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Second land policy conference in Africa discusses youth role in land governance

Addis Ababa ,14 November 2017 (ECA) -Africa's land policy conference opened in Addis Ababa Tuesday with a clarion call for governments to properly manage land for the benefit of its people, in particular ensuring youth and women have access to land.

The day started with participants attending various workshops to discuss varied topics, including land planning and governance, land certification system, technology application for agriculture, conflict management, access to land for women and youth and environment management.

The four-day Addis Ababa conference was organized by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Union Commission (AUC) and the African Development Bank and under the coordination of the African Land Policy Centre (ALPC).

ECA Deputy Executive Secretary and Chief Economist, Mr. Abdalla Hamdok, in his opening remarks said Africa was in a hopeful state not only because of its youthfulness but also because of its widespread land-based resources.

Mr. Hamdok told participants that Africa is home to abundant natural resources accounting for at least 30 percent of the world's natural resource wealth; 12 percent of oil reserves, 40 percent of global gold reserves, 60 percent of uncultivated land and 70 percent of coltan deposits, from which electronic microchips are made.

"The 420 million young people aged between 15-35 years can be gainfully involved in the exploitation of these resources especially through agriculture, manufacturing and industrial sectors", he said.

The theme of the conference is: "The Africa We Want: Achieving socioeconomic transformation through inclusive and equitable access to land by the youth."

Speaking on behalf of youth and women, Ms. Rachael Mwikali said the drive towards achieving the African Union's goals on land was given additional boost in October 2016, when the African Land Policy Centre, then the Land Policy Initiative, was established.

"This Centre will create linkages and partnerships to bridge the gap in technical assistance and funding and create continental and regional land platforms that enhance coordination in the land sector", she explained.

Participants at the conference underlined that land is central to livelihoods and sustainable development and therefore should be properly managed.

“Without proper governance of natural resources, land included, it is very difficult to achieve sustainable and equitable growth,” affirmed Gabriel Negatu, Director General of African Development Bank in Eastern Africa.

In his opening remarks, Eyasu Abraha Alle, Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources in Ethiopia, recalled that land was one of the major resources that Africa has in abundance but should be properly managed and used for the benefit of current and future generations.

The ongoing conference is attended by government officials, academia, representatives of Regional Economic communities, African centers of excellence, civil society and private sector associations.

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