



**Press Release No.        /2012**

**African Parliamentarians meet to discuss on Multilateral Environmental Agreements**



**Entebbe, Uganda- 04 June 2012-** Under the theme “Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) in National and Regional Development”, representatives of African regional and national parliaments met today 04 June 2012, in Entebbe, Uganda.

The primary aim of the Colloquium is creating awareness and enhancing capacity of Parliamentarians in environmental management, environmental policy and mainstreaming of MEAs in sustainable development plans and policies.

Commissioner Tumusiime Rhoda Peace of the African Union Commission, Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture, indicated the issue of environmental concern and disaster as the most serious threats to the existence of humanity. “Africa is most vulnerable and yet least responsible for this. We, therefore, have to put in more effort to address these threats. For Africa, failure to address environmental disasters will result in dire consequences both in terms of socio-economic development and human health. Impacts of climate change and desertification are creating additional demands on Africa’s challenged economies, and draining our limited resources”, she said.

According to the Commissioner, responding to the need to address environmental disasters, the international community has put in place various conventions and agreements, and most African countries are signatories to these international conventions. Despite the fact that continental conventions have been established in favor of Africa to address specific regional and sub regional needs on environmental issues, “most African countries have still not ratified or adopted the protocols”, she underscored, giving the Maputo Convention as an example.

“Parliaments have a key role to play for the implementation of MEAs, through passing appropriate laws and regulations to translate these international agreements into the national legislation. Parliaments are also involved in the ratification of these MEAs and are therefore crucial partners for promoting sustainable development, environmental governance and for advancing law and policy”, said Ambassador Roberto Ridolfi, the Head of the European Delegation to the Republic of Uganda,

In relation with the regional and global dimension of many environmental problems, Ambassador Ridolfi mentioned the important role of the African Union Commission as

responsible body for promoting environmental sustainability on the continent. “Its principal role in this regard is to coordinate and facilitate implementation of programmes and strategies related to the environment, to enhance capacity of Africans in environmental management and to raise environmental awareness”, he said.



Mr. Mounkaila Goumandakoye, Director and Regional Representative, United Nations Environmental Programme Regional Office for Africa highlighted the significant link of this colloquium to the upcoming Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in a sense that the two events primarily focus on the common quest of delivering sustainable development in the planet of 7 billion people.

“These MEAs are playing a significant role in the drive to achieving sustainable development by mapping out global, regional, national and local actions on environmental management. The MEAs also play a critical role in improving governance, enhancing international political comity, mobilizing financial and technical resources, and facilitating changes in our policies”, according to Mr. Goumandakoye.

“While Africa is not the major contributor to environmental problems, it has, nevertheless, suffered most from the impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, desertification and population, among others”, said Mrs. Rebecca A Kadaga, Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda.

She further claimed that the adverse effects of environment and natural resources degradation have severely affected the efforts towards increasing agricultural productivity, as part of the pursuit of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The workshop brought together national and regional parliamentarians, MEAs experts, civil society organizations, AU member states, United Nations Environment Programme, European Commission, Regional Economic Communities, (RECs), NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA), international organizations, MEAs Secretariats, and other partners.

MTs/