



SYMPOSIUM OF EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR

**JUSTICE, PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION OF SECAM**

**Statement on COP 27**

**NO CLIMATE JUSTICE WITHOUT LAND JUSTICE**

**Introduction**

Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) is an Association of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (composed of 8 regions) whose mission is to network and speak with one voice on matters pertaining to the Church in Africa. This public policy statement by the Justice, Peace and Development Commission (JPDC) is the result of an ongoing dialogue with African civil society and grassroots organisations, women's and farmers' movements and other faith-based groups gathered in a spirit of "synodality" in a platform called Our Land is Our Life.

SECAM's intention is to highlight the concerns for the 27th Conference of the Parties about the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change - otherwise known as COP27. All peoples of God, wherever they are in the world, must certainly agree that this Conference must bring results to Africa.

**Sister Earth, along with all the abandoned of our world, cries out, and she is pleading with us to take another course**

Although African land is so rich in natural resources, access to land continues to be inhibited by a system of commercial relations and ownership which is structurally perverse. A lot of people in Africa largely dependent on access to land, on natural reserves and ecosystem services for their means of subsistence. It is also recognized that many intensive forms of exploitation and environmental degradation not only deplete the land and resources needed to sustain communities' livelihoods, but also undermine the social structures that shape their cultural identity and meaning of life. The way humanity treats the environment influences the way it treats itself, and vice versa. The throwaway culture affects the excluded just as it reduces things to waste. Every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment and affects the entire planet.

Yet we believe that as human beings we can embark on new paths of authentic freedom. We can respect the rights of peoples and cultures and their rights to the land they inhabit. No system can completely suppress our openness and God-given ability to respond to our dignity. The culture of integral ecology can counter the culture of irrationality in the face of the climate emergency, the culture of disguise, denial, occupation and extermination. The Earth Charter asks us to leave behind the period of self-destruction and to make a new start. Despite all our limitations, gestures of



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generosity, solidarity and attention can only spring up in us since we were made for love. (cf. *Laudato Si*, #22; 25; 52-53; 58; 116; 138-142; 145; 166; 205-207)

### **Sharing the struggle for land and climate justice**

Our communities are exposed to the climate crisis and the land grabbing that goes hand in hand with water grabbing, increasing water and soil pollution by pesticides, loss of biodiversity and traditional seeds, as they witness the irreparable destruction of their environment. Communities share the experience that as they claim their rights to land, they are being persecuted, which is leading to more violent conflicts, despair, and instability. Unfortunately, the dignity and shared well-being of women farmers and peasants' farmers without land experience, coupled with deep inequalities, are compromised.

Yet, we understand that communities should not be made poor if resources were not captured by the powerful and their corporations and given away by weak public institutions. Coming together as African faith actors, civil society organizations and community land rights activists, we engage with communities in their struggle for land and climate justice, we are denouncing false solutions that deprive local communities of their livelihoods, their land rights and tenure.

We join communities mobilizing against ill-advised large-scale land acquisition investments and their struggles against land grabs in the case of Feronia in DRC, Addax Bioenergy in Sierra Leone, Socfin in Sierra Leone, SIAT subsidiary in Ivory Coast ([see link](#)), Congo River Basin in DRC, TOTAL-ENI in Capo Delgado, Mozambique, and the East African Crude Oil Pipeline in Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya.

The UNFCCC and COPs have demonstrated to delay, deny, or further kick away the goal of staying below 1.5 degrees Celsius global temperature. Rich nations currency fictitious solutions (nature-based solutions and techno-fixes) and pretend to compensate poor communities in Africa. Rich countries push to offset their emissions, while refusing to cut back on their own emissions. COP27 must abandon all false solutions (net zero, failed emissions-trading, offsetting schemes). Governments, civil society, and social movements must join the struggle for a system change and demand real zero, and not net zero.

### **Laudato Si calls for a new culture of integral and human ecology**

*Laudato Si* (#166+) notes that the Church has a responsibility towards the creation, and she must assert this responsibility in the public sphere. In so doing, she must defend not only earth, water, and air as gifts of creation that belong to everyone. She must above all protect humankind from self-destruction. Our



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duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person, considered in herself and in himself and in relation to others.

We would like to call on all those assembling in Sharm EL Sheikh to remember the calls recently made by local communities in their struggle against large-scale land acquisition. As discussions on climate crisis intensify, land and climate justice must go hand in hand.

### Recommendations

- We stand in solidarity with all communities and territories affected by land grabs, armed conflicts, and resource wars. Climate actions that perpetuate land injustice and further exploitation of natural resources and displacement of communities due to false solutions must make way for equitable and just transition in sectors agriculture and mining.
- Indigenous communities and their traditional leaders must be the principal dialogue partners when large scale land acquisition projects affecting their land are proposed.
- The right of Free, Prior and Informed Consent of women, and the right of indigenous peoples and their communities to Say No to projects that deprived them of their lands in their territories must be upheld.
- Peasant agroecology must be recognised, respected, and supported which includes securing the land and natural resources of communities.
- Article 6 of the Paris Agreement must be revised to avoid any commoditization of land and natural resources to the detriment of local communities.
- We urge the Global North to pay their ecological debt and respectfully use indigenous knowledge to design interventions on the ground that is adapted to the local context.

Accra, 4 November 2022

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