Workshop on climate resilient reconstruction post Cyclone Idai set for Harare

Harare, Zimbabwe, October 22, 2019 (ECA) - The Economic Commission for African (ECA) and partners, the Department for International Development (DFID) and the United Kingdom's Met Office, are this week convening a workshop for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to formulate actionable strategies for climate resilient reconstruction of infrastructure post the devastating tropical Cyclone Idai in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

The planning workshop for climate resilient investment in reconstruction and development in SADC Member States is informed by the three countries’ experiences following Cyclones Idai and Kenneth.

In Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, more than 1 000 people lost their lives, while hundreds of thousands remained in need of aid, following the devastating battering by Cyclone Idai. The World Bank estimates the affected countries will need over US$2 billion to recover.

The workshop, which falls under the ECA’s Building Back Better strategies, runs from 23-25 October 2019 in Harare.

Mr. James Murombedzi, Chief of the African Climate Policy Center (ACPC) of United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), says the overall objective of the workshop is to initiate a series of initiatives to support the integration of climate information services and climate change considerations into resilience building in climate sensitive sectors of the economies of SADC countries.

“The workshop will review the status of climate information services in the region, explore tools and methods for enhancing the mainstreaming of climate change in development planning, and begin to identify concrete actions towards climate proofing economic activities, ecosystems, human settlements and physical infrastructure especially in areas projected to be impacted by extreme weather and climate events,” he said.

The affected countries will share their experiences, in particular what the impacts of Idai were, why these impacts happened and the workshop will also introduce participants to the types of climate information that are available, as well as tools and methods for analysing this information and its applications in decision making.

“Africa’s economies, ecosystems and societies are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and variability and have the least capacity to cope and adapt to climate impacts,” said Mr. Murombedzi, adding building resilience will positively impact disaster risk preparedness and response.

The underlying causes of vulnerability, he said, include high levels of poverty and national indebtedness, poor infrastructure, unemployment and low levels of capacity to generate and use climate information, including early warning systems.

Food shortages and higher domestic prices caused by flooding further increase the national poverty headcount rate by almost 1 percent each year. But with some science and evidence based planning, the damage could be limited.

It is therefore incumbent on member States to take urgent steps in order to keep the damage of the next, inevitable catastrophes in check, said Mr. Murombedzi.

The workshop will elaborate “Building Back Better” strategies based on improving resilience through improved weather and climate forecasting; integration of climate information into infrastructure, ecosystems and settlement plans; capacity building for the use of Socio-Economic Benefits (SEB) models for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR); and innovative financing for reconstruction and climate sensitive infrastructure planning.

It is geared towards provision of support to affected countries through ‘building back better’ by integrating climate information for resilience by way of policies and improved access to climate information and prediction services.

The planning workshop will also elaborate strategies and approaches to obtain verifiable estimates of the economic impact of Idai and Kenneth in addition to lives lost and missing persons. The broad objective of this workshop is to develop a regional actionable programme that builds the capacity of the SADC member States for climate resilient development planning.

The workshop will be attended by up to 50 participants, including representatives from the three countries, other SADC countries, the SADC Climate Services Centre, Regional Economic Communities, regional and international partners, including the UN family.

A regional actionable programme document that enhances capacity and resilience in SADC member States against the impact of weather and climate risks and disasters is expected to be the main outcome of the workshop.

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