

## **“Sound Land policies, crucial for economic development in Central Africa ” say participants at a regional workshop in Yaoundé**

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Addis Ababa-07 August 2008-ECA- “The management of natural resources and preservation of ecological balance are key dimensions of our future actions in the area of land policy”.

This statement was made yesterday in Yaoundé by the Director of ECA's sub-regional Office in Central Africa , Mr. Hachim Koumaré, at the opening of a three-day regional consultations workshop on land policy in the sub-region, taking place in Yaoundé. Around 100 land stakeholders representing national governments, civil society, private sector, centers of excellence and development partners are gathered in the capital city of Cameroon to assess land policy formulation and implementation processes and draw lessons from past experiences. This workshop is jointly organized by the African Union Commission, the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank within the context of the Land Policy Initiative which was launched in 2006.

The Yaoundé workshop, which is the fourth in a series of five regional consultations, aims at reaching consensus on key land issues, specific to Central Africa's region and to reflect them in a consolidated continental framework and land policy and implementation guidelines. Discussions are informed by the findings and recommendations of the Regional Report Assessment on Land policy in Central Africa . Land stakeholders from the sub-region will focus on:

- Central Africa 's land policy specificities, initiatives and lessons that should be taken into account in the continental framework.
- The knowledge, institutional and resource gaps as well as lessons from on-going land initiatives.

With more than 70% of its population residing in rural areas, Central Africa is a region where land policy and reforms are crucial in addressing poverty, food security, regional stability and sustained economic growth issues.” The potential of the land question to disrupt regional peace and stability and the importance of land in achieving sustainable food security and poverty reduction cannot be overemphasized” warned Dr. Abebe Haile-Gabriel from AU in his address to the workshop.

Factors constraining land policy in Central Africa include the pluralistic property regimes stemming from the colonial legacy, some cultural practices such as discrimination against women and poor governance. More importantly, land issues in Central Africa are related to the management of the forestry ecosystems.

The outcomes of the regional workshop on land policy in Central Africa will serve as inputs to the enhanced policy framework and implementation guidelines to be submitted for consideration by the African Union Summit in January 2009.

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