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## Kyoto protocol good for Africa - or not?

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Nairobi - Africa, global warming's main victim, stands to do well out of the Bonn deal on greenhouse gas emissions and its provisions for development aid and reforestation, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) said here on Friday.

By contrast, Climate Network Africa (CNA), a non-governmental aid agency based in Nairobi, described the deal as a "fiasco," in which "Africa has turned out to be the biggest loser."

The very fact that the deal was signed by 180 countries, opening the way to the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, is good news for Africa, UNEP experts told a news conference in the Kenyan capital, where the body has its headquarters.

"There is not a single positive consequence of weather change for Africa," UNEP Executive Director Klaus Toepfer said.

"Climate change is specially a burden for this continent which has the least responsibility for this change," he said.

Africa, home to 14 percent of the world's population, produces 3,2 percent of greenhouse gases. Its increasing natural disasters, such as floods and drought, have been linked to global warming.

Among the provisions of the Bonn deal, the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) is of particular concern for Africa.

This allows industrialised countries "to offset some of their emissions at home by paying for carbon saving projects in developing countries including the transfer of renewable and cleaner energy technologies," excluding big dams and nuclear power plants, according to UNEP.

For CNA, whose Executive Director Grace Akuma wrote an opinion column in Thursday's Daily Nation, there is "no equity on regional distribution of projects under CDM".

Developed countries can also earn credits by paying for reforestation in poor countries, thereby boosting the world's so-called carbon sinks.

Still, there are limits applied to this measure, the rules for which are very strict.

According to UNEP, these rules offset to a degree objections, raised by CNA among others, that the measure could exacerbate drought because of the type of forests planted by the western timber industry.

CNA, perhaps surprisingly for an environmental organisation, is concerned about the reforestation proposal, saying it has "no scientific certainty (and is) a sure way to civil strife over land tenure rights".

Under Bonn, funds have been set up to help poor countries adapt to climate change, for which the European Union, Switzerland and Canada have agreed to pay \$410-million.

CNA described the sum as "miserable and insulting."

"It's very good news for Africa," according to Pedro Sanchez, who heads the International Centre for Research into Agro-Forestry, explaining the money will help redress the expected 30 percent drop in food production due to climate change over the next 20 years.

In Africa's humid and semi-humid regions, trees and plants grow quicker and the soil has a greater

capacity to absorb carbon than in developed countries, explained Sanchez.

Toepfer noted that this aspect of the Bonn deal can only be applied to areas that were already deforested in 1990.

According to UNEP, four million hectares of forest are destroyed every year in Africa.

The aim of the Kyoto Protocol, which the United States has rejected, is to reduce the emissions of developed countries' greenhouse gases by 5,2 percent over the years 2008 to 2012.

It must be ratified by at least 55 countries representing 55 percent of greenhouse gas emissions to come into effect.

Akumu lamented that Kyoto provided "no quantitative figures for the amount of greenhouse gas emissions industrialised countries should reduce domestically, at source".

"Developing countries must reject this fraudulent protocol concluded at the expense of our survival," she said. - Sapa-AFP

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