Forestry activists meet to review progress

CHARLES KWIZERA & MOSES GAHIGI

LOCAL forestry conservation bodies subscribed to the Central African Regional Programme for Environment (CARPE), yesterday met to assess the progress that has been made in the previous term and chart a way forward.

During the meeting which took place at the Ministry of Natural Resources (MINENFRA), activists called upon the public to join the forest conservation campaign by initiating different initiatives.

While opening the meeting, the Minister of Natural Resources, Stanislas Kamanza, commended the work done by the conservationists in the country saying that their efforts have contributed much to the country’s targets of safeguarding natural resources.

According to Stedde Habyarimana, the head of CARPE, the coming together of stakeholders not only serves to evaluate their performance but also works to create a pool of ideas and innovations to solve emerging challenges.

"This is intended to bring together all stakeholders in the forestry conservation field to share ideas, evaluate our selves and set new solutions," said Habyarimana.

He went on to encourage the public to start up new initiatives for the preservation and promotion of forests, saying that CARPE is ready to give them grants after assessing the viability of their initiatives.

"As the minister emphasised, we call upon other people with viable forestry initiatives to come to us and we shall fund their projects," added Habyarimana.

CARPE was established in 1993 by USAID, which provides economic and humanitarian assistance worldwide with an aim of helping African and Central African countries to reduce the effect of destruction of forest, which is rampant in this region.

The body operates in countries that include Congo, Cameroon, Gabon, Cameroun, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe and Rwanda among others.

Activists call for legal assistance to the poor

BY ROBERT MUGABE

SEVERAL African legal experts gathered in Kigali yesterday called for more legal aid to be extended to the poor especially those in rural areas.

This was announced during a conference that has attracted over two hundred participants including the legal experts, professors, human rights activists and legal practitioners to discuss legal aid in Africa.

The activists called upon legal practitioners to take their services to villages as stipulated in the Lokoipe Declaration which advocates for legal aid to ensure that human rights are respected.

"There is need to have legal organs, legal aid bodies and paralegal established near to the rural area because in cities we have enough lawyers," said Karl Limondin, the head of the Danish Institute for Human Rights.

In his opening remarks, Deputy Chief Justice, Jean Roger said that in Burera, justice was being extended to the rural communities through the Abunzi (Mediation) who are charged with solving minor disputes in the communities across the country. He however told the activists that the judiciary was in the process of establishing legal aid offices in different parts of the country to assist in criminal administration in the rural areas.

"Burera is in the process of setting legal aid bureau in all districts of the county to advise the disavantaged who have limited access to lawyers," Bugge told the participants of the conference that took place at Hotel Novotel Monday.

Signed in 2004, the declaration which was signed in the Malagasy Capital advocates for a legal aid programme providing legal assistance at all stages of the criminal process including investigation, arrest, pre-trial detention, bail hearings, trials and appeals and any other proceedings.

"We are expecting a lot as we share experiences but also we expect to announce another declaration to stress on the need of these legal aid systems and set all and have access to justice," Justice Dimitar Mindalo, a South African judge told The New Times in a separate interview.

Minister wants EAC university fees harmonised

BY BERNARD NAMATA IN KAMPALA

FOLLOWING the recent signing of the Inter-University Bill by Partner States of the East African Community (EAC), all universities in the five-member States should charge uniform fees, the Chairperson of the EAC Council of Ministers Monique Mukaruziga, has urged.

However, the decision should only be implemented after legislation and ratification of the bill and protocol has been done by member States.

"Both the Common Market protocol and the intra-university bill provides for non-discriminatory treatment for members of the community. When the Common Market is implemented and the intra-university bill ratified there will be no discrimination in all areas including University fees," said Mukaruziga addressing a Press Briefing on Tuesday on the commencement of the Third Meeting of the East Africa Legislative Assembly (EALA) in Kampala.

"Students from member States of the community should be treated with the same conditions. They should pay uniform fees without discrimination," she added.

In an interview with The New Times, Mukaruziga observed that with the principle of regional integration, priority should be given to harmonisation of laws through this has been largely ignored by the community, hence making it difficult to implement adopted joint programmes and projects.

"Harmonisation of laws within the community has been largely ignored by the community yet we have to provide for harmonisation of fees stipulated in the intra-university Bill for East Africa. But if the sectional committee on education cannot agree on all we have to have legislation in place to implement all our joint programmes. Most joint programmes are not operational due to absence of legislation," she said, citing the provision of harmonisation of fees stipulated in the intra-university Bill for East Africa.

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