

African journalists hone skills to get it right on climate change reporting

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Addis Ababa, 8 October 2010 (ECA) – The challenges posed by impacts of climate change to ordinary livelihoods in Africa are too acute to deserve the patchy coverage the African media give the phenomenon, some 40 African journalists concluded at the end of the first day of a media training workshop that opened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia today.

Under the theme “Getting it right: Reporting climate change for sustainable development in Africa”, the training workshop is organized by the Africa Climate Policy Centre (ACPC), in collaboration with the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), in the run-up to the Seventh African Development Forum (ADF) which opens in Addis Ababa on Monday.



The theme of ADF VII is “Acting on climate change for sustainable development in Africa” and ADF organizers are counting on the media to play a leading role in both the debates and processes.

The workshop therefore aims to improve participants’ understanding of the issues around climate change and how it impacts Africa, so that they can be better prepared to raise awareness of the international negotiations and how local communities and individuals are affected by the impact of climate change in Africa.

Recognizing the stiff competition climate change stories face for news space from other newspaper sections, and radio/TV programmes, participants are being challenged to “think outside the box” to write more compelling stories on what some described as an unfolding disaster for Africa.

In a statement at the opening session, Mr. Josué Dioné Director of the ECA’s Division for Food Security and Sustainable Development stressed the need for African journalists to adapt to the vast and increasing glossary of climate change terms and acronyms, conceding that due to the highly scientific nature of climate change science, “some technical issues, such as climate change adaptation, mitigation, finance and technology, require specialized training in order to enhance reportorial skills”.

For example, “What do all these mean for sustainable development and people’s livelihood? What about the Bali Platform and the Copenhagen Accord? What is the significance of the two degrees touted in Copenhagen? How close is Copenhagen Accord to the African common position and what are these common positions”, he asked.

During the experiences-sharing sessions that followed each presentation, it became evident that climate change specialists and related institutions also need to sharpen their communication approaches and the way they deal with reporters and the media as a whole for maximum impact.

If accurate reporting and good journalism are critical to sound economic policy and good governance, then proper understanding of issues by reporters are essential prerequisites, participants agreed.

Organizers do not expect participants to become climate change experts within three days but they are confident that journalists would write better on these issues, if they understand exactly *how* climate change is affecting the livelihoods of African countries.

:: [Opening Statement by Mr. Josué Dioné, Director, Food Security and Sustainable Development Division, UNECA](#)

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