



SYMPOSIUM OF EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR

PRESS RELEASE

(FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION)

**EU AND AU SHOULD ENSURE BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION FUNDING
RESPECTS INDIGENOUS PEOPLES RIGHTS**

(SECAM.org) - Accra (Accra), September 17, 2024:

The Justice, Peace and Development Commission (JPDC) of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) is urging the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU) to take proactive measures to ensure that EU biodiversity conservation funds do not lead to mass land alienation and threaten the livelihoods and stability of indigenous and local communities on the continent.

As one of the partners that first launched the policy brief on "[Protecting the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities to Halt Biodiversity Loss](#)" on 12 September 2024, SECAM-JPDC reiterates the collective call for a new conservation paradigm that respects and protects the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, who are estimated as managing 80 per cent of the world's remaining biodiversity.

In this Press Release, being relaunched on 17 September 2024 by SECAM-JPDC and its partners, CIDSE, the Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience (CAWR, Coventry University), the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), the Pastoralists Indigenous Non-Governmental Organisation's Forum (PINGOs Forum), the Pastoral Women's Council (PWC) and others, would like to draw your attention to key recommendations outlined in the joint policy brief. These include:

- **Ending Exclusionary Conservation Models:** The policy brief calls for the abandonment of "fortress conservation" approaches in favour of co-management models that empower Indigenous Peoples and local communities to protect biodiversity in partnership with global actors. This means avoiding any kind of displacement, promoting conservation approaches that integrate humans and nature and ensuring biodiversity finance is managed and monitored by local communities.
- **Securing Land Rights:** Protecting the right to land of Indigenous Peoples and local communities is paramount. The policy brief advocates for legal recognition and protection of the human right to land as a foundational element of effective biodiversity conservation, in light with UN Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ([UNDRIP](#)) and of the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas ([UNDROP](#)).

- **Guaranteeing Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC):** All biodiversity projects, especially those funded by the EU, must secure the FPIC of Indigenous Communities, in line with international human rights standards. Meaningful and active participation of local communities should also be ensured.
 - **Redirecting Biodiversity Finance:** The policy brief urges that biodiversity financing be redirected to support sustainable practices such as agroecology and pastoralism, which enhance biodiversity while safeguarding the rights and livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Pastoralism is a viable livelihood and land management system that does not receive adequate support.
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About the Organisations:

- [SECAM-JPDC](#) is a SECAM Commission that supports the Catholic Church's efforts in Africa to advocate for the interests of the poor and marginalized towards establishing more just, prosperous, transparent and peaceful African societies living in harmony with nature.
- [CIDSE](#) is an international family of Catholic social justice organisations working together for global justice.
- [Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience](#) (CAWR), Coventry University is a research centre dedicated to the development of resilient food and water systems through agroecology.
- [Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa](#) (AFSA) is a pan-African network of civil society organisations championing food sovereignty and agroecology in Africa.