

Africa can take the lead on climate and development agenda

Addis Ababa, 21 October 2013 (ECA) – The UN Under-Secretary General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, Mr. Carlos Lopes, has called on Africa to go beyond global negotiations on climate change in their current format and seek solutions that effectively address African concerns on global warming.

Denouncing what he sees as negotiations which are “largely driven by global and external interests”, M. Lopes tabled a six-point agenda before some 500 experts, scientists and policymakers who began meeting in Addis Ababa today for the Third Annual Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa (CCDA III).

He called on Africa to “firm up its own views on how to put the continent’s interest first”, saying that climate change offers Africa an array of incredible investment opportunities that can reap dividends.

The first point he mentioned is that Africa has the potential to leap to a new clean techno-economic paradigm, especially as “just 0.3 % of the sunlight that shines on the Sahara and Middle East deserts **could supply all of Europe’s energy needs** [1]” he said, quoting the European Commission’s Institute for Energy.

In this respect, he said that, because Africa is not locked in any technology preferences, it could follow a green and clean energy pathway and leapfrog old carbon-intensive models and pursue a low carbon development pathway.

Secondly, he called for greater investment in climate science, services and the production of high quality data to facilitate the development of early warning systems and initiate the much needed research on climate impact, vulnerability and adaptation; and for creating a knowledge economy.

He recalled that one of the fundamental and priority undertakings of the ClimDev-Africa programme, is to make climate information widely available; and cited, as a good example, a recent conference jointly organized by ECA, WMO, World Climate Research Programme and the University of Dar Es Salaam held in Arusha to define Africa’s needs in the areas of research that could contribute to climate information and knowledge, inform policy decisions, and development planning.

Thirdly, he proposed major improvements in Africa's institutional and policy capacity, arguing that "there must be investment in mechanisms for a concerted engagement of all key players", including climate and social scientists, development economists, policy makers, entrepreneurs and users of climate information.

He then delved into the need for investment to expand South-South partnerships can help risk management.

"By systematically sharing experiences and lessons learned, disaster-prone countries facing similar challenges can arrive at better climate change solutions", he said, quoting possible partnerships between the African, Caribbean and Pacific Small Island States that share similar challenges.

"They can step up efforts to address these challenges and establish south-south cooperation to focus on their unique challenge and incubate several options that will insulate them from current vulnerabilities and develop future opportunities", he argued.

His fifth was on the need to leverage Africa's agriculture.

"With a growing population and an ever-increasing demand for food, investments in agriculture are critical", he explained, adding that "investing in production technologies, innovation, water use efficiency and sustainable land management are essential".

He insisted on the need to leverage the capacity of the private sector to scale-up investment in agro processing that could create jobs and diversify export commodities to unlock the sector's strong multiplier effect in the economy.

Finally, he hopped on the use of tourism to Africa's advantage. "According to the UN World Tourism Organization, Africa is one of the fastest-growing tourism destinations", he cited and said that there is already growing recognition of the urgent need for the tourism industry, national governments and international organizations to develop and implement strategies to face the changing climate conditions.

The theme of the Third Annual Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa (CCDA-III) is: *Africa on the rise: Can Opportunities from Climate Change Spring Africa's Transformative Development?*

The opening session of the three-day conference was also addressed by Mr. Alemayehu Tegenu, Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy, of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia; Mrs. Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, Africa Union Commission; and Mr. Aly Abou-Sabaa, Vice President of the African Development Bank.

Opening remarks were delivered by Ms Fatima Denton, OIC of Special Initiatives Division at ECA and Coordinator of the African Climate policy Centre which serves as the ClimDev-Africa Secretariat. The

opening session was followed by a high level dialogue on the theme of the conference, during which experts went into all the nooks and corners of how climate change could best serve Africa's development agenda.

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