
Media call for support to push Africa's land reform agenda

Addis Ababa, 10 November 2014 (ECA) - In prelude to the inaugural Conference of Land Policy in Africa (CLPA) to run from 11 to 14 November in Addis Ababa, a group of journalists from across the continent today expressed their enthusiasm to push the land reform agenda but called for continuous support from key advocacy institutions such as the Land Policy Initiative (LPI). The LPI is a joint partnership of the African Union Commission, the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank, set up to support African governments in addressing contemporary land policy problems.

This was during a workshop to equip the journalists with the tools to better cover the Conference and move on with advocating land policy reforms in Africa. Following the workshop, the media practitioners quickly established themselves as the nucleus of a new network of journalists on land issues. But they requested continuous LPI support in facilitating robust training in the area and linking them to relevant data and knowledge institutions in a bid to grow a movement of land governance advocates to support Africa's overall development.

"The media can influence policy makers to adopt inclusive policies and frameworks that advance the sustainable use of lands in Africa," the journalists were told, by Janet Edeme who opened the workshop on behalf of the AUC-AfDB-ECA consortium. "But the media have so far been rarely targeted for capacity development on land issues," she said.

Some of the crucial ways in which the media can play a key role in the land policy dialogue, LPI experts said, would be to expose corrupt practices, monitor land reforms as well as acquisitions and deals, demand for governments' accountability, create forums for land stakeholders to engage the state and utilise information technology to advance land reform processes. But to do this, they need to understand the core elements of land governance. Such elements include access and rights issues, the state of natural resources associated with land, land use privileges, decision-making processes on appropriation, the security of rights especially with regards to women and indigenous peoples, and mechanisms for resolving land conflicts. These, they were advised, should be underpinned by responsible reporting that seeks common ground and is conflict-sensitive but which goes ahead to ask the "so what?" question before publishing.

The journalists are expected to immediately reflect their new perspectives in their coverage of the 4-day

conference. The Conference will dwell extensively on securing land rights, inclusive agricultural growth in the context of large scale investments and emerging best practices in developing and implementing land policies.

Issued by:

ECA External Communications and Media Relations Section

PO Box 3001

Addis Ababa

Ethiopia

Tel: +251 11 551 5826

E-mail: ecainfo@uneca.org [1]

www.uneca.org [2]

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