



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

Published on *United Nations Economic Commission for Africa* (<https://www.uneca.org>)

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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, November 14, 2017 (ECA) – The 2nd biennial Conference on Land Policy in Africa opened in Addis Ababa Tuesday with the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) pledging to do more to support African governments to develop robust policies that will support Africa's economic and social transformation through the optimum use of her land and natural resources.

ECA Deputy Executive Secretary, Abdalla Hamdok said the ECA remains committed to contributing to the implementation of the AU Agenda on land as demonstrated by its support through the hosting of the Land Policy Initiative (LPI), which is transitioning to the African Land Policy Center (ALPC), for eleven years.

"We commit to provide support to AU Agenda on land including hosting the ALPC and continuing to support this land policy conference," said Mr. Hamdok, adding the main purpose of the outfit is to enable the use of land to lend impetus to the process of African development.

Mr. Hamdok said through the ALPC Africa has an opportunity to propel the continent forward through strategic reforms in land governance policies.

"Africa ought to see land as a major resource to enhance food security, peace and security and ensure environmental protection. By developing inclusive land policies, we create an opportunity for investment while simultaneously protecting the interests of the African people," he said.

He added: "Also globalization patterns provide an opportunity as well as a challenge for the continent. With national and global investors developing growing interest on land and its resources, we must ensure that investment activities are aligned to the needs of the African people. Luckily, the Guidelines on Large scale land based investments in Africa (LSLBI) provide an opportunity for the continent to promote investments in a responsible and sustainable manner."

AfDB

For his part, AfDB's Director General for the Eastern Africa region, Mr. Gabriel Negatu, said the bank is prepared to work with partner institutions to assist governments to ensure land governance and land policy processes in Africa are transparent, easily understood and accessed.

He said the bank was also prepared to collaborate with all concerned in their work to blend tradition and modernity in land rights regimes with a view not to discriminate against women and

youth.

“The bank, through a number of gender-based initiatives, will remain available to support member countries ensure that gender, as part of our twin objective of inclusive growth, will be fully implemented,” said Mr. Negatu.

He emphasized “a strong and effective land policy regime in Africa is an idea whose time has come. The case for it is strong and the time to act is now”.

Mr. Negatu said the AfDB, through it High Five and other initiatives, was ready to play its rightful role in this process alongside the ECA, IFAD and the AUC, adding the bank, in recognition of the importance of natural resources for Africa’s transformation, has set up a new department called the African Natural Resources Center.

One of the center’s key focus areas is land governance, he said.

AUC

For her part, Janet Edeme, Head of Rural Division in the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture at the AUC, said through hard work with partners, they were building consensus, raising awareness, generating evidence, developing capacities and improving coordination to enhance implementation of the AU Declaration on Land, helping to address some of Africa’s daunting land challenges.

She said the ALPC will, among other things, set the agenda on land issues in Africa, acting as a repository of knowledge and represent Africa on global platforms; drive continental land policy and advocacy to ensure land remains a priority in the policy agenda and create continental and regional platforms that enhance coordination in the land sector.

“Inclusive participation of the youth in decision-making and empowerment through access to land and other natural resources will unlock Africa’s economic potential by harnessing the demographic dividend and provide opportunities for gainful employment,” said Ms. Edeme.

The conference, running under the theme: “The Africa We Want: Achieving socioeconomic transformation through inclusive and equitable access to land by the youth”, ends Friday.

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Source URL: <https://www.uneca.org/stories/eca-afdb-and-auc-pledge-more-support-african-countries-land-conference>

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