  



**6 November 2021**

**International Day for the Prevention of the Exploitation**

**of the environment in war and armed conflict**

Twenty years ago (2001), the UN decided to dedicate a day to an issue that is as relevant as it is neglected: the impact of wars on the environment.

**Why celebrate this anniversary?**

**Because the environment has its own dignity** and must therefore be recognised as a bearer of rights, just as in the Christian context creation relates to the creator in a direct and unmediated way, is the recipient of his promises and therefore has subjectivity in his eyes.

**Because the environment is the vital condition of every species**, including ours, and if the requirements for habitability are not met, deaths and migrations occur.

**Because preventing attacks on the environment is part of peacekeeping** and peacebuilding strategies, as there can be no lasting peace if the natural resources that sustain livelihoods and ecosystems are destroyed.

**For in the Christian context, 'War is against the will of God'**, echoing the motto of the first assembly of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in 1948.

In an increasingly lethal way, **the environment is both a military target and an uncounted victim of war** (polluted water wells, burnt crops, felled forests, poisoned soil and killed animals) **and the cause.**

 The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has, in fact, found that **war over resources is also war on resources:**

- in the last 60 years at least 40 per cent of all internal conflicts have been linked to the exploitation of natural resources, be they raw materials such as timber, diamonds, gold and oil or increasingly scarce resources such as fertile land and water.

- Conflicts involving natural resources are twice as likely to recur and will also become more bloody due to demographic pressure.

**In addition to murder, there is also ecocide**, and various secular and religious organisations around the world are calling for it to be recognised as an international crime - encompassing and transcending war - at the International Criminal Court.

**In the context of the ongoing COP 26** (UN Climate Change Conference) which started on 31 October, we recall that the UK Observatory on Conflict and the Environment (www.ceobs.org ) **is calling for governments to commit to reducing military emissions of greenhouse gases.**

**On this day, we want to establish a local dialogue with the institutions that make up the war industry, from arms factories of all kinds, to ports and airports, to financial agencies, including pension funds, to ask them to make commitments to withdraw.**

Globalization and Environment Commission of the Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy and Pax Christi Italy