

# OUR LAND IS OUR LIFE

## PRESS CONFERENCE 21 JUNE 2021

8AM DAKAR, 9AM ABUJA/LONDON, 10AM BRUSSELS/JOHANNESBURG, 11AM NAIROBI

### AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY AND FAITH LEADERS CALL FOR URGENT ACTION AT THE AFRICAN – EUROPEAN AGRICULTURE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

African civil society and faith leaders of the Our Land is Our Life Alliance call on African and European Agriculture Ministers to ensure African people's real concerns and needs are fully addressed in their Ministerial meeting of 22 June.

The Ministers' conference brings together AU and EU agriculture ministers to discuss progress on the action agenda on agriculture adopted in July 2019, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Much of the 9-point agenda concentrates on creating a conducive environment for large business interests. Importantly, the OECD FAO Guidance on Responsible Agricultural Supply Chains calls for systematically identifying risks and potential negative impacts associated with agribusiness (i.e. pesticide poisoning of farmers, risk to land tenure rights and sustainable use of resources, including risk to biodiversity and farmers seed rights.) We are concerned that the agenda is not presently addressing the big issues facing Africa and would want to make suggestions to enable the agenda work better for Africa.

- The impunity of corporate capture of African natural resources and the damage this is doing to Africa's food systems, to our environment, our soils, lands and water, our biodiversity, our nutrition and health is a major concern.
  - "When the Ministers discuss increasing agribusiness trade (action1), food safety (action 5) and improving environmental sustainability (action 9), are they ensuring that European companies are not exporting highly hazardous chemical pesticides to Africa that are banned from sale in Europe? And that priority is given to African governments effectively regulating and prohibiting toxic pesticide use? There must be an end to pesticide poisoning whether working on farms or eating the produce on our plates" insists Anne Maina of BIBA/Kenya Biodiversity Coalition.
- The need for transformational change in agriculture and food production.
  - Dr Million Belay, General Coordinator of the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa says: "Agroecology must be put on the Ministers' agenda. Between 60 - 80% of Africans are small scale farmers. Agribusiness-food platforms (action1) and digital solutions (action 3) will not solve their problems. While there is proven track record of Agroecological approaches that show huge potential to create jobs for youth, contribute to healthy diets and more resilient farming communities.

- Land rights are the cornerstone of land justice and rural livelihoods.
  - “Women are tired of waiting. The challenge remains for political leaders to take account of the land rights injustice facing African women,” says Lungisa Huna, Co-Director of the Rural Women’s Assembly. FAO’s 2020 Africa food security report<sup>1</sup> finds that 256 million people remain hungry in Africa, with rural women -the main producers of food- the poorest and least well nourished.<sup>2</sup>
  - “It is vital to secure the community’s land and natural resources – the foundation of local food systems and the primary spiritual link with nature. Without land security<sup>3</sup>, there is no future for peasant communities,” says Massa Kone of the Global Convergence for the Struggle for Land, Water and Farmers' Seeds (CGLTE).
  - “We call for our governments’ full-fledged support to ongoing negotiations towards a UN Binding Treaty on transnational corporations as a much-needed tool to access justice, reparations and prevent future human rights violations by big powerful corporations who are often able to stay in impunity,” says Erika Mendes of Justiça Ambiental JA! - Friends of the Earth Mozambique.
  
- We need to care for our common home and ensure African community voices at the policymaking and negotiating tables.
  - Father Germain Rajoelison of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) shares the Pope’s urgent call to tackle the current ecological crisis by making a paradigm shift that will allow all human beings to live sustainably in dignity. He urges “the AU and EU to sincerely engage with African civil society and faith communities to ensure their meaningful participation in the Africa EU partnership process.”

## ENDS

For further information or interviews, please contact:

- Anne Maina, BIBA/Kenya Biodiversity Coalition [anne.maina@kbioc.org](mailto:anne.maina@kbioc.org)
- Dr Million Belay, AFSA General Coordinator [million.belay@afsafrica.org](mailto:million.belay@afsafrica.org)
- Lungisa Huna, Co-Director, Rural Women’s Assembly. [lungi@tcoe.org.za](mailto:lungi@tcoe.org.za)
- Massa Kone, Spokesperson, CGLTE. [kmassa26@gmail.com](mailto:kmassa26@gmail.com)
- Erika Mendes, Justiça Ambiental JA! - Friends of the Earth Mozambique [erikasmendes@gmail.com](mailto:erikasmendes@gmail.com)
- Father Germain Rajoelison, SECAM, [g.rajoelison@gmail.com](mailto:g.rajoelison@gmail.com)

The Our Land is Our Life coordination group is composed of leaders of the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), The Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), Convergence Globale des luttes pour la terre et l’eau en Afrique de l’ouest (CGLTE), Rural Women’s Assembly (RWA), Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN), and The Pan-African Institute for Citizenship, Consumers and Development (CICODEV).

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<sup>1</sup> FAO, ECA and AUC. 2020. *Africa Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2019* <http://www.fao.org/3/ca7343en/CA7343EN.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/downloads/WorldsWomen2015\\_chapter8\\_t.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/downloads/WorldsWomen2015_chapter8_t.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.misereor.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload\\_misereororg/publication/en/foodsecurity/study-LSLA.pdf](https://www.misereor.org/fileadmin/user_upload_misereororg/publication/en/foodsecurity/study-LSLA.pdf)