INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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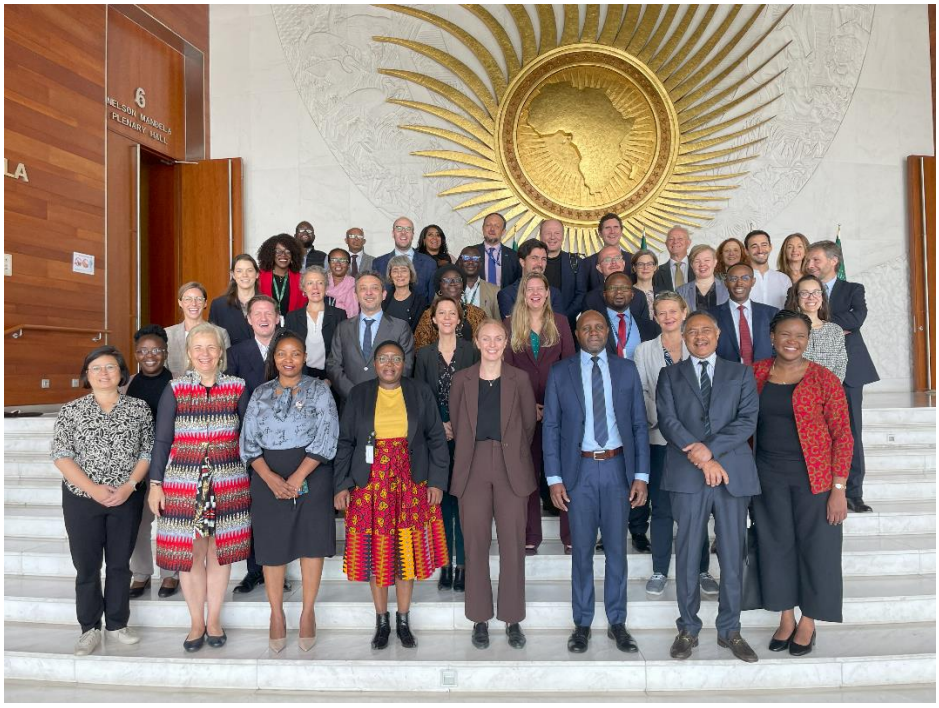
The African Union Commission Meets with a High-Level Donor Mission on Multi-Hazard Early Warning and Early Action System



The Directorate of Sustainable Environment and Blue Economy (SEBE) welcomed a high-level delegation of donors to the Africa Multi-hazard Early Warning and Early Action System (AMHEWAS) Situation Room on 5th March 2024 at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The visit aimed to familiarise with the progress and achievements in disaster risk reduction and multi-hazard early warning systems under the leadership of the AUC, and in the context of its Programme of Action to implement the Sendai Framework in Africa. The delegation comprised thirty-three (33) representatives from the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Kenya, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the European Union delegation to the African Union.

Speaking on behalf of the African Union Commission at the event, Harsen Nyambe Nyambe, SEBE Director, welcomed the high-level delegation and expressed the

African Union's appreciation to partners for supporting the continent's efforts to mitigate disasters which are on the increase in frequency and intensity mainly due to the changing climate.

Director Nyambe also highlighted the strides made by the AU Commission towards enhancing disaster resilience in Africa. These include the development of the AMHEWAS Programme and the inauguration of the AMHEWAS Situation Room at the AU headquarters in 2021, as well as the current synergies between the Programme and the Early Warning for All initiative by the United Nations Secretary-General.

Furthermore, Director Nyambe emphasised the Commission's plan to diversify multi-hazard early warning products to include droughts, food security, and earthquakes, among others. He underscored the strong collaboration between the Commission AU Member States and Regional Economic Communities through regular anticipatory meetings, with the current focus on riverine flooding, heavy rainfall, and strong winds, as well as the biennial review reports produced with the support of all the three parties.

On his part, Mr Amjad Abbashar, Chief of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) Regional Office for Africa (RoA), said, "The collaboration between UNDRR and the African Union Commission dates back to 2005. It has been a journey of milestones that also resulted in the establishment of the Disaster Risk Reduction Unit in 2017." Mr Abbashar underscored that Africa was the first continent to have its Programme of Action aligned with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. He also stated that the PoA has five additional targets tailor-made to the African context.

Mr Abbashar pointed to the critical role played by the AU Commission – the convening of the Africa Working Group on Disaster Risk Reduction (AWGDRR), Africa's premier multi-stakeholder DRR coordination mechanism that meets twice a year. He noted the importance of this mechanism, especially in shaping Africa's common positions at various global meetings.

A presentation was shared with the partners on the AMHEWAS programme, focusing on progress, key achievements, gaps, and challenges. Ms Nomsa Dube, the AMHEWAS Programme Manager, noted that along with establishing the Continental Situation Room for Disaster Risk Reduction, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have also established regional situation rooms. These include the Disaster Operations Centre at the IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC) in Nairobi, Kenya, the Disaster Operations Situation Room at the African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development (ACMAD), and a newly established Situation Room at the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Abuja, Nigeria. Ms Dube also highlighted the planned establishment of an AMHEWAS Situation Room at the SADC Humanitarian and Emergency Operations Centre (SHOC) in Nacala, Mozambique. She further noted that the plans for the AMHEWAS programme also include strengthening Member States and Regional Economic Communities' capacity for preparedness.

Mr Jully Ouma, a hydrologist at the Disaster Operations Centre at ICPAC, also presented the interoperability of the Continental AMHEWAS Situation Room and the Regional Situation Room. Mr Ouma noted that the AMHEWAS Situation Room and the ICPAC have collaborated to produce various multi-hazard early warning products.

Progress notwithstanding, funding, and human resource gaps persist and must be addressed to ensure the sustainability of the AMHEWAS Programme. The AU Commission appealed for support in rolling out the Programme to reach the vision of AMHEWAS by 2030 and, therefore, accelerate the achievement of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 targets. With increased international cooperation, Africa will likely realise more dividends on effective multi-hazard early warning systems and early action.

The high-level delegation toured the AMHEWAS Situation Room and took stock of the various operations, including generating multi-hazard early warning products to enhance disaster preparedness. During the physical tour of the AMHEWAS Situation Room, Mr. Lusajo Ambukege showcased the operations of the Situation Room and the AMHEWAS products. Mr. Lusajo Ambukege, Senior Early Warning and Disaster Operations Expert reported that the Situation Room produced the Continental Watch

bulletin/ advisories and Disaster Situation Reports. The continental watch advisories aim to foster anticipatory action, and the Disaster Situation Reports seek to galvanise solidarity and support for AU Member States hit by major disasters.

The visit also provided a platform for the delegation to watch a video clip on the impacts of tropical cyclone Freddy in Madagascar, Malawi, and Mozambique arising from the assessment that the AU Commission conducted with the SADC Secretariat and UNDP in August 2023.

The African Union Commission and the UNDRR Regional Office for Africa (RoA) organised the event.

Collaborating Partners on the AUC's Disaster Risk Reduction Portfolio

The European Union's Intra-ACP Natural Disaster Risk Programme catalysed the African Union Commission's disaster risk reduction activities. Through this solid foundation, The DRR Unit has expanded its scope and established programmes, including AMHEWAS, the Africa Urban Resilience Programme, and the Sahel Resilience Project. In addition to the EU, the DRR functions are also supported by the generous governments of Italy, Sweden, and Norway, as well as implementing partners, namely UNDRR, UNDP, the CIMA Research Foundation, and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) on behalf of Germany.

For further information please contact:

Mr. Aboubakar Diane, Senior Policy Officer, Disaster Risk Reduction| Directorate of Sustainable Environment and Blue Economy **|** African Union Commission
Tel: +251 115 517 700 | **E-mail:** DianeA@africa-union.org **|** Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

For media enquiry:

Mr Molalet Tsedeke | Information and Communication Directorate **|** African Union Commission
Tel: +251-911-630 631 | **E-mail:** MolaletT@africa-union.org **|** Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Ms. Maryanne Muriuki, Communications Analyst – Disaster Risk Reduction **|** Disaster Risk Reduction Unit **|** African Union Commission

E-mail: MuriukiM@africa-union.org **|** Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Information and Communication, African Union Commission I **E-mail:** DIC@africa-union.org I **Web:** au.int **|** Addis Ababa, Ethiopia **| Follow Us:** Facebook | Twitter | Instagram | YouTube