

## **Africa Poised to Tackle Effects of Climate Change**

**By Brenda Zulu**

Africa Union is promoting a common value while encouraging Africa to speak as one voice like what they did at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP15) in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Presenting a statement at the Opening ceremony of the 14<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, Commission Chairman Jean Ping observed that when Africa spoke as one voice the results were encouraging. He explained that climate change, the energy crisis, global recession and food crisis made development very difficult for Africa.

Africa will be pushing for adequate commitments from developed countries to meet their obligations and also adequate levels of funding for dealing with the threats posed by climate change that affects vital life support lines of water, energy, ecosystem and food security.

Speaking in the context of the 14<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the African Union Summit, African Union Commissioner for rural economy and agriculture Rhoda Peace Tumusiime gave an update of food security and climate change.

She said the Copenhagen Accord that was the outcome of COP15 that provided a stepping stone for consideration of the demands of Africa in the next round of the negotiations towards COP16 in Mexico at the end of this year.

According to the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, Tumusiime explained that Africa should not be paying the price for the effects of climate change generated by the activities of industrialized responsibility for global warming, which is why the developed countries should provide for the need of Africa's mitigation and adaptation to climate change and variability.

Tumusiime explained that the basis for Africa's common position was because Africa was going to suffer more than most regions in spite of its least contributions to green house gases in the atmosphere. She added that Africa remained the least resilient and capable to deal with the challenges posed by climate change. Climate change was said to be ravaging Africa through extreme weather patterns manifested by floods such as those in West Africa, drought like the one in East Africa, erratic rainfall patterns, coastal erosion and other impacts on food security, was, energy, human and animal health.

She also observed that in the past climate change negotiations, Africa did not get the best out of the process because it did not have a clear position on issues that were on the table.

She noticed that, "this time around, in the run up to COP15, Africa was thoroughly prepared from technical level to Ministerial level up to to head of Government.

Meanwhile, Sheila Sisulu the Deputy Executive Director of the World Food Programme said in terms of climate change disaster risk reduction, the AU was in the process of creating a Disaster Risk Pool Fund which is a mechanism that acts like an insurance that is used in anticipating severe weather conditions.

Sisulu said in this case African countries would contribute to a fund that would help in planning and responding to disasters in order to mitigate climate change on the continent.

“ We are getting this model from the Caribbean’s of which we are aware that Haiti only contributed US\$300 of which more than \$8 million has been used to help out in the earthquake disaster,” said Sisulu.

She said the AU was considering using The Africa Risk View software to help in data collection of different disaster reports that were happening on the continent.

Meanwhile, Mafa Chipeta, the Sub-regional Director of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) observed that Climate Change was not an African making and that the continent could not even cope with its annual climatic changes.

Chipeta said it was important that in adaptation to climate change Africa dealt with land reclamation project giving an example of Malawi.

In his keynote address at the Summit, Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations urged African countries to get associated with the accord.

“We must keep up the momentum towards achieving a binding global climate agreement as soon as possible,” said Ban.

He said he was looking forward to the US\$100billion annually to be mobilized per year by 2020 for developing countries as agreed at COP15.

He observed that addressing climate challenges takes significant resources and that developing countries need assistance to rapidly scale up clean energy efforts. He added that they also need significant support to adapt to the consequences of climate change.

He added that he would soon launch a high level panel on development and climate change, which will address climate change issues comprehensively in the context of sustainable development.

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