

17 February 2022

"Whatever is done for Africa without the African people is not for Africa."

A joint declaration of Social Movements and Peasant farmers, Faith-Based Organizations and CSO delivered at the "[African People's Summit](#)" ahead of the 6th EU-Africa Summit, demanding more space for CSO and measures to guarantee land justice and agroecology.

Context

We, members of a broad alliance of social and peasants¹ movements, faith-based organisations and civil society² across Africa and Europe observe with great apprehension as the EU and the African Union hold their 6th summit. Over the last 20 years of partnership, we have not seen any significant added benefit from this partnership, which has failed to improve the livelihoods of African rural communities. This partnership and similar ones with other regions of the world have shown themselves to rather be shadow structures that facilitate the grabbing of land, the plundering of natural resources, ongoing corporate impunity with the complicity of national and international authorities, with aggressive market expansion that comes at the expense of people's prosperity and habitats.

We are saddened to observe that these issues of utmost urgency for Africa rarely make it to the centre of the negotiation table of the Summit discussions. Otherwise, how could we explain that food systems and agriculture and responding to Covid-19 were not part of the themes initially proposed for the Summit?

Notwithstanding the message of promoting a relationship of equals by the EU leaders, we observe with concern that the legacy of colonialism, now transformed into some kind of corporate-led neocolonialism, and substantial power asymmetries persist in the partnership, which continue to tilt the partnership in favour of the EU structurally. It is disturbing and problematic that there is no meaningful effort on the part of the EU to deal with this painful and sombre past. A different approach is indeed needed for a more transformative relationship between the two continents. The terrorism and conflicts in the Sahel and other regions of Africa and the forced migration of young Africans crossing the Mediterranean Sea are products of extreme poverty, inequality, climate emergency and economic downturns.³

We echo the essential words of late Bishop Desmond Tutu and say that we Africans are not interested in picking up crumbs of compassion. We want and demand the full menu of rights.

¹ Peasants include persons engaged in artisanal or small-scale agriculture, crop planting, livestock raising, pastoralism, forestry, hunting or gathering, and handicrafts related to agriculture or a related occupation in the rural area as defined in Article 1 paragraph 2 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Rural Workers (UNDROP).

² African Civil Society Declaration: <http://aefjn.org/en/our-land-is-our-life-declaration/>.

³ African Civil Society Declaration: <http://aefjn.org/en/our-land-is-our-life-declaration/>.

African Peoples' Vision

We reject partnerships that address the symptoms rather than the real needs of African people and their vision of a world where all can enjoy their fair share of the gifts of creation. We envision a culture of solidarity and democratisation of *ubuntu*, where the people - the poor, youth and women - and the environment are at the heart of economic and social policies. We want an Africa that can define and shape its relations with other regions and world powers. Still, above all, that puts the dignity and wellbeing of all Africans at the centre of its policymaking.

Convinced that African People deserve better consideration in the partnership, we recommend European and African leaders to take the following points into account:

- Ensure space for civil society actors both inside and outside decision-making spaces. Civil society actors struggle to take their rightful seat at the table, while others may opt to remain 'outside'. Both must be able to freely and safely make their voices heard and to influence decisions.
- Support national governments - together with Civil Society - implementing the African Land Governance Strategy that will guarantee customary law of communities, women and youth rights and access to land, and ultimately reduce land governance challenges in the continent.
- End the financing of Large-Scale Land Acquisition projects and speculative investments by public development banks that result in land grabs.
- Recognise, value and support the vast potential of peasant agroecology to sustainably increase food security and sovereignty, reduce poverty and hunger, while conserving biodiversity and respecting indigenous knowledge and innovation. This requires a shift in the kind of development programmes that are funded, as the trend clearly shows that such transformative approach is largely ignored by public funders.⁴
- Recognise small-scale family farming as a viable structural model for the development of the agricultural sector in Africa.⁵
- Support and develop the concept of territorial food systems, by decentralizing value addition, stimulating the rural economy while promoting local food governance.
- Engage pro-actively in the negotiations towards a UN binding treaty on Transnational Corporations and Human Rights to fill the legal gap in international law and hold big companies accountable for violations throughout their supply chains. The EU due diligence law should not be seen as an excuse for the region not to participate in this international process but rather as complementary.
- Live up to promise by effectively and urgently sending African countries the quantities of Covid-19 vaccine that it pledged under the Covax initiative.
- Support the initiative of India and South Africa for a patent moratorium on Covid vaccines at the WTO until the end of the pandemic. Furthermore, the EU should pressure the CVI vaccine companies to agree to their technology transfer.
- Demonstrate ambitious emissions reductions, and refrain from greenwashing.

⁴ <https://www.cidse.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CIDSE-Agroecology-and-Finance-Briefing-Sept-2020-1.pdf>.

⁵ Neudert & L.Voget-Kleschin, What are the effects of Large-Scale Land Aquisitions in Africa on Selected Economic and Social Indicators. MISEREOR.

- Support investments in a decentralized clean energy transition adapted to Africa such as solar energy.
- Ensure that African lands are not seen as carbon assets intended to offset the emissions of the main polluters - States and companies - under the cover of potential carbon credits which will only result in increased financialization of nature.
- Support knowledge, know-how, life skills and our vision for the future, not achieved by patenting life. We discourage countries to sign up for the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants. But we ask for the support and the development of adapted and accessible peasant seed, food and therapeutic systems.
- Protect human rights defenders, particularly those working to protect land, water and natural resources, and to denounce their criminalisation.
- Support and apply the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Rural Workers, by ensuring that relevant international cooperation activities, including international development programmes, are inclusive, accessible and helpful to peasants and other people working in rural areas; and that peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to define and establish priorities and strategies concerning the exercise of their right to development.

Organisers



With support of other actors from the **Our Land is Our Life Platform**.