

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Secretariat is participating at the on-going UN climate Change conference in Durban, South Africa. The COMESA team has also set up a stand in the African pavilion where they are sharing information on the COMESA climate change programme and learning from experiences from other stakeholders.

Earlier this week, three African leaders launched the Africa Pavilion at the meeting. The conference, also known more technically as the Seventeenth Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), runs from 28th November through to 9th December.

Presidents Jacob Zuma of host country, South Africa, Idriss Déby of Chad, and Vice President Fernando da Piedade Dias dos Santos of Angola visited the Africa Pavilion as the conference got underway. The three leaders insisted that Africa's voice be heard collectively throughout this key UN event.

Visiting an authentic larger-than-life simulation of an African rain forest spanning 500 square metres, President Zuma said: "This pavilion puts up a very powerful case for the continent of Africa. People will come here not just to discuss theories and imagine Africa. They are going to see it in reality. I think this is an absolute innovation we have made." The South African President added: "This pavilion represents Africa in its totality. And I think it makes a powerful case to this conference.

The Africa Pavilion, located within the precincts of the UNFCCC, is serving as a platform to have Africa's voice heard. To demonstrate Africa's ability to be part of the solution to the challenges of climate change on the continent, the Pavilion is hosting a full program of roundtables and events during the UN climate conference.

"Through its roundtables and conferences, its rainforest exhibition, the Africa Pavilion will bring together our leaders to debate on Africa's future as well as climate finance," said Abebe Haile-Gabriel, director of Rural Economy and Agriculture at African Union Commission. "All this is to support our negotiators, to support the African common position and to support our host, the Republic of South Africa as the chair of COP 17."

Aly Abou-Sabaa, Chair of the Climate Change Coordination Committee at the African Development Bank, said: “The Africa Pavilion is a partnership between the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the Government of South Africa. It offers an opportunity to showcase some of the important initiatives and activities in Africa regarding climate change and development by a wide range of actors. This spirit of cooperation will ensure that development and climate change are at the forefront of discussions and negotiations.”

The roundtables and side events will culminate in Africa Day, on 8 December, when Heads of State, Ministers and climate experts will take part in high-level discussions designed to promote a development agenda that is aligned with the vision of climate resilient and low carbon economies across Africa.

Speaking earlier, Youba Sokona, Coordinator of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa’s newly established African Climate Policy Centre, said “all these activities will mark a significant shift from the way Africa has often participated at different COPs”.