

African Scientists to develop a Climate Change Roadmap

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the International Council for Science Regional Office for Africa (ICSU ROA) has successfully convened a three-day consultative workshop (17-19 March 2010) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia with an ultimate aim of preparing an implementable Climate Change Roadmap for Africa. Over 60 senior scientists, economists, lawyers, policymakers and company executives were in attendance. The workshop deliberated on the outcomes of December 2009 Copenhagen Climate Change conference (UNFCCC/COP 15) and adopted four resolutions to produce an African Ecological Footprint Initiative, a Climate Change Roadmap for Africa, Climate Change Funding Opportunities for Africa and publication of a book on Climate Change in Africa by African climate experts.

Specifically, the workshop focused on current status of research work on Climate Change in Africa; the capacity of African governments and their institutions to handle the disaster risk management cycle; technologies and innovations at Africa's disposal for mitigation and adaptation; the need to introduce a coherent approach between African climate scientists, and policy-and decision makers on Climate Change issues; measures to promote the legitimacy and role of science in policy-and decision making processes in Africa; international collaborations in Climate Change initiatives and a possible Climate Change Roadmap for Africa for sustainable growth and development.

The workshop was officially opened by Ms. Aida Opoku-Mensah, Director of the ICT, Science and Technology Division (ISTD) of the UNECA. She outlined the objectives of the workshop, stressed the threat of Climate Change in obstructing sustainable growth and development in Africa, and restated the aim of attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. She pointed out that every participant of the workshop recognizes Climate Change to be one of the most important challenges of the 21st Century that requires an urgent and innovative action by the global community. Ms. Opoku-Mensah also pointed out that Africa faces monumental challenges to its survival and long-term sustainability since it has entered the 21st Century. At the core of these challenges is the continent's ability to master science, technology and innovation (STI) and to successfully apply these tools to address critical problems related to health, food, water and to mitigate and manage the threats of Climate Change. This is the reason, as pinpointed by Ms. Opoku-Mensah,

that promoting research and development (R&D) to be the backbone for climate science and adaptive technologies on the continent is critical.

Mr. Josue Dione, Director of Food Security and Sustainable Development Division (FSSD) of the UNECA, on his part, made a brief remark on UNECA's work in driving Africa's Climate Change agenda. He said that Climate Change has become a key challenge to Africa's sustainable development and that Africa needs to build its scientific capacity to choose its options in the Climate Change agenda basing on its own terms. Mr. Dione stressed that the outcomes of the consultative workshop will be very crucial in obtaining inputs from the African scientific community to chart the way forward. He further pointed out that UNECA is working very closely with its partners particularly the African Union Commission (AUC) and the African Development Bank (AfDB), through the African Climate Policy Center, to coordinate and drive Africa's Climate Change programme. He emphasized the importance of the involvement of the African scientists in this endeavor.

Prof Sospeter Muhongo (Tanzania) gave an account on the various Global Climate Change initiatives starting from the establishment of IPCC in 1988 to UNFCCC/COP 15 conference in Copenhagen, Denmark in December 2009. In his keynote speech, he summarized natural and human-induced hazards and disasters that have affected Africa in the last 50 years, such as floods, droughts, water-borne infectious diseases, polluted water, ocean acidification, and wildfires. These are prominent and are linked to emissions of green house gases (GHGs) and subsequent global warming. Prof Muhongo emphasized the importance of space sciences and technologies for Climate Change education and research. He advised the African governments to invest in seed science, R&D on water resources and renewable energies, and in systems for monitoring, mitigation and adaptation to hazards and disasters affecting the continent. Ms Isatou Gaye from FSSD spoke on the UNECA's Climate for Development in Africa Programme (Climdev-Africa). The ClimDev-Africa programme is a unique regional initiative jointly undertaken by UNECA, the African Union Commission (AUC), and the African Development Bank (AfDB) with highest-level political endorsement. It is designed to respond to Climate Change challenges for Africa's development, with focus on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture and food security, water resources, energy and health. The aim of the ClimDev programme include increasing the resilience of Africa's population to Climate Change by enabling effective adaptation activities; and addressing the need for improved climate information for the socio-economic development of the continent. ClimDev-Africa programme is being implemented progressively starting in 2009 with an indicative budget of about US \$140m for 4 years (including provisions for additional capacity at AUC and RECs).

Prof Edward S. Ayensu, Executive Chairman of Edward S. Ayensu Associates Ltd, Ghana and Dr Ramzi Elias, Associate Climate Diplomacy, European Climate Foundation, Brussels (Belgium), made a joint presentation on, “Copenhagen (UNFCCC/COP 15) Outcomes”, with much emphasis on Climate Change research funding possibilities for Africa. Prof Ayensu pointed out that for the first time all parts of the world especially the developed countries openly accept the severe condition of Climate Change and the urgent demand for them to reduce GHGs emissions. He considered this situation to be a very positive development. He suggested that Africa should proactively seek for and make use of the financial resources that the international community pledged for supporting the developing world to combat Climate Change. He elaborated on the linkage between Climate Change and human security and safety.

Several national and regional experiences and trends in rainfall, temperature and atmospheric dust based on data collected over the last century were presented. In general, it was clear that the temperature in Africa is rising while rainfall trends on the continent are mixed – in some cases rainfall is increasing and in others reducing. Several models for predicting future trends in temperature and rainfall trends, and national ecological footprints accounting were also discussed to enhance understanding of the impact of different models in predicting long-term future changes in the climate. In order to identify good practices and success factors in developing, implementing and managing Climate Change related projects, lessons were drawn from national experience of and cases studies in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana and Uganda. It was emphasized that speed/time, political leadership recognized by all partners, management of stakeholder interests and involvement of all key players are prerequisites of success.

In summary, the workshop concluded with the following resolutions:

1- Global Footprint Network, UNECA, ICSU ROA and other partners within and outside Africa should embark on the African Ecological Footprint Initiative aiming to produce an African Fact book. The latter would be used as a scientific reference document for Africa’s negotiations and partnerships in combating Climate Change and for building robust national economies that drastically reduce poverty from the continent.

2- UNECA in collaboration with ICSU ROA and other partners should champion the preparation of action lines, shared and differentiated responsibilities and timeframes for the implementation of the Africa’s Climate Change Roadmap.

3 - UNECA and ICSU ROA, in collaboration with other key partners in Africa, should map out major Climate Change funding opportunities available

for Africa. This exercise should also involve mapping out ongoing major Climate Change research activities on the continent. It should also include conducting skills audit and an inventory of functioning research infrastructure for Climate Change education and research in Africa.

4 - African experts on Climate Change to prepare and publish a book on this subject, and that the book should be published within one year from now (by March 2011).

It was also agreed that UNECA, ICSU ROA and other key partners should prepare a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the implementation of the aforementioned Africa's Climate Change initiatives. The MoU should be endorsed during the 2nd Science with Africa conference which will be held in Addis Ababa on 2-4 June 2010.