

The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Gender in Zambia, Edwidge Mutale, has said that gender mainstreaming is the current international approach to advancing gender equality and equity in society while at the level of national government, it is a process that involves incorporating a gender perspective into all policies, plans, programmes and projects to ensure that these impact on women and men in an equitable way.

Ms Mutale was speaking in a speech read for her by Ag. Permanent Secretary at the Gender Ministry, Mr John Zulu, during the official opening of a regional capacity building training for selected institutions, on mainstreaming gender in agriculture and climate change from 13-15 March 2013 at the Courtyard Hotel in Livingstone, Zambia. She said the regional strategy drafted by COMESA, seeks to assist the regional institutions, Member States, communities and other partner organisations in mainstreaming gender in agriculture and climate change and in so doing, it applies a gender perspective to the COMESA agriculture programme and considers climate change challenges.

“This strategy is pragmatic in the sense that 80 percent of agricultural activities are dominated by women,” Ms Mutale said. She added that it has been acknowledged globally that women are the most impacted by effects of climate change and, therefore, the regional strategy would facilitate the processes of examining conditions in agriculture and climate sector as they relate to women, men and youths.

“The regional strategy on mainstreaming gender into agriculture and climate change seeks to facilitate and promote climate-smart agricultural policies, structures and programmes, and also promote gender equality and equity towards sustainable development by 2015.” She outlined the key strategic objectives of the strategy as: promoting and advocating for gender equity in agriculture and climate change policies, programmes, systems and structures at the regional and national levels; and strengthening the capacity of policy makers, field workers and farmers on approaches to integrating gender in climate change, and agriculture.

She further said there is need to strengthen linkages between national institutions responsible for gender; agriculture and climate change at regional and national levels and also create and strengthen strategic partnerships and tripartite relations, at international and regional levels; including private/public partnerships.

“We now need to establish an information management system focusing on gender, agriculture and climate change and promote gender-equitable research supporting climate-smart agricultural technologies,” she concluded. Speaking at the same function, Assistant Secretary-General in charge of Programmes, Ambassador

Kipyego Cheluget, in a speech read for him by the Director of Gender, Mrs Emiliana Tembo; said COMESA is committed to improving gender mainstreaming in all its programmes. “It is imperative that gender issues are well articulated and addressed in order to ensure an all-inclusive development programmes in the COMESA region with regards to agriculture and climate change,” he said.

He added that the Secretariat has successfully developed the Regional Strategy and Strategic Action on mainstreaming Gender in Agriculture and Climate Change (RESTRAP) document and it is anticipated that the strategy will be used as a guideline for addressing practical dimensions of gender mainstreaming in agriculture and climate change programmes.

“It is important to note that COMESA is the first REC to implement such a strategy and strategic action plan focusing on providing practical and proactive interventions on mainstreaming gender in agriculture and climate change activities. It is, therefore, imperative that the Strategy attracts financial commitment towards its implementation,” he said.

Ambassador Cheluget concluded that there is need to continue to advocate for the strengthening of collaborations with other regional institutions to ensure that the strategy makes impact in the livelihoods of the general populace within the region.