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Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA P. O. Box 3243 Telephone: 5517 700 Fax: 5511299

Web Site: www.africa-union.org

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

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Conference on the Use of Earth Observation to Support Environmental Policy Making in Africa

Addis Ababa, 22nd May 2012- A conference on the Use of Earth Observation to Support Environmental Policy Making in Africa was kicked off today, Tuesday 22nd May at the Conference Centre of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, under the theme:” *Showcase the Use of the African Monitoring of Environment for Sustainable Development (AMESD) Services for Policy Making*”.

Organized by the African Monitoring of Environment for Sustainable Development (AMESD) under the AUC Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture, this two-day Conference aims to address and sensitize policy makers on the potential utilization and integration of the AMESD regional products and services and integrate environmental of Earth observation information into the development process of its 48 African member states.

It was attended by representatives from the African Regional Economic Communities (RECs), AMESD Regional Implementation Centers (RICs), Environmental policy makers from each of the 49 African, Caribbean and Pacific states (ACP), Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), local and international organizations, universities and others.

AUC Commissioner of Rural Economy and Agriculture Mrs. Rhoda Tumusiime, in her remarks delivered on her behalf by Dr. Khalil Timamy, AU – AMESD Coordinator, described the conferences as a mile-stone event in AMESD calendar, with combination of series of activities involving training and capacity building, where the parties involve are the RECs, RICs, and technical assistance team, adding that they all contribute significantly to the success of the program. He said “the ability to generate data is not the same thing as the ability to utilize data effectively for policy making. Policy makers and planners need to be trained how to make sense of the data, how to use it, and incorporate it in their development and planning processes. The next decision step is to see how the built EO capacities can contribute to narrowing the gap between policy and implementation in Africa”.

Mr. Gary Quince, Ambassador of the EU delegation to AU, said in his opening remarks that “the AMESD program is one of the key action within the Africa-EU partnership on Climate Change and Environment, which closely linked with other initiatives such as the Climate for Development in Africa (Clim-Dev), Africa initiative and the Multilateral Environmental Agreement Programme. He emphasized that “the conference offers a great opportunity to exchange experience on the use of Earth observation information for better management of natural resources, as well as to raise awareness of how this information can aid better policy making and planning and improved environmental governance”.

H.E. Mr. Sileshi Getahun, the Ethiopian State Minister of Agriculture said “this conference brings together experts of Earth observation technologies and African policy makers to find ways together for practical use of such technologies to sustain the development in crucial economic sectors of AU Member’s States and how to link science to development effectively”.

According to the Presentation of AMESD, the expected results of the conference that potentialities and usefulness of AMESD services and products are properly shown for policy making and economic planning, promote an active, informed and sustainable participation of African governments in global environment, and appropriate use of Earth

observation technologies for the sustainable development of Africa, with the help of the AU-AMESD, providing its operational services, and European Union providing its financial assistance.

AMESD is a partnership between the African Union Commission (AUC) and the European Union (EU). AUC has been mandated by the five participating Regional Economic Communities (RECs: CEMAC, ECOWAS, IGAD, IOC, and SADC) and by the ACP Secretariat, who are the program beneficiaries, to be in charge of the program implementation. AMESD was kicked off in October 2007 and is expected to run until mid-2013. Its funding from the European Development Fund reaches €21 million. It has made significant progress since its inception, in terms of improving data access with the deployment of 111 new satellite reception stations in 48 African countries.

The conference will conclude tomorrow Wednesday 23rd May 2012.

For further information, please visit the AU website: www.au.int or www.amesd.org

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