

## **Carlos Lopes says Paris Climate Agreement should aim to save lives**

Addis Ababa ,Ethiopia 21 November 2015 (ACPC) - The Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has said that unless climate negotiators and governments begin to put faces and people behind the statistics on impacts of climate change in Africa, "the sense of urgency with which the upcoming negotiation must be approached from a humanistic perspective would be lost."

Speaking in Addis Ababa ahead of the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) due in Paris France at the end of this month, Mr. Carlos Lopes said, "it is the 11th hour for many of the continent's people who are at the frontline of the effects of climate change and for whom the outcomes of the negotiations are critical".

"Beyond the projected text and contours of the Paris Agreement, it is the lives of millions of Africans, especially the deprived segment of the population that is made up of women and children in the rural areas that are on the line", he explained.

Noting that while many reports spell out the catastrophic consequences of climate change for most of Africa, he warned that "victimhood cannot, and should not be the default strategy for the African position".

"This should be another opportunity for Africa to sharpen its positions, informed by data and research; build alliances, based on shared values; and continue to speak with one voice on critical issues such as energy security, agricultural transformation and the centrality of a people-centred development, which is predicated on the protection of the continent's ecological goods and scarce natural resources."

Several scientific reports predict that if no stop gap measures are taken (through concrete emission reductions) between the Paris Agreement and the 2020 date of implementation of the successor treaty, global warming could go well over 3 degrees Celsius with predicted losses of 5% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of many countries and a reduction of as much as 10% in agricultural production.

He said that Africa's "core priorities cannot be lost in the global governance because the opportunities for the continent to be a continued growth pole will be much reduced under a changing climate".

"Social justice and equity must be at the heart of the global discussions", he said, adding that "it is morally unacceptable and economically untenable for the rest of the world to continue to ignore millions of vulnerable people in Africa who will not be sitting on the agenda-setting table or able to tell the story of their daily challenges on health, energy, food security, education, water scarcity ...and whose future, knowingly or otherwise, will depend on Paris, whatever the complexion of the agreement.

He stressed that a paradigm shift is needed to ensure that the African continent is perceived as an equal beneficiary and player in the global development arena. "The time has come to refrain from

viewing the world in blocks and interest groups but as one," he added, further emphasizing that an approach of enlightened self-interest that leaves no-one behind is the key to addressing intractable problems that result in migration, conflict and loss of life.

Mr. Lopes said the highly-anticipated climate change agreement could dramatically alter the landscape of inequity and inequality, and in tandem with Africa's Agenda 2063, the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development will lay the foundation for eradicating poverty irreversibly, inclusive growth and protecting the planet.

The negotiation must emphasize investments in people over processes, ensure that financing is not only adequate but accessible and predictable to fully support national development priorities, he stressed.

"This is about our collective resolve to shape the course of governance and to allow humanity to emerge as the winner over semantics and narrow vested interests," he concluded.