

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

Press Release No: xxxxxxxx
Venue: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Date: 16th February 2023

The African Union Commission Meets with Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency on Key Environmental Programmes in Africa



The Sustainable Environment and Blue Economy (SEBE) Directorate in the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment held a briefing session with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) Environmental Programme Officers at the African Union Commission (AUC) Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 8th February 2023. The session covered environment, climate change, biodiversity and disaster risk reduction. The session was attended by 36 environmental programme officers of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) working in Africa.

Representatives from the Embassy of Sweden to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the African Union headed the delegation. The purpose of the session was for the AUC-SEBE to brief the SIDA Environmental Programme Officers based in Africa on the programmes and initiatives the AUC is implementing in the area of Biodiversity, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction. The session also provided a platform for sharing experiences and challenges and thus boosting the knowledge on success factors for practical support on environment, climate change and biodiversity.

Mr Harsen Nyambe, Director of SEBE, co-chaired the meeting and in his opening remarks he welcomed the Swedish delegation and thanked them for visiting the Commission. He acknowledged the generous support by Sweden to the Commission on Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change and Biodiversity. Director Nyambe also highlighted the priorities on environmental sustainability and Blue Economy. He underscored the importance of investment in disaster risk reduction, climate change, biodiversity, water and sanitation, the Great Green Wall Initiative, Meteorology

(Weather and Climate Services), Blue Economy, and Environment Management including circular economy and Pollution prevention.

On her part, Ms Anna Tjärvar, Programme Manager for Environment, Climate Change and Energy at the Embassy of Sweden in Addis Ababa, who also doubled as the head of the delegation who visited the AUC and co-chair, thanked the Commission and Director Nyambe for hosting the delegation. She informed the session that the emissaries comprised Swedish officials working in various African countries.

Mr Gatkuoth Kai, Technical Coordinator for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), presented the programmes and projects under the DRR portfolio. He informed the delegation of the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Africa Programme of Action for the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, which are critical continental frameworks guiding the DRR agenda on the continent. He stated that the AUC has developed a series of programmes and projects to implement the two frameworks. These include: (i) Strengthening Disaster Risk Governance for Resilience in African Regions and Countries; (ii) Sahel Resilience Project; (iii) Africa Urban Resilience Programme; (iv) COVID-19 Recovery Framework for Africa; (v) Africa Multi-hazard Early Warning and Early Action Programme (AMHEWAS); and (vi) Continental Civil Capacity Mechanism for Disaster Preparedness and Response. Question and answer sessions and in-depth discussions on DRR on the Continent followed the presentation.

Ms Leah Wanambwa, Senior Policy Officer, Climate Change and Biodiversity also presented on the initiatives, projects and frameworks relevant to Biodiversity, Climate Change including the Green Recovery Action Plan (GRAP). She also shared on the priorities for the African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2032. Ms Wanambwa highlighted the critical strategic intervention areas of the strategy, which include: Governance and policy, Adopting pathways towards transformative climate-resilient development, Enhancing means of implementation towards climate-resilient development, and Leveraging regional flagship initiatives. Following a discussion with the delegates, Ms Wanambwa made a presentation on the GRAP and underscored its priority areas: Climate Finance, Renewable Energy, Nature-based solutions including biodiversity and oceans, Resilient Agriculture, and Green and Resilient Cities.

The SIDA delegates asked a number of questions and also wanted to know the impacts of Swedish support to the programmes. They also provided technical input on some of the gaps experienced by AUC-SEBE. The engagement was very fruitful for both parties and it should be encouraged.

The visit ended with a vote of thanks by Ms Tjärvar to the AU Commission for hosting the delegation and sharing rich information about the AU's works. Reiterating Sweden's continued support to the African Union in addressing the challenges they face from climate change and disasters, Ms Tjärvar highlighted that the Sahel Resilience Project is playing a catalytic role in advancing Africa's disaster risk reduction agenda. "The project managed by UNDP and its regional partners is a unique platform that brings together agencies investing in multi-hazard early warning systems for anticipatory action, and urban resilience and risk reduction in Sahelian countries and Africa," she added.

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