
**“TO YOUR OFSPRING I
WILL GIVE THIS LAND”**

(Gn 12,7)

**PASTORAL LETTER OF THE CATHOLIC
BISHOPS OF MOZAMBIQUE**

**TO CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES AND FAMILIES
AND TO PEOPLE OF GOOD WILL**

Beira, 30 April 2017

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Dear brothers and sisters:

I. INTRODUCTION

1. We, Catholic Bishops of Mozambique, at this special time of Easter, wish to extend our greetings to all Christian communities and families and to all people of good will. May the peace be with you!
2. The land in Mozambique is in deep agony! The concern and disenchantment of so many Christian and non-Christian communities facing land conflicts is enduring every day, endangering their own food security and family and social stability.
3. On the other hand, two years after the publication of the encyclical *Laudato Si* (= Praised be) of Pope Francis, on the care of the common home, we want with this pastoral letter to concretize some aspects of this message in the context of our Country. For this reason, we invite, in particular Catholic Christians, to read and reflect the Encyclical Letter individually or in a group.
4. The Encyclical *Laudato Si* is part of the Church's Social Doctrine which, based on Sacred Scripture from the earliest days of the Church, seeks to illuminate the reality, problems and conflicts that arise in human coexistence with a view to respecting the dignity of the human being, created in the image and likeness of God. From it, we can benefit from great inspiration for the interpretation of the current situation of Mozambique, and to manifest in practice, what care for the common home means.
5. This rereading will lead us to review some of our attitudes toward others, toward the earth and, above all, toward God, our Lord. That is why we want to appeal to the different actors in our social, political, economic and religious life so that we can seek together the best for the country and for those who inhabit it.
6. As announcers of the Gospel, we have already left a message of hope based on reality, faith and the ideal of brotherhood.

As pastors of the Catholic Church, we are the voice of many thousands of Mozambican citizens. As the voice of the most fragile, we will echo their just aspirations and rights. As heirs of the motherland, we pledge ourselves in its defense, on our behalf and on behalf of the generations that will follow us.

II. THE QUESTION OF LAND

7. The Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique of 2004 states in its art 109^o:
“1. The land is a state property. 2. The land can not be sold, or in any other way alienated, neither mortgaged nor pledged. 3. As a universal means of creating wealth and social welfare, the use and enjoyment of land is the right of all Mozambican people”¹.
8. Today, the internal situation and the international context resulting from the process of searching for raw materials, energy sources and cultivated fields at lower prices mean that the land is sold in the eyes of everyone, including the authorities. We wonder whether the land works as a universal means of creating wealth and well-being and whether its use and appropriation is a right exercised by all the Mozambican people. This issue is aggravated by excessive ambition for agrarian purposes, extraction and processing of mineral resources, agrobusiness, biofuels and the implementation of mega-projects, which in many cases are not clear in their real intentions.
9. It is estimated that from the year 2000 to 2013, 56 million hectares of African land were sold or handed over to foreigners. This makes us realize that the companies and governments of the industrialized countries are seeking in Africa the solution to the world energy and food crisis of their own countries and not necessarily seeking to help solve the problems of Africans or Mozambicans². In fact, as Pope Francis warned very well, the countries of the Northern Hemisphere should begin by paying the "ecological debt" to the countries of the Southern Hemisphere³.
10. Of all African countries, our country is one of the most coveted by foreign companies and countries in recent years. In fact, foreign direct investment in Mozambique has increased rapidly in recent years. According to the National Bank of Mozambique, in 2013, we were the third largest foreign direct investment (FDI) destination in Africa⁴.

¹ However, this constitutional principle starts from art. 3 of Law 19/1997 of 1 October (Land Law).

² Cfr. Rodríguez Soto, J.C., “El saqueo de África”. In: Vida Nueva, nº 2.757, 2011.

³ Cfr. LS 51.

⁴ Cfr. Bank of Mozambique, Annual Report 2013.

In recent years, Mozambique has sold or handed over 535,539 hectares for agribusiness projects to foreign companies⁵. In 2007, around 33 million hectares (40% of the country's arable land) were identified in Mozambique as valid for the cultivation of biofuels⁶. An initiative of the World Bank, the New Alliance for Food and Nutrition Security of the G8, was launched in 2009 to open Mozambique to large-scale agribusiness projects. Under the New Alliance, a framework agreement was signed with Mozambique. This agreement was transformed into a national public policy: the National Agrarian Investment Plan (PNISA), which became the instrument that operationalizes the development of agriculture in Mozambique⁷. However, we must reflect on the development model that underpins these policies, their authenticity and justice.

11. Land in Mozambique is becoming a source of problems, mainly for local communities dependent on land for their survival, from which 90% is occupied by customary practice, a model of land occupation recognized by Land Law⁸. Ignorance of rights and duties is forcing local communities to abandon their lands to favor public-private investors. In order to implement these policies, many of our peasant brothers are 'invited' (and forced) to move from family farming to contract farming: "to hand over the land to foreign companies that can exploit them more and better, and work as employees for them". It should be noted that agribusiness technology does not require a lot of labor, so the promise of employment to farmers works only as a mechanism to induce peasant families to cede their parcels of land to investors without questioning nor resistance. On the other hand, the product of the agribusiness is not intended to supply the local population but to export, so the peasant is left without land, without work and without food that he must then buy at the import price.

12. In all provinces of the country conflicts are arising because of land, either with the arrival of mega-projects or other companies and investments linked to them. The land is a coveted property that is rare for the Mozambican, both in rural areas and in cities. Despite the gaps that we find in the current land legislation, we realize that it provides for mechanisms to set the terms and conditions to be respected in the decision-making process for a new occupation in a rural community.

⁵ Cfr. GRAIN, "Os usurpadores de terras do corredor de Nacala", Relatório 2015.

⁶ Cfr. The performance of EU-Africa Energy Partnership, presentation by the Ministry of Energy of Mozambique, International Business Roundtable, 'Business Perspectives on the Africa-Europe Energy Partnership, 27-29 de Junho de 2007, Hamburgo.

⁷ Cfr. GRAIN "Os usurpadores de terras do corredor de Nacala", Relatório 2015.

⁸ Cfr. art. 12

The text of the law is not intended to undermine the rights and interests of the communities living in these places, but opens "doors" for an inclusive and harmonious development between the investor and local communities, in a process in which both share responsibilities and benefits. Therefore, the problem essentially results from the non-application of the current law by those who have this duty.

13. In the meantime, members of communities need to be trained in order to know how to use the lands they occupy and the natural resources there, according to customary norms that do not contravene the Constitution and other legislation in force. In fact, those who take better care of the land are those belonging to the place, for whom the land is more than an economic good. We hope that the Assembly of the Republic, as well as other legislative bodies, will create land laws, make it difficult for foreigners and multinational companies to access it and, on the contrary, will benefit local communities from being marginalized and impoverished, as has happened.
14. On the other hand, the economic model that prevails in the country is increasingly capitalist-consumerist. Neoliberal economics and globalization are driving us to consume more and more products that, until now, we did not need, and that replace our traditional ones. Moreover, massive consumption means mass production, and mass production means rapid depletion of non-renewable natural resources and even those that are renewable need long periods for their recovery. This model of development is not helping us protect and care for the earth, our common home. In the words of Pope Francisco, "this economy kills"⁹.
15. We cannot forget though, that for the Mozambicans the land traditionally belongs to an ancestor. The relationship we have with the land and with a place is not limited to a simple functionality in the use and enjoyment of it: it is an experiential relationship, literally vital, because it unites us to our ancestors, offers us a history and roots us to life. The land, the place, the nature, is the guarantee of the life of the family and the community. To ask a family to leave their land is to ask them to cut their history and abandon their ancestors. On the other hand, we remember that 70% of our people live in rural areas, in permanent contact with nature and the land, and depending on it for their vital needs. Therefore, all materialistic, consumeristic and exploitative readings of nature in general, and concretely of the land offend the culture and tradition of our people.

⁹ Cfr. Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*(EG), n.53.

Land is part of the material and immaterial patrimony to which Mozambicans feel internally bound.

16. What is at stake in our country at present is the absence of an integral ecology and a model of development that respects the integration of all, particularly the most fragile. On the one hand, there are many cries of nature that we do not want to hear: where do the prolonged droughts and the destructive floods come from? Where does the absence of potable water in rural and urban areas come from? What causes new respiratory and cardiac diseases? What is the relationship between forest destruction and climate change? What is the relationship between water scarcity and rising food prices? What is the link between quality of life in the cities, the type of construction and town planning, the organization of traffic and the existence of green areas? What is the link between land use, mega-projects and the fight against absolute poverty? What is the link between the diversity of nature and the discovery of new medicines? We challenge researchers from a wide range of backgrounds to train citizens in these and other questions and answers.

17. On the other hand, the ecological conversion that we are slow to realize leads us to ignore or belittle the clamor of the people and especially the cry of the poor: "both the common experience of everyday life and scientific research show that the most Serious consequences of all environmental aggressions on the poorest people"¹⁰. In reality, the weakest link in the chain of survival to aggression is the poorest: because they lack information about their rights; because they lack the ability to make themselves heard; because they lack the economic power to find alternative solutions; because they ignore their ability to mobilize; because they lack the leaders who make their voices heard; because they lack means of assistance and protection.

18. Pope Francis synthesizes: *"These situations provoke the groans of the sister earth, who join with the groans of the world's abandoned, with a lament that cries out for us another course. We have never mistreated and wounded our common home as in the past two centuries ... we do not yet have the culture to cope with this crisis and there is a need to build leaderships that lead paths, seeking to respond to the needs of the current generations, All included, without harming future generations. It is essential to create a normative system that includes inviolable limits and ensures the protection of ecosystems, before the new forms of power derived from the techno-economic paradigm end up destroying them not only like politics, but also like freedom and justice"*¹¹.

¹⁰ Cfr. Episcopal Conference of Bolivia, Pastoral letter "El universo, don de Dios para la vida" (2012), 17.

¹¹ Cfr. Pope Francis, LS, n. 53.

19. In short, the problem of land is not an isolated problem or restricted to the economic aspect. It is a social, cultural and religious matter. We can not work for peace without taking care of nature and social justice. We can not get used to seeing how decent work is destroyed, families are evicted, peasants are dispelled and nature is abused. For this reason, as Pope Francis said in his last meeting with the popular movements, we must take upon ourselves some indispensable tasks for a human alternative to the globalization of indifference: 1º) to put the economy at the service of the peoples; 2º) to build peace and justice; 3º) to defend Mother Earth¹².

III. THE WORD OF GOD LIGHTS UP THE EARTH

20. The Bible teaches that the earliest promise of God to his people through Abraham is summed up in this way: "To your offspring will I give this land." These words resonate in our heart: the land is not ours, it is a gift, an inheritance we receive and the best inheritance we will leave to the next generations. By extending this meaning, the Bible reminds us that God made man from the earth and breathed into him the Spirit of life (*Gen 2: 7*). It is participation in the Spirit of God which makes us "stewards" of the earth, with the right and the duty to dominate it as well as the whole creation (*Gen 1:28*). As Pope Francis explains in the encyclical letter 'Praised be' [*Laudato Si'*], this can not be understood as a right to submit, to exploit and to devastate the earth, but as the responsibility of cultivating and caring for it. Cultivating and caring for creation implies a relationship of responsible reciprocity between human beings and nature¹³.

21. And because the earth does not belong to us but is a gift from God, the land can not be sold; Is inalienable. "The land cannot be sold forever, because the land is mine and you are in my land as guests and foreigners " (*Lev 25,23*). Hence the law of the sabbatical year and later the Jubilee year. These laws (every six or every fifty year) speak of freedom of property, forgiveness of debt and repose of land and animals.

22. Porque Because a freed slave people can not produce slaves (*Dt 15:15*), in those years the slaves were released and the lands, accumulated in few hands, bought to pay off debts, were returned to their original owners and families. Every 50 years there was a kind of Agrarian Reform in which the land was again

¹² Cfr. Speech by Pope Francis to the participants in the III world meeting of popular movements, November 2016.

¹³ Cfr. Pope Francis, *LS*, n. 66,67.

distributed equally among free people. The gift of liberation and the Promised Land are, therefore, intimately connected with a practice that should regulate, in justice and solidarity, the development of the Israeli society¹⁴, in which we, the People of God, are mirroring ourselves.

23. The usurpation and trampling on human dignity as well as indifference to situations of injustice are not a new phenomenon. From the time of the beginning of the monarchy in Israel, kings, through the system of fees, appropriated all peasants' lands and could give and receive lands as a gift or in negotiations with other kings and / or wars (2 Sam 24, 24, 1 Rs 16, 24). This new mercantilist view of the land, shocked the consciousness of the land to be a gift of God that they should keep forever.
24. The history of Joseph has already made clear what was happening in Egypt during a period of famine (*Gn 47,13-22*). First, Joseph sells food for money. Then food for cattle and finally food for land. Thus "*Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for all the Egyptians sold their fields, because the famine was severe on them. The land became Pharaoh's.*" (*Gen 47:20*).
25. The biblical prophets stood out as being the conscience of God among the people and denouncing, in the name of God, abuses of power. The prophet Elijah denounces King Ahab when he agrees to kill the peasant Naboth to snatch the land from him (*1 Kings 21*). Naboth's response to the king when he requested the sale of his land was: "*May the Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my ancestors*" (*1 Kings 21: 3*). It may remind us of the suffering of so many brothers and sisters who are taken indiscriminately from the land.
26. The prophet Amos lived under the reign of Jeroboam II, in the Kingdom of Israel. Economically prosperous time for some sectors, but fatal for the poor and, therefore, for faith in God: the most powerful appropriated the lands of the poor; Increased economic power, because of the usury and the administrative-judicial corruption; The small landowners turned into wage earners in their own land and even slaves (*Am 2,6*). In this environment, Amos, in the name of God and with the peasants, harshly denounced the profit of merchants, who built "*houses of carved stone*" (*Am 5,11*), covered with ivory and silhouettes with cushions of Damascus (*Am 3,12; 6.4*); Its tables are full of excellent wines and delicious pastries (*Am 4,1,6,6*). And the worst, Amos declares, is that they live this way without being at all worried about the ruin of the people (*Am 6,6*). On the contrary: they are the cause of the misery of the people (*Am 6,6*).

¹⁴ Cfr. Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church^o 23.

27. Isaiah in the Kingdom of the South (Judah), also observed how the rulers of the people broke the covenant by causing poverty and misery in the people. After singing the song of the vineyard of the friend, the prophet launches a series of admonitions where the sin of the latifundio appears as the first: *"Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is no more room, and you are made to dwell alone in the midst of the land."* (Is 5,8).
28. The prophet Micah was a peasant. He denounced with realism the usurpation of land that the newly rich were doing: *"Woe to those who plan iniquity and plot evil in their beds! At dawn they practice evil, because it is in their power. They covet the fields and steal them, covet houses and take them; They oppress the man and his house, the owner and his inheritance"* (Mk 2,1). The prophets associate and identify the usurpation of lands and the accumulation of wealth in few hands with idolatry and the breaking of the agreement: they ceased to be His people, the People of God.
29. Although at the time of Jesus, Palestine was under Roman rule, the theme of the land does not appear as the first concern in the Gospels. Jesus speaks and denounces the relation of covetousness to things and the danger of richness. So when someone comes to him to ask for his intervention with the brother so that he shares the inheritance, Jesus does not enter into punctual questions, but he presents that parable of the rich fool: *"And he said unto them, take heed to yourselves, and beware of covetousness; Because the life of any person does not consist in the abundance of what he possesses. And he set before him a parable, saying: The land of a rich man had produced abundantly; And he thought to himself, What shall I do? I have nowhere to gather my fruits. And he said, I will do this: I will break down my barns, and build greater ones, and ther I will gather all my produce and my goods; And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have many possessions in store for many years; Rest, eat, drink and play. But God said to him: You fool! This very night your life will be required of you. Then who will own what you have accumulated? ' This is how it will be for anyone who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich toward God."* (Lk 12,13-21).
30. The preaching of Jesus, centered in the kingdom of God, is directed to theological conversion, not only moral. Inviting to stop worshiping the idols of wealth, both material and spiritual, that divides society into rich and poor, good and bad, to worship the Father of all who makes us brothers and children in Jesus. In fact, the experience of the first Christian community was the sharing of goods: they used to sold their property and goods, and shared with all, according to the need of each (Act 2,45; 4,34).
31. This same tradition is gathered in the New Testament by the Apostle St.

James, who presided over a community where social differences between a scandalously rich minority and a poor majority were constantly increasing. Are not we all Brothers? *"Come now, you who are rich, weep and wail for the misery to come upon you. Your richness have rotted and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and consume your flesh like fire. You have hoarded treasure in the last days. Look, the wages you withheld from the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous, who did not resist you."* (James 5,1-6).

IV. THE CHURCH WALKS ON THE EARTH - THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

32. The earth is our common home, and we are all brothers. Therefore, in the face of problems arising around land tenure, the Church cannot and should not stand aside in the fight for justice¹⁵. It has always been attentive to this problem, remembering the requirements of human solidarity as well as the convictions of the Church. The Fathers of the Church (first Christian writers) were clear in their preaching since time immemorial. *"You do not give of your fortune,"* said St. Ambrose¹⁶ – *"To the generous to the poor, you give of that which belongs to him. Because what you attribute to yourself was given in common for the use of all. The land was given to everyone and not just to the rich."* There has always been a clear conviction in the Church that God has given the goods of the land for the benefit of all and not a few.
33. The right of property (and the Church always refers, first and foremost, to the right of ownership of the land¹⁷) should never be exercised to the detriment of the common good. Therefore, in cases of conflict between private and acquired rights and the primary community requirements, it must be resolved with the active participation of individuals and social groups¹⁸. God has destined the earth with all that it contains for the use of all men and peoples; So that the goods created must arrive equitably into the hands of all, according to justice, seconded by charity¹⁹.
34. The tradition of the Church has always defended the right to private

¹⁵ Cfr. Pope Francis, EG, n. 183.

¹⁶ Saint Ambrose (337-397). Bishop of Milan and Father of the Church

¹⁷ Cfr. Pope John Paul II, Centesimus Annus (CA), n. 6

¹⁸ Cfr. Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio (PP), n. 23.

¹⁹ Cfr. Concilio Vaticano II, Gaudium et Spes (GS) n 69; Cfr. Laudato Si, n. 93.

property of all. But it never recognized this right as absolute and untouchable, regardless of circumstances. The earth was given to all and the fruits of it should benefit everyone. The principle of the subordination of private property to the universal destiny of goods and consequently the universal right to its use is a "golden rule" of social behavior and the "first principle of the whole ethical-social order"²⁰.

35. This conviction of the universal destiny of goods invites us to cultivate a vision of the economy inspired by moral values that never allow us to lose sight of neither the origin nor the purpose of these goods in order to achieve a fair and solidary world in which the formation of wealth can play a positive role²¹. In this sense, it is important to realize that access to land is being forbidden by an economic system, commercial relations and structurally perverse property²² that puts profit, the benefit of companies above the common good and the right to land of communities. As Pope Francis reminds us in his letter: *"Large-scale economies, especially in the agricultural sector, eventually force small farmers to sell their land or abandon their traditional crops"*²³. In many places, as a result of the introduction of agribusiness, there is a concentration of productive land in the hands of a few, due to the progressive disappearance of small producers who, as a consequence of the loss of arable land, are forced to withdraw from direct production²⁴. As a result, many of them emigrate to the city where they live in miserable conditions.

36. In a special way, the Pope draws attention to the respect that must be had for the communities themselves with their agricultural traditions. *"They should become, the main interlocutors, especially when moving forward with large projects that affect their spaces. For them, the land is not an economic good, but a free gift of God and the ancestors who lived there, a sacred space with which they need to interact in order to maintain their identity and values. They, when remaining in their territories, are the ones who best care for them. In various parts of the world, however, they are under pressure to leave their lands and leave them free for extractive and agri-livestock projects that do not pay attention to the degradation of nature and culture"*²⁵.

²⁰ Cfr. Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (CDSI), n. 174.

²¹ Cfr. Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (CDSI), n. 174.

²² Cfr. Pope Francis, LS, n. 52.

²³ Cfr. Pope Francis, LS n. 129.

²⁴ Cfr. Pope Francis, LS n. 139.

²⁵ Cfr. Pope Francis, LS, n. 146.

V. THE LAND AWAITS FOR US

37. God entrusts and expects us to build a country in which we can all live as children and brothers. It is necessary to come back to feel that we need each other, that we have a responsibility to each other and that it's worthy to be honest. We are today the community to which St. Peter once invited to wait, operatively, for a new land where justice dwells (2 Pt 3,13). We need to unite all sectors of society in the construction of the country we want.
38. To do this, we need to draw lines of action in our personal, social, economic and political life that will help make our land more livable and our fraternal coexistence.
39. We should not accept a model of development that privileges individual profit to the detriment of the dignity of the human being and the rights of the communities. We realize that human development is not limited to economic goods, but to the personal and social improvement of all members of the human family.
40. We should not accept a society which economy is centered on the idolatry of money. Let us not collaborate with an economy that kills. Let's try to consume the local produce produced by our farmers, by our neighbors. We should not accept a consumerist model of life. We must not accept and witness the massive destruction of forests, plants and animals.
41. Let us take care of our relations with our brothers and with all creation. Let's learn to respect, care for and protect life in all its phases and senses. Let us strive to live in a more integrated and integral way.
42. Let us educate the new generations in values and not only in competences. In fact, we can train technicians, engineers, doctors, we can even be political; If we can not have compassion, empathy, solidarity, but if we do not cooperate, if we do not have the sense of justice, we will not be able to have eyes for what surrounds us. Today, we must recognize that a real approach to land presupposes a social and economic approach, which must integrate justice and the notion of development in the debates²⁶.

VI. THE LAND REQUIRES OUR CONVERSION

43. We appeal to all Christians: do not be blind and deaf in the face of the social,

²⁶ Cfr. Pope Francis, LS n. 49.

political and economic reality of the country, but fight the "every man for himself" with a conscious attitude of human and Christian solidarity. In all Dioceses, formation courses on the Social Doctrine of the Church are organized to help lay people respond to their mission. If it seems opportune, associations of the faithful of a particular professional category should be organized to help each other.

44. We appeal to priests, religious men and women who are close to the people and know of their suffering and needs: have more courage to identify situations of injustice against peasants and to act in their defense because it is fidelity to our consecration to the God of life what is at stake.
45. To the media: to communicate with love of truth. Be the mouthpiece of the people and the amplifiers of their concerns, and do not let others make you polluters of the people with half truths.
46. To researchers from a wide range of areas: focus on social, ethical, political, ecological issues, and ground the real situation with truth and professionalism. Teach us also to read reality in the light of biology, entrepreneurship, justice, among others.
47. To educators and students: deepen knowledge about soil, water, air, living beings; Publicly celebrate the days dedicated to nature care; Warn of the causes and consequences of climate change; Teach hygiene and public health habits; Fight against all types of pollution; Promote actions to clean streets, villages and neighborhoods; Strive for an education that is not just instruction but focus on values and attitudes.
48. In a special way, we call attention to the Christian laity who work in the world of politics: that their actions be of respect for humanity. In this way we want to remember the words the Pope addressed, in a special way to each one of you: *"Politics is one of the highest forms of charity since it seeks the common good"*²⁷. Therefore, your way to holiness is politics. We urge you to worship the Lord in this service and not the party or any ideology, which is a form of idolatry. It is your Christian duty to train yourselves in the Social Doctrine of the Church to work with responsibility and ethics, avoiding any kind of corruption in this important and delicate mission.
49. In the same way we can not forget the entrepreneurs. Business activity is a

²⁷ Cfr. Pope Francis, "Answers by Pope Francis to the questions of the representatives of the Jesuit schools of Italy and Albania". Vaticano, 7 June 2013.

noble vocation oriented to produce wealth and improve the world; We ask that you place the common good at the center of your activity and not only personal gain. It is possible and necessary to implement an economy of the common good.

50. In 2025 we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of our independence. The best way to celebrate it could be to start an effective Agrarian Reform in order to correct the negative impacts that current agrarian economic policies are having on rural communities and throughout the country. Even more, it could be a agrarian and social reform that would reconcile all Mozambicans as members of the same people and nation, freed from the oppression of colonizers and that would allow the equitable distribution of the richness that God gave to Mozambique for the enjoyment of all.

51. There are, in fact, no two separate crises: one environmental and one social crisis; But a complex socio-environmental crisis²⁸. We wish to celebrate 50 years of independence of Mozambique in an environment of peace, fraternity and social and environmental harmony. That is why we are all invited to start working now to create the necessary conditions.

52. We conclude this letter by invoking Mary, our Mother. May she, Mother of Mercy, take us under her mantle, look at us and accompany us on the way towards this land desired by all, where justice dwells. Under the Mother's gaze, it is possible that from the arid land, flowers and fruits flourish, and from the aridity of our relations, harmony and peace.

Upon each of you we extend our blessing.

May the peace be with you!

Beira, 30 April 2017

D. Francisco Chimoio, Archbishop of Maputo and President of the Episcopal Conference of Mozambique

D. Hilário da Cruz Massinga, Bishop of Quelimane and Vice-President of the Episcopal Conference of Mozambique

D. João Carlos Hatoa Nunes, Bishop of Chimoio and Secretary General of the ECM

²⁸ Cfr. Pope Francis, LS, n. 139.

- D. Lúcio Andrice Muandula**, Bishop of Xai-Xai and member of the ECM
- D. Cláudio Dalla Zuanna**, Archbishop of Beira and member of the ECM
- D. Francisco Lerma Martinez**, Bishop of Gurué and member of the ECM
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- D. Adriano Langa**, Bishop of Inhambane
- D. Luiz Fernando Lisboa**, Bishop of Pemba
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