



*Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network
Réseau Afrique Europe Foi et Justice*

ECHOES from AEFJN

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REFLECTION

Coming Back to Ordinary Time

AEFJN settles back into Ordinary Time with the news that Pope Francis will visit the European Parliament on November 25 at the invitation of its president Martin Schulz. The pope's visit comes in the midst of turbulent times in international politics with multiple and divergent crises such as the Ebola epidemic. Thousands of African people have been affected by the eruption of Ebola. However, the work of the Health Security Committee of the EU has focused more on prevention of cases of Ebola within its own borders through measures such as medical evacuation; equipping EU hospital structures to respond to eventual cases in Europe and advice to travellers rather than economic aid, prevention and treatment in Africa. The international community is worried about the Ebola crisis, but paradoxically the EU ignores the consequences of imposing its economic power via Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) that are likely to perpetuate underdevelopment in Africa. [Read more](#)

AFRICA

The Ebola Scourge

An Ebola epidemic has been ravaging West Africa in recent times. The WHO has described the current epidemic as the worst in history. The outbreak started in March in South East Guinea but has spread to Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and lately Senegal [\[1\]](#). It is very difficult to give good statistics of the outbreak because the figures are changing every day. Besides, the statistics that the WHO is giving on the matter is far from being a fair representation of the real situation on the ground. What is clear is that in the three worst hit countries namely Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, the health system is no longer able to catch up with the exponential spread of the [Ebola virus](#). The UN must act quickly and decisively to stamp out the epidemic. An epidemic which spreads at such an alarming proportion has the capacity to get to anybody in any part of the earth. [Read more](#)

ALSO IN THE NEWS

Land Grab and the False Promise of Food Security

Policymakers around the world often equate increased investment by foreign agribusinesses in Africa to improved food security. However, Dr Destaw Andargie argues that this is mainly a false promise, because a lot of the production from these companies will be used to satisfy the demand of rich consumers. The author argues that the market is "need-blind", because the market determines a "competitive" price for food based on the competition between consumers around the world. This means that the market will not allocate food where it is most needed, namely to poor consumers. The author suggests that in order to tackle hunger rather than supporting large foreign companies

producing for world markets, African food producers, i.e. family farmers, should be sufficiently supported in improving their productivity and urban poverty should be tackled allowing the urban poor to afford sufficient food. [Read more](#)

The EPA: Risk for food sovereignty

Over the last three decades African countries have benefited from a preferential access to the European market. The EPA is going to modify this relationship dramatically. Africa is called upon to open up its own market and the EPA is based upon the principle of reciprocity. Agriculture constitutes the pillar of the African economy and the means of subsistence for the majority of its population. The EU affirms that the African consumers will draw profit from the EPA thanks to low-cost food products imported from Europe. But, in truth, who will profit from this? Food and agriculture are strategic national interests and the charge of them must not be entrusted to foreign firms and governments. A free-exchange agreement with the EU will have an impact not only on commercial relationships on the regional level but will also limit the national space in matters of policy for the support of agriculture and food sovereignty. [Read more](#)

ADVOCACY

Conference: “How to end Conflict Minerals?”

AEFJN with the Belgian network of natural resources organized a panel debate “How to end the conflict minerals?” in Namur (Belgium). In the eastern part of the DR Congo, the illegal trade of minerals has been financing armed rebel groups for over 15 years fueling and prolonging armed conflict in the area. The local population suffers from mutilations, massacres, rape, slavery and mass displacement. The EU Trade Commissioner De Gucht has proposed a voluntary self-certification scheme to 450 European companies for their imports of "conflict minerals", namely gold, tin, tantalum (coltan) and tungsten. However, by offering a voluntary self-certification scheme and by limiting the scope of the legislation the impact on the ground and, in particular, on affected populations may be minimal. The panel consisted of MEPs Maria Arena (S & D), Claude Rolin (PPE) and Philippe Lamberts (Ecolo), and Elena Peresso from the cabinet of De Gucht representing the European Commission. [Read more](#)

VIDEOS

[What is Resistance to Land Grabbing?](#)

Video on communities resisting land grabbing. (Only in French) (2 min)

[Honest Accounts: The True Story of Africa's Billion Dollar Losses](#)

Video on the financial flows going out of Africa without benefiting the population. (3 min)

[Africa's Climate of Change](#)

Video on African farmers' answers to climate change (5 min)