



IPS ANNOUNCES 2006-2007 JOURNALISM AWARD FOR REPORTING DESERTIFICATION IN AFRICA

October 18, Nairobi, Kenya

Inter Press Service (IPS), in partnership with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), launched the 2006 Journalism Awards for excellence in reporting on desertification at a special two-day workshop on Reporting Desertification in Africa.

Two cash prizes of US\$2000 each will be awarded to winners for articles in English and French.

The award was launched on Wednesday, October 18, to commemorate 2006 as the International Year of Deserts and Desertification.

“Desertification threatens the very core of our livelihoods in Africa today, from water, human settlements, food security to survival” said IPS Africa director Farai Samhungu. “This award is part of our efforts to encourage media to give greater attention to the issues of desertification.”

Articles will be judged by an African panel of journalists and experts. The winning piece will be one that captures a wide readership while displaying quality in terms of writing, knowledge of issues, research, and analysis, and its potential impact on readers.

The prize will be awarded by the Inter Press Service News Agency (IPS) to the journalists with the most outstanding article on desertification and land degradation in rural areas in western and central Africa.

The support from IFAD is intended to encourage participation by the African media to contribute to an urgent need to achieve effective and sustainable of land management given the threat posed by deserts today.

Samhungu says that Africa, especially African journalists are constantly challenged to report on Africa more effectively by telling stories that exhibit the different perspectives that communities are grappling with. This award provides an excellent opportunity to showcase examples of good reporting that can and should consistently come from the region.

The mission of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification is to promote and give momentum to sustainable land use and management in Africa, and to also galvanise support for effective implementation of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification.

According to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, two thirds of the land in Africa is considered to be desert or drylands. The growing problem of desertification in Africa is closely linked to poor management land and other natural resources. If this situation continues unchecked, Africa's persistent poverty cycle will continue and ambitions espoused in the Millennium Development Goals and other Africa-wide initiatives will not be achieved.

Improving the livelihoods of countries in drylands is one of the areas of work of IFAD, a UN agency whose mandate is to assist rural poor in developing countries to overcome poverty.

Participants at the October workshop, along with IPS journalists contributing to a year long programme on reporting rural poverty, and other journalists are invited to submit entries.

Journalists can submit up to two articles – online or print – for consideration. These articles can include news reports, features, analysis, interviews, opinion/think pieces, and editorials. Submissions should be in English or French. The closing date for entry is July 31, 2007.

Only work published between January 1st 2006 and July 31st 2007 will be considered. Entries can be sent to desertification@ips.org, along with scanned newspaper clippings or web references and details of the name, type and nature of publication in which it appeared.

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