

Friday, Lusaka (21st June, 2024)



ENVIRONMENTALISTS PROBE UPSCALING ZAMBIA'S COAL PRODUCTION AS GOV'T CLARIFIES

Zambia Climate Change Network - ZCCN Coordinator Lidya Chibambo says there is need for Zambia to align goals regarding the energy transition especially that the country plans to upscale coal production.

Ms Chibambo says the Minister of Energy has often been referring to the need for an energy mix to stop dependence on hydroelectricity.

She said the energy mix should be speaking to sustainable development that will not drag Zambia back to more emissions.

Ms Chibambo said this in Lusaka during a National Learning Workshop under the 'Strengthening Civil Society Voices for Climate Advocacy in Zambia' organised by the Centre for Environment Justice - CEJ with support from the United Nations Democracy Fund - UNDEF.

"We are looking at transitioning from fossil fuel to more renewable energy. This has seen a lot of debate because countries are at different levels of transition. There have been terms like phase out and phase down. Civil Society Organisations play a key role in understanding this. Politicians will say we need the energy mix. Already we have Maamba Collieries that is expanding by adding more kilowatts to the national grid but that is coal. Are we getting back to the commitments or not? These are issues we want CSOs to probe," she said.

At the same event, Rise Community AID Programme - RICAP Executive Director Samuel Tundu also sought clarification on plans to upscale coal production.

In response, Ministry of Green Economy and Environment Principal Climate Change Adaptation Officer Kasanda Bunda says the Government is committed to balancing goals regarding the energy mix.

"I like that question on coal because that is what the Honourable Minister was asking us yesterday to say that in the Nationally Determined Contributions - NDC we are talking about

reducing emissions from coal but at the same time Government is trying to upscale energy production from coal; so are we not conflicting?" he revealed.

Mr Bunda said countries at the global level have agreed to a just transition especially when it comes to energy transition.

He said the agreement entails that as countries are transitioning under energy, the transition has to be just, fair and orderly.

Mr Bunda said this means that least developed countries like those in Africa need to transition in a just manner.

"We have to consider our circumstances and situation that we are in. We cannot just say we stop but look at the conditions like the current power deficit. So for us, is moving away from coal justifiable to us looking at our circumstances?" he asserted.

He said in the course of the agreement, there are possibilities that countries can continue to use facilities as long as they put up technologies that are helping to use the coal sustainably and cleanly.

"Already there are technologies like the one that is being used in Maamba. It is a technology that uses waste coal which is rated clean. We recognise that transition is there in the NDC but efforts are being made to transition into the utilisation of clean coal but we have also to consider the concerns that we are in resulting from the drought," he said.

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