

# SECAM Conference on Land Grabbing and Just Governance in Africa

**Jumuia Conference and Country Home, Limuru (Kenya), November 22 - 26, 2015**

*COMMITMENT TO ACT AGAINST LAND GRABBING AND TO SUPPORT LOCAL COMMUNITIES*

## ***OUR LAND IS SACRED, OUR LAND IS OUR LIFE, OUR LAND IS NOT FOR SALE***

Land grabbing has become a *cancer*<sup>1</sup> that stands on the way of true development of Africa. It is packaged in various counterfeit development programs that are practically targeted towards the looting of our resources. We acknowledge this problem to be part of the unjust global economic system which has impoverished us gravely thus creating: forced evictions and migrations such that our brothers and sisters are dying in the Mediterranean sea in an effort to seek new life; community conflicts that weren't there in the past, extreme inequality and power differentials and other social problems in our beloved continent. We also acknowledge that our political elites and some of our local leaders are accomplices and beneficiaries of this evil thus giving Europe, North America, Asia and even South America the opportunity to colonize us the second time.

However, we recognize that it is not helpful to sit back, fold our arms and blame the past and colonialism for our problems. Motivated by our Christian values, Catholic social teachings, African religious and social value of *ubuntu* we resolutely commit to take our future in our hands. Our ancestors gave us this land in trust for own use and for the use of future generation and they resting there as well. ***OUR LAND IS SACRED, OUR LAND IS OUR LIFE, OUR LAND IS NOT FOR SALE***. God forbid that we betray this trust and turn African land into commodity for sale. In this vein, we the participants at the SECAM Land Grab Conference held at Limuru, Kenya from November 22-26, 2015 commit to concrete personal and group strategies to reverse this situation.

We are committed to presenting and telling a different narrative of Africa and her development needs; showcasing the opportunities and potentials that are available in our land instead of the story of misery, deprivation and hopelessness put in our consciousness by colonialism and tell others to do the same. What Africa needs are justice and respect for our shared humanity and not development aid.

We are committed to working in coalition because as the African proverbs says; when spiders unite their webs, they can tie a lion. We particularly charge SECAM to provide the necessary leadership. We need not only to network and form a coalition of activities of advocacy, we also commit to a network of pray-ers and prayers to counteract the actions of the corporations.

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<sup>1</sup> SECAM: Governance, Common Good and Democratic Transitions in Africa No 29.

Advocacy is not synonymous with being in opposition; rather we engage in it to provide sounding boards for the various national and international policies and frameworks geared towards the enhancement of greater justice, peace and integrity of creation in our world. We therefore commit ourselves to a more proactive advocacy of the national public policies and policy making process especially those aimed at facilitating land grabs before they are signed into laws. This might entail getting experts at the national and international levels to become part of our coalition.

Land grabbing has unique faces in different countries of Africa and are in most cases counter-productive strategies accepted or adopted by the respective African national governments to address some economic needs. We recognize in this vein that there is no one size fits all solution to the problem of land grabbing. Therefore, we commit to work with national/regional JPIC commissions of Episcopal and Major Superiors' conferences, Faith based Organizations, locally and internationally based NGOs, and Experts to proffer more productive alternative strategies for a particular country.

We commit to a campaign for a Moratorium on further land deals in Africa until the National Governments have incorporated national binding laws that will protect the vulnerable and our ecosystem in the face of international voluntary regulations and frameworks that facilitate land grabbing.

We commit to denounce the criminalization of land activists in all its forms and commit to support those already criminalized and their families until they are freed.

We are committed to:

- an action plan for the education of Local and Christian communities about land grabbing, creating awareness of the lies behind land grabbing and market economy;
- empowering local communities to stand up for themselves non-violently and without giving in to despair;
- an action plan to educate local communities on the sustainable use of land and preservation of the integrity of our ecosystem;
- promote and sustain mass movements of creative non-violence to protect our African cultural value of communal land ownership; support for women and youth to have access to land and support for restoration of Lands already grabbed;
- identify actors that hide behind the corporations, dialogue with them for change/conversion and take creative non-violent actions where necessary;
- expose the endemic corruption in our economic system which keep us in poverty and make our people easy prey to land grabbers.

We commit to a **five year** action plan as outlined below. The co-organizers of this conference will form a monitoring team to evaluate the yearly progress of the action plan.

## ***GENERAL PLAN OF ACTION***

To conclude the Nairobi Conference with concrete guidelines to work together in the next five years, it was possible through the *Open Forum Methodology*, to adopt a General Plan of Action with three main dimensions: Education and Empowerment, Networking, and Policy advocacy and Engagement.

### ***1. Education and Empowerment***

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#### **Whom?**

- Self education, individuals and groups
- Faith based communities
- Local communities
- Religious communities, Major Superiors and Bishops Conferences
- Women groups

#### **What?**

Strategic focus: Human Rights, socio-economic and environmental impacts of land grabbing.

#### **How?**

- video/ films/ documentaries
- Drama
- Workshops in schools, communities
- Road shows and speak outs
- IC resources
- Town criers
- Radio, TV, Gingo spots
- Media

### ***2. Networking***

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#### **What?**

Strategic Focus: sharing information, building co-alition for action and dialogue, bring other actors on board.

#### **How?**

- Creating platforms & working groups ( Would CIDSE provide leadership for Europe and America; and SECAM provides for Africa?)

- Systematization of case studies and alternatives for advocacy, sharing of best practices
- Approach and dialogue with other actors, investors, policy makers and parliamentarians
- Support local communities in their non-violent resistance actions

### *3. Policy advocacy and Engagment*

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#### **What?**

Strategic Focus: National policy makers & parliamentarians, EU commission and Parliamentarians, US congress and policy makers, African Union (AU), African Regional Community and Economic blocks

#### **How?**

- Campaign of Moratorium on further land deals in Africa
- Research/documentaion and publications of potential impact and impact assessment of policies on land grabs.
- Active participation in public consultations regarding international frameworks and national land policy making process.
- Working with experts to provide better alternatives policies.
- Approaching UN rapporteurs with evidences of Human Right violations through land grabbing asking for policy change.
- Monitor policy implementation processes
- Inform/educate communities about land policies and work with them to internalize their soci-economic impact on them.
- Engage in the advocacy to state Land as a Human Rights
- Promote policies that will protect land activists

### *4. Monitoring system*

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SECAM to see to it that one of the co-organizers of the Conference takes the responsibility to put in place a Network or Platform to facilitate communication among all Conference participants.

The monitoring team will regularly communicate with individual participants/networks to receive feedbacks on practical actions and strategies taken to implement the above Plan of Actions and share any type of results with others.

Each country delegation is requested to select one Conference Participant to play the role of reminder.