

Teusday, Lusaka (15th October, 2024)



UNEP HINTS AT CREATING AFRICAN INSTRUMENT ON ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) says there are ongoing discussions about creating an African instrument on environmental rights.

UNEP Deputy Director of the Law Division Andrew Raine, further said there are already 2,116 specialized environmental courts and tribunals in 67 countries, urging Zambia to establish an Environmental Court.

He said the institutions help advance environmental justice by equipping judges with specialized knowledge.

This came to light at the Environmental Protection Day (EPD) 2024 organized by the Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ) in Lusaka.

Mr. Raine highlighted the importance of environmental rule of law, which he described as having two main components such as good laws and good implementation.

He stressed the need for fair and clear laws, public participation, access to justice and information, accountability, coordinated mandates, and effective dispute-resolution mechanisms.

Mr. Raine also mentioned the potential of specialized environmental courts to advance environmental justice.

He said despite global geopolitical tensions, countries are coming together to address environmental issues through multilateral agreements, such as the international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution and the global biodiversity framework.

Mr. Raine said the human right to a healthy environment is recognized in the legal frameworks of 160 countries and regional treaties like the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Meanwhile, Ministry of Green Economy and Environment – Director Environment Godwin Gondwe, representing Ministry of Green Economy and Environment Permanent Secretary Douty Chibamba, highlighted the mounting pressures on the environment and the global forces threatening communities, urging a collective commitment to enforcing environmental laws and best practices in stewardship to secure a sustainable future.

Mr. Gondwe noted that since its inception, the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment has provided guidance and technical support to enhance programming and governmental protection efforts.

He praised the Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ) for its significant contributions over the past four years, including convening key stakeholders to discuss urgent environmental issues.

Mr. Gondwe expressed pride in the progress made and encouraged continued efforts to bring together key actors for environmental justice.

He also addressed the increasing environmental challenges posed by chemicals, solid waste, hazardous waste, industrialization, and mining, calling for urgent corrective actions to manage and remedy these issues.

Mr. Gondwe stressed the importance of strengthening environmental monitoring, law compliance, and enforcement mechanisms, and called for active participation from all stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, and communities.

He urged the private sector to invest in green technologies and sustainable businesses and emphasized the need for inclusive development that prioritizes the voices of marginalized groups.

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