforts to speed recovery should not compromise future wellbeing of people in Ukraine by skipping environmental screening process.
- There is a need to build capacity of Ukraine organizations to deal with the environmental consequences of the conflict.
- Information on the environmental aspects of the conflict in Ukraine and examples from other conflicts, should be consolidated into one (internet accessible, web-based) location.
- Planning for recovery needs to start soon and consider the environment. This planning should be based on well-established principles and lessons on successful post-conflict recovery, with attention to improving environmental conditions in Ukraine going forward.
- Coordination, within the humanitarian community, between the humanitarian and environmental communities and between government and humanitarian and environmental communities can be strengthened and move towards coordinated planning and activities.
- Further, broad-based, attention is needed to the reconstruction process, to complement and support ongoing Government efforts in this area.