STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP-CONCEPT NOTE

ADVANCING THE GREEN DIGITAL TRANSITION

Enabling an inclusive green transition with digital platforms

CO-CONVENERS

United Nations University Institute for Natural Resources in Africa (UNU-INRA) and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UN-ECA).

BACKGROUND

The urgency to mitigate the catastrophic impacts of climate change necessitates a rapid transition from fossil-based energy systems to clean, low to zero-carbon energy sources. Without specific efforts to ensure an equitable transition, existing injustices in the current energy systems will be exacerbated, resulting in winners and losers. Winners will benefit from the employment and innovation opportunities associated with the transition, while losers will bear the transition's burdens and lack access to the opportunities.

In Africa, a poorly managed transition would impact the informal sector, especially youth and women. The informal sector is a significant backbone of the African economy, providing a vital source of livelihood and income opportunities. Across Africa, the informal sector has demonstrated leadership in response to climate change and the low-carbon transition than the formal sector by leading several renewable and clean energy innovations. Informal workers engaged in the green energy space are expanding the footprint of renewables and disrupting traditional energy models. There is, however, minimal reference to the informal sector in the green transition discussions and interventions. Most green entrepreneurs function in solitary spaces without the requisite tools, relevant support mechanisms, and systems (data, infrastructure, policy opportunities) required to thrive and grow. However, accelerating the transition and achieving an inclusive and equitable green transition will be hampered if the informal sector's contribution remains neglected.

Digital technologies and the fast internet enable learning everywhere and empower billions worldwide by providing access to education, financial services, and government services. Digital technologies have enabled easy access to agricultural extension services for smallholder farmers for improved productivity. However, digital technologies have not been harnessed enough to provide similar support services to green entrepreneurs and enable the transition. Connecting green entrepreneurs and relevant stakeholders with a digital platform is required to create a learning community around digital solutions and climate actions to support green businesses and provide evidence to enable climate and green policy decisions to better support green businesses. An accessible digital platform could allow data gathering on existing renewable energy markets and renewable energy usage and participation of micro-small enterprises, which is required to provide valuable insights for the transition towards more sustainable energy systems.

To this end, the UNU-INRA and UNECA are hosting stakeholder workshops in participating countries, including Ghana, to actualize the JUSTIS digital portal. The digital portal engages and connects green entrepreneurs across four participating countries-Ghana, Zambia, Namibia, and Ivory Coast, to share ideas and information about business design, branding, market, and performance indicators, better access to new opportunities, and evaluate potential risks.

AIM AND OBJECTIVE OF THE SIDE EVENT

The climate crisis needs deliberate efforts if the world is to restructure current economic systems to viable green businesses. Supporting local enterprises will contribute to the development leapfrog that will create the right mix of local policies, private sector support, and entrepreneurship to create new jobs, facilitate the design of green infrastructure and enable a business space that will give local entrepreneurs the support they need to launch and transform their business.
This workshop aims to demonstrate the potential of the **JUSTIS digital portal** as an important enabler of the green transition and create awareness among

policymakers about the JUSTIS initiative and its utility, function and usefulness in supporting green policy decision-making.

The JUSTIS digital portal, among other functions, is:

1. Providing a support infrastructure for green businesses across Africa.
    i. Supporting green start-ups through dedicated information that is context-based to enable entrepreneurs.
    ii. Providing green market data and information to enable entrepreneurs to identify market outlets,opportunities, and tailor their goods and services based on demand and market potential.
2. Connecting entrepreneurs across Ghana, Zambia, Namibia, and Ivory Coast to better access new opportunities and evaluate potential risks.
    a. It serves as a connective portal by bringing businesses, policymakers, and potential customers together.
    b. It gives insights into the kind of services that entrepreneurs can retail.
3. Enabling entrepreneurs to scale up their businesses.
    a. The digital portal provides a marketing platform to retail green products and services to potential consumers, financial markets, and investors.
    b. Provides information on market findings based on the different markets represented in the doorway.
    c. Market research analysis available on the site can enable entrepreneurs to tailor their goods and services based on demand and market potential.
    d. Entrepreneurs can share ideas and information about business design, branding, market, and performance indicators.
4. Enable investors to identify new business ventures.
5. Retail the services of entrepreneurs to consumers looking for green services.
6. Provides policymakers with a learning platform to support evidence-based climate and green policy decisions to better support green businesses.
7. Provide researchers working on the substantive and technical matters related to the identified sectors can also evaluate the learning needs

regarding a potential booming green energy market in the countries under study and provide sound business advice on the nature and scale of businesses to be 'mined'.