

AU urges African countries to intensify efforts against Deforestation

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The African Union (AU) on Tuesday urged African countries to intensify efforts in combating deforestation so as to drive African countries' common aspiration towards developing green economies.

"Despite their prominent contribution to the development of Africa and the realization of the AU's Agenda 2063, as well as the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), forest resources are threatened and are under siege in Africa," the AU said in a statement on Tuesday.

According to the 55-member pan African bloc, the major threats that are currently challenging Africa's forest resources ranging from various man-made and natural factors mainly illegal exploitation of forest resources and trade, conflicting policies at national and regional levels, competing land uses, climate change, as well as poverty.

The AU, which recognized ongoing national and continental efforts to tackle the threats that are affecting Africa's forest resources, also urged its member countries and pan African institutions to exert concerted efforts in effectively tackling these challenges.

The AU also stressed that if Africa is to successfully realize the 50-year continental development Agenda 2063 the continent "needs to harness domestic natural resources."

"Forest resources are a critical factor for the welfare of Africa and for financing the development of the continent," the AU said.

The AU also stressed that "trees and non-timber forest resources have significant economic and ecosystem services" due to vital contribution to food security, conservation of genetic resources, provision of habitat for biodiversity and reduction of emissions that cause global warming.

African heads of state and government, under the African Union umbrella, had adopted the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods during their meeting in Malabo, capital of Equatorial Guinea back in June 2014.

The declaration, among other things, directed the AU Commission and African ministers of forestry and energy to put in place a sustainable forest management program in a bid to assist AU member states and regional economic communities "to sustainably manage and develop their forest sectors for socio-economic development and environmental protection."

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