

Climate boss feels for Africa on climate change regime benefits



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Africa is the continent hardest hit by climate change yet benefits least from the current international climate change regime, a situation which cries out for concerted engagement by African leaders in the current round of climate change negotiations, Yvo de Boer told carbon market stakeholders and government representatives Wednesday.

The countries of the world are busy negotiating what will happen when the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol ends in 2012.

These negotiations need to be concluded in December 2009 in Copenhagen, which leaves little time for crafting a complex agreement aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and helping countries adapt to the effects of climate change already evident.

“There’s a lot at stake for Africa. How can a Copenhagen deal, for example, help African countries adapt to the impacts of climate change and make African economies climate-resilient?” Mr. de Boer asked the 500 participants in Africa Carbon Forum meeting to promote carbon market benefits on the continent.

Under the Kyoto Protocol’s Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to sustainable development can earn saleable certified emission reduction credits.

Countries with a commitment under the Kyoto Protocol can use the CERs to meet a part of their obligations under the Protocol. There are to date more than 1150 CDM projects in 49 countries, but just 27 of these are in Africa.

“Outside of Africa, the CDM has been a great success. It has provided an important source of investment and financial flows for clean development, it has stimulated technology transfer, and two per cent of credits issued under CDM are going toward adaptation to climate change,” said Mr. de Boer.

Despite the small number of projects in African, CDM is growing on the continent and is already estimated to be stimulating several billion dollars worth of capital investment in the seven African countries hosting projects. Market stakeholders and policy-makers are looking for ways to multiply these benefits.

“So the question is: How can we make the Clean Development Mechanism work better in Africa? And how do we get to a Copenhagen deal that will benefit Africa more?” asked Mr. de Boer, who suggested to the answers could lie in effective engagement by African negotiators.

“The current climate change negotiations present African countries with a golden opportunity to change things for the better and design a Copenhagen deal that works for Africa. For this to happen, it is crucial that African countries put their concerns on the table and push for solutions that respond to their specific problems,” Mr. de Boer said.

“He who does not seize the opportunity today, will be unable to seize tomorrow’s opportunity,” said Mr. de Boer, citing a Somali proverb.

To help Africa attract its fair share of emission reduction projects under CDM and satisfy growing carbon market interest on the continent, partner international agencies and the International Emissions Trading Association (IETA) are holding the three-day Africa Carbon Forum.

The forum is being held under the umbrella of the Nairobi Framework initiative to expand the reach of CDM.

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