

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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AFRICA MARKS A TURNING POINT TOWARDS ADDRESSING DISASTERS THROUGH ITS MULTI-HAZARD EARLY WARNING AND ACTION SYSTEMS SITUATION ROOM

The facilities for the Africa Multi-hazard Early Warning and Early Action Systems (AMHEWAS) Situation Room for disaster risk reduction have been handed over to the African Union Commission (AUC) by the Government of Italy. The event took place on Monday, February 28 at the AU Compound in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.



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The AUC, through the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Technical Coordinator Gatkuoth Kai, expressed concerns that the Africa's risk profile is very high. To address this, the AUC adopted its Programme of Action for the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, envisioning the reduction of continental risks and mortalities by 2030.

AMHEWAS is linked to the Disaster Operations Centre (DOC) situation room housed at IGAD/ICPAC in Nairobi, and the multi-advisory situation room located in Niamey, Niger at the African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development (ACMAD). The Multi-hazard Early Warning Programme mainly funded by the Government of Italy and the Kingdom of Sweden, with Italy supporting the establishment of situation rooms at the AUC, and two others at the regional scale, housed at ICPAC Nairobi and at ACMAD in Niamey.



Ambassador Hermann Immongault, the Chairperson of the African Union Permanent Representative Council (PRC) Sub-Committee on Environmental Matters said “However, for the Africa Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems (MHEWS) situation room to reach its full potential and even go beyond, there is a need for the African Union Commission to support member states to establish similar situation rooms at national and regional levels to encourage a networked approach in disaster risk management and ensure their interoperability thereof”.

In her speech, the Italian Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, H.E. Marina Sereni noted that exposure to hazards on the increase due

to climate change-urbanisation and unsustainable land use. She noted that conflicts and COVID-19 have heightened the risks and reduced resilience of communities in Africa. Therefore, she emphasised the need to shift from managing disasters to managing risks. This would be greatly achieved by devoting increased attention towards the prevention of hazards and also anticipatory action needed to limit their humanitarian impact.

In addition, Mrs. Sereni noted the appreciation of the Italian Cooperation to have played a part to the implementation of Africa roadmap for improving the availability, access and use of disaster risk information for early warning and early action. Increasing early warning information for early action to people. The Italian Government provided a grant of 5 million Euro towards the roadmap. The Italian Cooperation has also been a key contributor in other disaster risk reduction initiatives in Africa in collaboration with UNDRR, including; strengthening of national and local capacities for the coordination and implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Horn of Africa, and in collection, exchange analysis data of multi-disaster early warning systems in the Sahel region and building the Africa network of excellence in DRR at the national level. She stressed that African stakeholders in all the initiatives are leading partners rather than beneficiaries.

In his remarks, the Director General of the African Union Commission, Ambassador Fathallah Sijilmassi thanked the government of Italy for its financial support and contribution and support towards the realisation of AMHEWAS. He also expressed the AUC's appreciation to United Nation's Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and the CIMA Foundation for their technical support in the project.

To support the AUC's goal to substantially increase in the availability and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments to people by 2030, the Director General noted that the Situation Room is already producing relevant products on the same. These include the Continental Watch produced weekly on Tuesdays and Fridays, and situational reports on unfolding disasters.

The event marked another high point in Africa's journey towards multi-hazard early warning systems for early action approach, following the adoption of the Continent's first ever Institutional and Operational Framework for multi-hazard early warning system and early action at the recently concluded AU Summit. The framework was funded by the Kingdom of Sweden through Sahel Resilience Project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The handing over event brought together representatives from the AUC, UNDRR, the government of Italy, including the Italian Ambassador to the republic of Ethiopia and the AU, and various representations from Sweden, Zimbabwe, the CIMA Foundation and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

For media inquiries:

Ms. Afrah Thabit | Information and Communication Directorate | African Union Commission | E-mail: Thabitma@africa-union.org | Tel: +251-912615121

For further information please contact:

Mr. Gatkuoth Kai | Technical Coordinator for Disaster Risk Reduction | Directorate of Sustainable Environment and Blue Economy, Department for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment | E-mail: KaiG@africa-union.org | WhatsApp: +251 909537884

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