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Africa lagging behind in development of 'green' energy economy – UN



3 March 2010 – Africa is lagging behind the rest of the world in developing renewable energy projects with initiatives aimed at producing clean and 'green' energy remaining largely under-exploited, warned a new report released today by the United Nations Environment Programme (**UNEP**).

A UNEP assessment **noted** that the entire continent has just over 120 carbon market projects up and running or in the pipeline in areas ranging from wind power to forestry schemes, and harvesting methane gas from landfills to fuel electricity generation makes up 20 per cent of all such initiatives.

Larger economies in Africa such as Egypt and South Africa are home to the lion's share of the schemes, with 32 and 13 projects respectively, while Zambia, Madagascar, Cameroon and Mali only have one or two projects each and several countries have none, according to the report.

The study also reported patchy growth in the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), an arrangement under the Kyoto Protocol allowing developed countries to reduce emissions and meet global warming commitments by investing in carbon reduction projects in developing countries.

However, the report – prepared for the opening of the Second African Carbon Forum – highlighted Kenya and Uganda as exceptions with the number of carbon market projects underway in these countries jumping from two in 2007 to 15 and 12 respectively.

"The growth of the carbon markets in Africa are both cause for optimism, and cause for concern," UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner told around 1,000 participants attending the three-day gathering, held at the agency's offices in Nairobi, Kenya.

"To realize only a few percentage points more of the massive potential for wind, solar, biomass and waste into energy schemes, action across a range of challenges needs to be stepped up," said Mr. Steiner.

He said this was in part the responsibility of the UN, regional development banks and international funding and donor bodies, but there is also a great deal private banks and individual Governments can do to make clean energy investments more attractive through innovative loans, forward-looking policies and smart market mechanisms

Mr. Steiner noted that the introduction a policy designed to encourage the adoption of renewable energy sources in Kenya triggered interest from a consortium to establish Africa's largest wind farm in the country.

"The groundwork has been laid for Africa to boost its participation in the carbon market, which is growing as an important commodity market worldwide," said John Kilani of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (**UNFCCC**). "You are bound to do business [under the Kyoto Protocol's CDM] when you bring all of the key market players together: the investors, buyers and sellers," said Mr. Kilani. "This Forum is therefore bound to boost the number of carbon offset projects in Africa."

The new Africa-wide UNEP assessment estimates that close to 4,900 CDM projects are up and running or in the pipeline worldwide, a large number of which are in the big developing economies such as Brazil, China and India.

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