



Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network
Réseau Afrique Europe Foi et Justice
ECHOS FROM AEFJN

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REFLECTION

A PATHWAY TO REAL SOLIDARITY

Talking about spirituality these days in Europe gives the impression that you are out of touch with life and immediately pitches you against those who want to uncouple religions from every sphere of human endeavour. Though the human elements of institutional religions have continued to rear their ugly head, the eternal truths and values they offer about the imperatives of [justice and charity](#) on the use of wealth and power for the common good cannot be eclipsed. However, there is an element in human nature that resists the imperative of justice and leads to behaviours that consistently and systematically violate the basic principles of Human Rights and international relationships. In the final analysis, the roots of our present socio-economic and ecological crises are spiritual and ethical questions of life. [Read more](#)

FROM THE AEFJN DESK

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS FOR WHOM?

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are an ambitious agenda of the United Nations to develop 17 goals aimed at poverty reduction and building a better world for all. The SDGs will try to end hunger, achieve gender equality, improve health services and ensure all children attend school all over the world. The SDGs make a link between human and economic development and propose a per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances. The economic development must undertake comprehensive social and environmental measures establishing co-responsibility among all the stakeholders involved in trade agreements. To ensure real progress in the sustainability of the economy, both developed and developing countries must assure the correct implementation of legally binding sustainable regulations. [Read More](#)

ALSO IN THE NEWS

HOW PHILANTHROPIC IS GLOBAL PHILANTHROPY?

The recent report of “Global Policy Forum” examines the role of Philanthropic organisations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundations and the Rockefeller Foundation in shaping the international development agenda. Philanthropic organisations have become increasingly important players both financially and in terms of agenda setting. Indeed, the spending of philanthropic organisations has exceeded \$10 billion according to estimates. At the same time these foundations have increased their influence on development programmes, in particular in the UN-setting. [Read more](#)

HEALTH IS A BASIC RIGHT

International treaties and agreements oblige countries to guarantee that everyone can exercise the right to health. Is this right, however, compatible with economic interests? What are the impacts of free trade agreements on the healthcare of countries in the South with whom the European Union has concluded and/or is negotiating an agreement? A series of policy briefs from the North-South working group of the Action Platform Health and Solidarity and Because-Health’s working group on Social Determinants of Health of focus on various aspects of the impact international trade policy has on health. The policy briefs examine the following topics: international trade policy and the right to health in relation to (1) intellectual property rights (TRIPS), (2) decent work and (3) universal health coverage. [Read More](#)

ADVOCACY

CONFLICT MINERALS: THREE-WAY DISCUSSION ON THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS

The Dutch Presidency intends to conclude discussions on conflict minerals within its mandate. In May 2015, the European Parliament voted in favour of a binding mechanism for monitoring the supply chain of minerals from conflict zones. The proposal is ambitious because it requires not only importers of minerals, smelters and refineries to source responsibly but also manufacturers of semi-finished and finished manufactured goods such as mobile phones, PCs and washing machines to ensure that the minerals in their products are not supplied to armed groups. However, Member States are in favour of a voluntary system throughout the supply chain and the European Commission wants to set itself up as a facilitator by suggesting a compromise: a binding settlement for importers of minerals and smelters. The three-way discussions probably resume in April, so stay tuned! [Read more](#)

G8 DISCUSSIONS AT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

In December 2015 The European Parliament commissioned a report on the G8 New Alliance on Food Security and Nutrition to which the EU is the second donor after the USA providing about 1,1 billion. In his draft report Olivier De Schutter, former UN rapporteur on the Right to Food, concluded that the New Alliance is deficient in a number of areas: shifting to sustainable modes of production, tackling the dangers of emerging land markets and contract farming. They are also weak on women's rights. Following up on the report the DEVE Committee produced a report whose content is encouraging – it says the EU should support more agroecology rather than industrial agriculture and it has called for more references to VGGT (Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security). However, the report is still subject to amendments which will be discussed in Committee on 14 March and voted on 20-21 April. After this there will be a plenary vote. The goal of the report is to adopt a resolution in plenary, to be voted on in June 2016. [Read more](#)

ACTIONS

SYMBOLIC ACTION IN BRUSSELS

Last February 24 a coalition of civil society organisations and citizens conducted a symbolic action in front of the headquarters of SOCFIN in Brussels. SOCFIN is a Belgian-Luxembourg agro-industrial group specialising in the cultivation of oil palm and rubber trees. The company has plantations in ten African countries and Asia and wants to expand these activities to take advantage of the increased demand for palm oil. This expansion is at the expense of the social and environmental rights of communities and without adequate consultation and consent of local communities. [Read more](#)

THE SECRETARIAT

VISIT TO THE SECRETARIAT OF PILAR TRILLO

Pilar Trillo, the contact person for AEFJN of the Religious Congregation of the **Little Sisters of Assumption**, visited the Secretariat for 10 days. She was trained in the work of the Secretariat and had the opportunity to discuss with the staff the work they do in Brussels. The main purpose of her visit was to gain first-hand knowledge of the Secretariat's work, to consider how best to share it with her congregation and to study new possibilities for collaboration between her congregation and AEFJN. [Read more](#)

LANDGRABBING IN CAMEROON

Did you know that land grabs occur at large scales in the Cameroon? Multinational organization often remove people from the little property they have inherited from ancestors. Their land is unjustly taken from either the state, elites or others who equally carry out the latter. How much of the land in the Cameroon have been sold to Europeans bodies in order to the plant GMO plant Jatropha? In these situations, it is the citizen who pays the heaviest price: their land is expropriated without just compensation, they are subsequently forced to migrate to the city center or work on their own land as an employee of a land grabber.

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INTERNS AT THE SECRETARIAT

Two interns, Kaleke Kolawole and Eva Demaré have joined the secretariat in Brussels. Kaleke studies International Development at the University of Portsmouth and will be staying with AEFJN for 5 months. She will mainly work on agriculture and gender related issues. Eva Deraré has successfully finished her masters in EU Studies at Ghent University. She will be staying at AEFJN for 3 months and work on the natural resources and transparency. Both interns contacted AEFJN out of a personal interest in the dossiers and work of the organisation. Besides the main dossiers, Kaleke and Eva will also be helping with the daily work of the Secretariat and looking at AEFJN's involvement in social media, including renewing the current AEFJN website. [Read more](#)

VIDEOS

[Ce que des multinationales nous cachent](#) (What the multinationals hide from us) Amnesty International France asks us not to bury our heads in the sand like ostriches but to challenge violations of human rights.

[Mega agrobusiness grows resentment in Mozambique](#) (2:14) Immense reserves of gas and coal in northern Mozambique have attracted foreign investors in recent years, but so has its fertile soil, much to the concern of small farmers displaced by agricultural mega-projects. Many local farmers are being squeezed out over government plans to encourage the establishment of huge plantations.

[Towards system change: conference 'People and Planet First'](#) This 15-minute video looks back to the conference about the encyclical Laudato Si which provided a unique space for discussions through which worlds that usually operate independently met, shared reflections and built unusual alliances.

[Video Action Against Socfin](#)

Video of the action by AEFJN & Partners to denounce the activities of SOCFIN