



SOFIMUN
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"Search Of Future Ideas, Models Us Now"

COMMITTEE:
COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION –
FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

CHAIRPERSON:
MARIA HAFERKORN & DESISLAVA
KRALEVA

TOPIC: (B)
LAND REFORMS AS A MEANS OF
DEVELOPMENT: RESPONSIBILITY OF THE
EU IN AFRICA

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (CEU)

Foreign Affairs Committee



The Council is the main decision-making body of the European Union. At the same time, it is one of the two legislative bodies of the EU, alongside the European Parliament. The Council comprises of ministers from all 27 member-states and its exact composition depends on the topic discussed. We will be discussing in the format including the Foreign ministers of the member-states, the High representative of the European Union as well as two observers (Turkey and African union).

The Council is presided over for six months by member states on rotational principle. The Presidency of the Council plays an essential role in organising the work of the institution, particularly in promoting legislative and political decisions. It is responsible for organising and chairing all meetings, including the many working groups, and for brokering compromises. For the year 2010 the presiding countries are Spain (January-June) and Belgium (July-December).

The Council of the EU has the responsibility to pass laws, usually jointly with the European Parliament; to coordinate the economic policy of member states, to define and implement the Common Foreign and Security policy, etc.

The Council can adopt several types of acts: regulations, directives, common actions or common positions, recommendations or opinions. It can likewise adopt conclusions, declarations or resolutions.

More information on the organization, functions and powers of the Council of the EU you could find at the official page of the Council as well as several European portals.

More at: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showPage.aspx?id=1848&lang=en>



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Topic B: Land Reforms as a Means of Development: Responsibility of the EU in Africa – 1.

INTRODUCTION

The EU is committed to promoting the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, especially to reducing poverty and promoting development. In terms of the upcoming session of the United Nations General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals, the EU needs to step up its efforts regarding those issues. Food security is one of those goals – and connected to it secure land access.

50 years after most of the African countries gained independence, they are still struggling with development, most importantly with land redistribution, i.e. land reforms.

Land reform is generally accepted to be the redistribution of property or rights in land for the benefit of the landless, tenants and farm labourers.

After the decolonization process, land reform in African countries has been concerned with correcting the imbalance of agricultural land ownership by the minority white settler population.

In several countries, this has proven to work efficiently, while in others, failed land reforms are the main reason for development staggering and coming to a halt. The responsibility of the EU Member States – some of them former colonial powers – to support land reforms and development in Africa is thus inevitable.

2. RELEVANCE OF THE ISSUE AND HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM



Land is a major economic, political, social and cultural asset in Africa. Controlling land resources is a means to gain political, economic and social power. Thus, land reform is a highly politicised process that can be seen as a threat to the interests of certain actors. However, land reform can also be seen as an opportunity to change the social and political relations particularly with reference to inequality based on gender, group membership, age, etc.

Since the 1970's, secure access to land has emerged as a decisive factor in poverty reduction, food security and sustainable

natural resource management.

The importance of this has been confirmed in the Millennium Development Goals, the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Convention to Combat Desertification. Improved security with regard to access to land has been shown to reduce levels of food insecurity, improve incomes and economic security, increase investment, reduce levels of conflict and increase the adoption of more sustainable resource practices.



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By contrast, without secure land access, poor rural people lack the incentives to conserve or invest in the productive qualities of the land. There is growing consensus internationally that secure access to natural resources, especially land, benefits the wider economy and the environment. As the European Commission stated in their Communication to the Council on March 31, 2010, "Secure access to land and secure land tenure and use rights are prerequisites for higher productivity of small holder farmers."

With this statement, the Commission points out the link between land reforms, food security and thus the reduction of poverty as envisaged in the UN MDGs. If the EU is committed to promoting MDGs, it needs to take seriously into account the necessity to support successful land reforms.

Most African countries have tried and are trying to tackle the issue of land reforms, on their own. This is being done in three different approaches:

1. Land Restitution, in which cases of forced removal from land are dealt with by the courts;
2. Land Tenure Reforms, which review and reform the administration and legislation vis á vis land tenure and
3. Land redistribution, often accompanied by a willing-seller-willing-buyer approach (the State (willing buyer) buys the land from the current owner (willing seller) and returns it to the rural population.

Unfortunately, positive results have rarely been achieved, so far.

While for instance South Africa and Namibia are still trying to find the best solution within the framework of its post-apartheid regime, Kenya's leaders were accused to have been distracted by the issue of formerly white-owned property redistribution, instead of dealing with more pressing issues when it comes to land reform – nonetheless, Kenya appears to be a success story, next to Ethiopia's extensive efforts, when it comes to land reforms.

The most prominent example, however, remains to be Zimbabwe.

In the Lancaster House Agreement 1980, the British Government vowed to support Zimbabwe's path back to being a functioning State of its own. Still in 1996, the British Conservative Government agreed to assist with further funding for land reform.

However, after coming to power, Tony Blair's Labour Government in 1997 refused to advance the process of land reform, in effect revoking Britain's obligations as per the Lancaster House understanding. The explanation provided was that the new government did not have any links with the former colonial policy and thus was not responsible for retribution.





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The EU has, again, extended sanctions on Zimbabwe in February 2010. One may question whether the Member States should be less strict on Zimbabwe and other African States, as there has been a certain reluctance to provide financial aid to support land reforms by the former colonial powers who redistributed the land in the first place.

This inability to solve post-colonial issues even after 50 years does not only pose an imminent threat to secure land access and therefore food security in the region but it is also closely interlinked with the problem of so-called "foreign direct investment", also described as land-grabbing.

This process involves governments and private investors from developed countries, buying or leasing land on a long-term basis, in order to grow and produce food for export to the industrialized world.

Such behaviour can be seen as a chance for developing countries, since foreign investment and food production can create employment opportunities and provide access to new technologies. On the other hand, land-grabbing can reduce the land that is re-distributed to the rural population, thus inhibiting their ability to use that land for their own purposes and development. This can lead to marginalization of the rural population and increased potential for land-related conflicts.

3. EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE

In promoting the land agenda, the European Union has been playing an increasingly important role because it has moved away from only funding research and advocacy projects to becoming a forum for coordination with a clear approach to handling land-related issues.

In January 2002, the EU created a Task Force on Land Tenure.

This Task Force focused on two objectives: to contribute to the World Bank's three-year research and consultation process that involved extensive discussions with policy makers, advocates for the poor and land experts around the world, resulting in the policy research report *Land Policies for Growth and Poverty Reduction*; and to formulate 'EU Land Policy Guidelines' to support, through the European Commission and Member States' bilateral programmes, the design of land policy reform processes in developing countries.



The Land Policy Guidelines were finalized in 2003 and adopted in November 2004. They provide policy advice and operational guidelines for EU donors to support the design and



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implementation of land policy and administration in developing countries. They are meant for field and head-quarters staff directly or indirectly involved with land issues and land reform programmes, in primarily rural (but also urban) areas. However, while Africa is preparing for hosting for the first time the FIFA World Cup, many countries have, according to the EU Commission, not yet implemented the 2009 Africa Land Policy Guidelines which were originally endorsed and welcomed by the African Union.

These guidelines, developed in collaboration with the Pan African Land Policy Framework and Guidelines Initiative, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank (AUC/ECA/AfDB) and adopted in July 2009 provide for a framework and guidelines much similar to the EU's Land Policy Guidelines.

The responsibility of the EU in this field is apparent. While several Member States are former colonial powers, other Members have themselves experienced land reforms in the past decades. The question needs to be addressed whether the larger part of the responsibility lies with the former colonial powers and in how far the other Member States could contribute and share their knowledge when it comes to dealing with land reforms.

After the re-establishment of the EU Working Group on Land Issues in 2009, the problem of a connection between land reforms and food security has moved into the EU's focus, again. The reinstated EU Working Group should "coordinate current efforts of the Commission (EC) and Member States (MS), share relevant experiences, observe, monitor and analyse local, regional, continental and global initiatives on land issues. The main objectives of the Working Group are (i) to share information, exchange experiences and (ii) develop common EU positions and recommendations on land policy and reform initiatives in developing countries."

As mentioned above, the EU Commission separately addressed the issue of food security in its Communication to the Council from March 31, 2010. There, it called for increased and continued efforts, regarding the implementation of the 2009 Africa Land Policy Guidelines, as well as the development of effective national land policies.

4. QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION SHOULD ANSWER



The CEU at SOFIMUN 2010 will, in the framework of the EU's development policy, need to deal with the question of financial, as well as logistical support for African countries tackling land reforms, once again, also taking into account the application of the Land Policy Guidelines of both continents.

Here, it should evaluate in how far there is still enhanced responsibility that can be allocated to the former colonial powers.

This should be addressed especially with view to the example of Zimbabwe, whose restrictions are revisable, according to development of the state's situation.



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Last, but not least, the CEU urgently needs to address the issue of land-grabbing, as it is one of the main concerns of developing countries, when it comes to meeting the Millennium Development Goal 1. Not only is it necessary to develop a strategy to raise awareness in the affected countries, but also a monitoring mechanism needs to be put in place. Efforts have been stepped up, as the FAO is currently working on developing Voluntary Guidelines for Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land and other Natural Resources, while – again - the implementation of the African Land Policy Guidelines by the African states seems to provide fruitful solutions, as well.

Here, creativity is requested from the Ministers of the CEU in terms of coming up with sustainable mechanisms and solutions.

Suggested Reading and Additional Sources

Topic B: Land Reforms as a Means of Development: Responsibility of the EU in Africa

For a better understanding of the issue, the following sources should be consulted, but they are not exhaustive, therefore it is recommended that the delegates research the topic on their own, both through academic sources, as well as informal channels.

Mandatory

The following materials should be read by the participants in order to gain an in-depth view on the issue.

1. [Rural development, territorial planning, agriculture, food security](#)
2. ["Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, An EU policy framework to assist developing countries in addressing food security challenges", 31 March 2010](#)
3. ["EU Land Policy Guidelines", 2004](#)
4. ["Land Reform: New Seeds on Old Ground?", Martin Adams, 1995](#)
5. [Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa", 2009](#)
6. [Development Policy Stance on the Topic of Land Grabbing – The Purchase and Leasing of Large Areas of Land in Developing Countries", German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2009](#)

Suggested

7. ["Pressures on West African Land: Reconciling Development and Investment Policies", Sahel and West Africa Club, 2009](#)
8. [Lessons Learnt from Land Reforms in Africa, Robin Palmer, Oxfam UK, 1999](#)
9. <http://www.dinnerwithmugabe.com/>
10. ["Dinner with Mugabe", Heidi Holland, Oxford Press, 2008](#)