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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, November 17, 2017 (ECA) – The four-day Conference on Land Policy in Africa ended Friday in Addis Ababa with Economic Commission for Africa's Chief of Staff, Collen Kelapile, urging Africa to enact policies that will harness the tremendous potential of its youth.

Addressing delegates who attended the conference, Mr. Kelapile said Africa's youth represent the future and therefore expect their policymakers to clear hurdles that block them from being involved in national development processes.

"Our continent will continue to drag behind other continents if the tremendous potential of the youth is not harnessed in and mainstreamed in our decision-making processes and development programmes," said Mr. Kelapile.

He said the challenge following the conference was how Member States were going to make productive use of outcomes to improve land governance in Africa; deal with challenges confronting the continent; effectively utilize the evidence that was provided during the meeting through various research findings; as well as implement policy recommendations that were agreed on.

"The youth of this continent have high hopes that the numerous challenges they face in accessing economic opportunities will be met by policy makers. There is therefore the urgency to deal with challenges of land governance and turn them into opportunities," said Mr. Kelapile.

"We can propel economic growth in Africa when the majority of the youth are gainfully employed."

He said the GDP of many countries would go up if appropriate opportunities are provided for the youth in particular.

"The entire value chain in agriculture offers the biggest opportunity for doing this. Without adequate access to land and secured tenure, this dream will be a mirage. The challenges are there, but so too are the opportunities and the benefits which outweigh the challenges. Together we can go far," the ECA Chief of Staff said.

At least 490 participants from 50 different countries attended the conference which saw participants discussing, among other topics the need to strengthen land governance and administrative institutions both at local and national levels; empowerment of youth through strengthening their land rights; women's land access rights and gender equality; inclusive, transparent and sustainable land based investments, economic justice and environmental

management or monitoring; migration, radicalization and violent extremism – linkages to youth employment; entrepreneurship and access to land for investment; rapid urbanization, land use and spatial planning policy and development control.

Participants included traditional authorities, academia and research institutions, government officials, civil society, private sector, local communities, development partners and the diplomatic community.

Mr. Kelapile said the ECA was proud to have successfully hosted the conference which was held under the theme: '*The Africa we want: achieving socioeconomic transformation through inclusive and equitable access to land by the youth*'.

Most of the papers and discussions focused on the youth, recognizing them as the pivot around which social and economic development of African countries should revolve.

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