



*Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network
Réseau Afrique Europe Foi et Justice*

ECHOES from AEFJN

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FROM THE AEFJN DESK

The Voluntary Guidelines: a valuable tool or window dressing?

Amid concerns about land grabbing and the lack of laws governing agricultural investment, civil society around the world has pressed for more regulation which has led to the endorsement in 2012, by the Committee on World Food Security, of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines (VG). The purpose of the VG is to serve as a reference for land governance in order to realize the Right to Food. The VG mention that small-scale family farmers, the most important food producers in developing countries, should be supported and that their tenure rights should be guaranteed. The VG contain a number of positive elements, however, they remain a voluntary tool. On top of that policy, initiatives aiming to improve food security, such as the G8's New Alliance on Food Security and Nutrition, favour large-scale industrial agriculture, contrary to the VG's focus on improving tenure rights of family farmers. In this light it is unlikely that the VG will be implemented widely, until they are made binding under legislation governing agricultural investments.

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ALSO IN THE NEWS

The “Billion Dollar Map” Under the Appearance of Good

It is estimated that 30 sub-Saharan African countries are significantly rich in natural resources and that they hold 30% of the natural resources world's reserves of uranium, platinum, diamonds and gold. Moreover, the continent has many reserves of oil, coal and gas. In spite of this wealth, 50% of its population is living below the poverty line. The World Bank wants to reverse this situation by creating a map of natural resources in Africa that would help the real value of these resources be better known so that they can make better deals. However, it is not only the lack of information that causes the loss of millions of dollars every year; there is also a set of problems caused by a lack of transparency in negotiations, an unfair tax system, the abuse of transnational companies operating in developing countries and corruption or inadequate infrastructure. Increasing the circulation of money through African countries is not the way to achieve an ambitious development project in Africa, but an example of avarice.

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AFRICA

The Brussels EU–Africa Summit, a missed chance for stronger partnership

Representatives of 54 African and 28 European States met in Brussels on 2 and 3 April for the fourth EU-Africa Summit. The meeting had a broad-ranging agenda under the title “Investing in People, Prosperity and Peace” but did not produce results. Despite the many changes both continents have experienced in the last decade, attitudes have not changed and both continents find it hard to act as ‘partners’. Yet the geopolitical context is changing and Africa has missed its opportunity of gaining strength by speaking with one voice, while Europe has missed the opportunity of stopping being a donor and becoming an equal partner, more attentive to African development needs. The Summit failed to address issues like maintaining the growth of Africa, the role of the continent in the international arena, market integration in Africa, national and regional conflicts, the aftermath of the Arab Spring, democracy, the rule of law,

governance and human rights in Africa. The [Declaration](#) with no clear timeframe is mostly a series of good aspirations.

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ACT

Letter to the European Parliament Candidates

In May 2014 European citizens will elect their representatives to the European Parliament for a period of 5 years. The European Parliament's decisions have consequences not only for Europeans but throughout the world and especially in developing countries. AEFJN has drafted a letter addressed to the European Parliament candidates inviting them to work towards fairer EU policies for Europe and for Africa. If you are a European citizen please send the letter, to at least 3 candidates (the head of lists of 3 different parties) in your region, to make sure that EU policies impacting Africa are included in their campaigns and commitments. You can send the letter on your own behalf or on behalf of your congregation (province, community). Please adapt the letter as you know best, filling up the yellow lines between brackets []. You can find the letter [HERE](#) and the list of the candidates of each country [HERE](#).

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VOICES FROM THE NETWORK

Report of a visit to Cameroon

Sr. Begoña Iñarra, AEFJN's Executive Secretary, visited the Cameroonian Antenna from 1 to 17 March 2014. Accompanied by a team from the Antenna, she visited sites of natural resources, had meetings with Christian associations (Justice & Peace, Caritas, the Antenna and INADES, the Jesuit-founded African Institute for Economic and Social Development) as well as with the Centre for Environment & Development and Action Paysanne (Family Farmer Action). They talked mainly about land issues, the difficulties of family farmers, access to quality medicines, the exploitation of natural resources and the consequences of all these for the people. Human rights issues were discussed with religious communities and the Antenna's 'observers' in the various provinces, for example immigration from the Central African Republic, malnutrition, corruption, abuse of the rights of the Baka (Pygmies) and the rights of prisoners. Sr Begoña gave a presentation to Major Superiors of the AEFJN network, the AEFJN Manual on economic justice and she led a day on leadership.

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General Assembly of the French Antenna

On the 11th March, Gino Brunswijck of the AEFJN Secretariat in Brussels took part in the General Assembly of the French Antenna. The day began with an interesting presentation on food security given by Secours Catholique France which was followed by a sharing of views. In the afternoon, Renée Mouazzan presided. Gino gave an introduction to the land grabbing issue and the campaign calling for a moratorium on large-scale land acquisition. He explained how Antennae can contribute to the campaign at a national level and the importance of congregations relaying the campaign to their communities in Africa. Questions were asked about the campaign. The participants recognised the need for such a campaign on an issue that affects the lives of millions of Africans.

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VIDEOS

[Olivier De Schutter : Land Grabbing](#)

Extract from an interview with Olivier De Schutter, the UN special rapporteur for the right to food. (1m30)

[Tell Associated British Foods to stop tax dodging in Zambia](#)

About a sugar company from Europe that is not paying taxes correctly in Zambia. (3m30)