

UN-Habitat wants regional SME proposals submitted this month

By Judica Tárino

THE UN-Habitat intends to promote creativity and innovativeness among prospective small and medium scale entrepreneurs (SMEs) projects in East Africa.

The country's UN-Habitat Programme Manager, Philemon Mutashubirwa, said this on Wednesday, adding that the region's economic projects would be run through the organisation's Mashariki Innovations in Local Government Awards Programme (MILGAP) which fund it.

"The award programme aims to recognize, reward and promote innovative projects, thereby improve the living status of poor men and women in the region," said the UN official at the Media Awareness Workshop on MILGAP in Dar es Salaam.

The UN official elaborated that the regional programme,

while being managed by UN-Habitat, would be financed by the Ford Foundation and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

It was noted that the project would focus on the promotion of innovative schemes likely to supplement the EAC governments' fight against the increasing poverty in the regional bloc.

"We aspire to award projects, which would assist the region's governments to battle out poverty and improve people's living standards," said the project manager.

He stressed: "Our long-term objective is helping these governments to beat up their Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly, on poverty reduction."

In his speech, Mutashubirwa was categorical that groups and organisations, government departments, and institutions from the partner states of Kenya and Uganda, would now be

required to forward their project proposals for selection based on some criteria set out by the UN organ.

"The projects could focus on a wide range of subjects, such as poverty alleviation and true partnership between the public and private sectors," he pointed out.

"The deadline for submitting the applications is May 15, this year, and the projects should clearly outline the "processes and resources" used to implement their innovative solutions," Mutashubirwa added.

The selection of the best projects would be based on several criteria such as: innovation, impact of the project, partnership building, sustainability, youth involvement, and leadership.

"Another important criterion is its replicability - that's the project must be copied by others in whole or part, for the benefit of the region's economies," said UN official.

The award is open to cen-

tral government ministries, departments and sections, private sectors, training and research institutions, youth groups, women groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community-based organizations.

The top three winners from each country would receive cash prizes in the priority range of 3m/-, 2m/- and 1m/- respectively, plus trophies and certificates. Winners in other categories will go home with small amount of money and certificates and trophies.

"However, all winners will be included in the UN-Habitat/MILGAP database, which is linked to the global database of best practices," Mutashubirwa concluded.

MILGAP was established in 2002 to advance the mobilisation and harnessing of local peoples' creativity with the overall objective of contributing towards the alleviation of poverty by recognising, supporting and encouraging innovations in local governance and decentralisation.