Partners commend ECA's technical support on sustainable development in Africa

ECA Press Release No. 93/2012

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 17 June 2012 (ECA) - African participants at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) have commended UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) for improved understanding that the region now has on sustainable development issues and for championing the Africa preparatory process to better prepare the continent's negotiators.

Commenting on the level of engagement that Ambassadors and negotiators have shown during daily briefings for the region in Rio, Liberia's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Dennis Remongar, said that this reveals a commendable level of preparedness by the continent.

He told ECA's Information and Communication Service (ICS) that in terms of knowledge of the issues, it is clear that African participants came to Rio quite prepared, thanks, in part, to the technical assistance ECA provided.

"But what we have to do henceforth is to try to be more strategic, by way of having our negotiators prepare for different scenarios for each session", he said. This way, they would be tactically more ready to handle situations for which prior preparations had not been made, he explained.

He cited cases of developed countries that want to open new discussions on poverty reduction and Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) and said that African negotiators should be astute enough to expect these sorts of delay tactics. The important thing, he said, is that we do not walk out of the negotiations.

Mr. Josue Dione, Director of the Food Security and Sustainable Development Division welcomed the remarks with modesty, saying that the "ECA is only doing its job, as it had been specifically mandated by the UN General Assembly to follow-up on the implementation of the conference outcomes” at the regional level.

“We were also mandated to integrate sustainable development in our own work programme and assist African states, regional and sub-regional organizations, to integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced manner”, Dione explained.

He recalled that even before then, ECA had long embraced the concept of sustainable development and laid a solid foundation for policy formulation in the area in Africa. “As the regional arm of the United Nations, the ECA has over the years carried out policy analysis, capacity building and advocacy on sustainable development matters”, he added.

He recalled that ECA has also facilitated and strengthened the exchange of experiences, including national experiences, best practices, case studies and partnership experiences on the implementation of sustainable development-related commitments.

Furthermore, the ECA has put in place a number of mechanisms including the committee on food security and sustainable development (CFSSD), the regional implementation meetings (RIMs) for the sessions of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), regional coordination mechanism (RCM) and the Sustainable Development Report on Africa (SDRA) which is now in its 4th edition.

SDRA has become one of ECA's flagship publications and is intended to remain an important medium for monitoring and assessing sustainable development in Africa.

This explains why assessment of progress towards sustainable development is now systematically based on a well-defined sustainable development indicator framework and indicator set covering the three pillars of sustainable development and the governance dimension which is considered overarching and indispensable for sustainable development in Africa.

Other ECA publications produced on a regular basis with direct relevance for Africa’s sustainable development agenda include but are not limited to: The Economic Report on Africa; African Women’s Report; African Report on Human and Social Development; African Governance Report; and Assessment of Regional Integration in Africa.
Furthermore, ECA has mainstreamed sustainable development into the work of all its sub-programmes, including support to AU and its NEPAD Programme; Financing for Development (development effectiveness); the promotion of Regional Integration; Climage Africa Programme and ACPC; the Land Policy Initiative; and different reporting on the Millennium Development Goals. More specifically, it established a vibrant sub-programme on Food Security and Sustainable Development to serve as its focal Division on sustainable development for the Commission.

Responding to a call by the General Assembly for efficient and effective preparations at the local, national, regional and international levels, and for regional commissions to take a lead role in the regional level preparations, ECA galvanized synergies at regional, sub-regional and the United Nations system levels to prepare for Africa's participation at Rio+20.

It also pulled intellectual and other resources from within ECA and partner institutions (AUC, AfDB, UNEP and UNDP) to effectively guide and prepare African countries to collectively articulate their concerns and priorities at the Conference and ensure that these are adequately reflected in the outcomes of the Conference.

ECA conceived and led in the implementation of the main activities of the Africa preparatory process for Rio+20, especially the Africa review report on progress towards sustainable development; Africa report on institutional and strategic frameworks for sustainable development; and the Africa Regional Preparatory Conference for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, October 2011.

The Commission collaborated with the same partners to prepare key reports such as the Africa Report on New and Emerging Challenges; and the Africa Report on a Green Economy in the context of Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication.