

## Decisive action on adaptation needed to reverse impact of climate change on Africa, says ECA's Ben-Barka



Addis Ababa, 7 April 2008 – (ECA) Without decisive action for sound adaptation, climate change will severely compromise agricultural production and exacerbate poverty and food insecurity in Africa, the Deputy Executive Secretary of Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Ms. Lalla Ben-Barka said today in Addis Ababa.

In a keynote address to the Senior Policy Seminar of the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) on Climate Change and Economic Development in Africa, Ms. Ben-Barka said climate change would significantly decrease the area suitable for agriculture, the length of growing seasons and yield potential, particularly along the margins of semi-arid and arid areas.

Citing climate change modeling results by the Nobel prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Mrs. Ben-Barka said that a warming by another 0.40 C on current temperatures would shorten crop-growing period by more than 20% in the Sahel by 2020, and reduce yields from rain-fed agriculture by up to 50% in many African countries.

She said projected losses in cereal production in Sub-Sahara Africa were estimated at about 33% by 2060, while climate change would decrease fisheries resources in large lakes due to rising water temperatures.

"The combined impacts of these events would threaten the livelihoods of large portions of the African population and curtail the prospects for broad-based economic growth, poverty reduction and food security in the continent," she said.

Water resources in Africa have been decreasing over time, mainly as a result of persistent droughts, rapid melting of snowcaps, drying of lakes and rivers and land use patterns.

Ms. Ben-Barka said climate change would intensify the situation. "Water levels have decreased in major lakes such as Lake Victoria, lakes within the Rift Valley, and Lake Chad, which has already lost over 50% of its water between 1973 and 2002," she said, adding that major rivers such as the Nile, Niger and Zambezi also face declining water levels.

"River flow in the Nile region will decrease by 75% by 2100 with damaging consequences on the well-known irrigation practices in the area," she said.

She said it was in realization of these serious challenges that African Union, in January 2007, called on countries to integrate climate change considerations into their development strategies and programmes.

ECA is already collaborating with the African Union and the African Development Bank to develop and implement the Climate for Development in Africa (ClimDev-Africa) which aims to improve climate-related observations and data, information services, risk management practices and policies, emphasising climate-sensitive sectors.

In a welcoming statement, AERC's Executive Director, Prof. William Lyakurwa, said nearly all impacts of climate change were exacerbated by inappropriate policy change and the erroneous belief that business might suffer if necessary policy changes were put in place.

The Seminar ends on Wednesday.

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