

Over 100 women entrepreneurs on Thursday, 07 March 2013 met at the Taj Pamodzi Hotel in Lusaka Zambia as part of Women's Day celebrations – to discuss the opportunities and challenges posed by climate change.

Speaking at the function, COMESA Climate Change Advisor, Dr Mclay Kanyangarara, who is also the interim coordinator of COMESA-EAC-SADC tripartite climate change programme, pointed out that women, as the family pillars, are the most affected by climate change.

“Rural women in particular bear the brunt of this burden. Due to adverse climate conditions, rural women spend more hours than they used to, looking for water and firewood. Rural girls are forced to drop out of school to work with their mothers, or spend their after school hours doing domestic related work instead of studying, which has a future effect on the family,” Dr Kanyangarara said.

He further informed the meeting that some countries have started including carbon footprint as necessary information on product labelling, and since most African countries are far from their export markets, their carbon foot print is increased and this may affect business.

“Entrepreneurs should actually take advantage of climate change to leverage business. For example in Lusaka, a study conducted by COMESA has revealed that over 800,000 tons of waste is generated by the city, much of it related to climate change. This could be transformed into energy, generating millions of dollars,” he said.

He added that opportunities also exist in renewable energy such as solar, and water harvesting.

“In addition such projects if well profiled could be sold as carbon credits under the United Nations Framework Convention Clean Development Mechanism (CDM projects). Other business opportunities that are likely to accrue as a result of climate change include food preservation, green houses distribution and farming,” he concluded.

The meeting was organized by Judah Investments in Partnership with, Lusaka Stock Exchange (LuSE) and the Ministry of Gender and Child Development; and an invitation was extended to COMESA as the Eastern and Southern Africa leader in the region in climate change climate change adaptation and mitigation.