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Djibouti, 23 February 2015 - The Project Steering Committee (PSC) for the *“Project to improve land governance in the IGAD region”*, jointly developed by the Land Policy Initiative (LPI), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), met for the first time last week, in Djibouti, on the heels of a successful official project launch. The PSC approved its terms of reference, and the 2015 work plan and budget, laying the foundations for the implementation of project activities.

The PSC will provide overall strategic guidance and project oversight, including through approving work plans and budgets, and identifying opportunities for partnerships that would enhance resources for its successful implementation. PSC members will also actively seek platforms to engage with senior policy makers and stakeholders at regional and national levels.

Mr. Mohammed Moussa, Chair of the PSC and Director of the Agriculture and Environment Division of the IGAD Secretariat, applauded the high-level representation of Member States. He noted that “the presence of two State Ministers, Chairs of Land Commissions and Permanent Secretaries is a sign of true commitment that will facilitate the participation of Member States in the implementation of the project.” Mr. Moussa added that “IGAD will work hand in hand with the LPI and do all that is possible to ensure successful implementation of the project, linking it to other existing programmes and initiatives.”

The PSC members are senior representatives of the AUC-ECA-AfDB Land Policy Initiative consortium, IGAD, IGAD CSO/NGO Forum, SDC, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the East African Farmers Federation (EAFF), and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

Ms. Joan Kagwanja, Chief of the LPI, thanked the SDC for its support to the land governance project, which builds on broader support for land governance in Africa. “The SDC support covers the first phase of the project, and will see the capacity of both IGAD and the LPI Secretariats enhanced to support Member States in addressing land governance issues.” SDC has pledged further support for a second phase targeted at country-level operations.

The PSC meeting was preceded by a rigorous annual work planning session, attended by over fifty-five representatives of IGAD Member States as well as Regional Economic Communities (RECs) based in Eastern Africa, regional producer and civil society organisations, development partners and donors. The planning meeting was instrumental in finalizing the work plan and budget for presentation to and approval of the PSC, as well as defining the roles and responsibilities of implementing partners for the IGAD-LPI-SDC project. Following approval of the 2015 work plan by the PSC, a working meeting was organized to agree on key platforms for building effective collaboration and synergies among RECs.

The Land Policy Initiative is a joint programme of the tripartite consortium consisting of the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Development Bank (AfDB), and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). Its mandate is to facilitate the implementation of the AU Declaration on Land Issues and Challenges in Africa.

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