

Chairperson's Note*

*Panel 1:
Southern Stakeholder Perspective:
Promoting Socially and Environmentally Responsible Land-Related Investments
(08 July 2009; Utrecht University)*

Introduction:

- We should not forget that majority of southern governments have not exerted the necessary political will to enforce redistributive land and asset reforms, as well as environmental laws
- In most cases, the economic development agendas set by national governments favour the granting of land concessions, the expansion of mono-crop plantations, operations of large scale mining, contract/corporate farming especially of agrofuels crops; establishment of economic zones and unregulated conversion of agricultural lands
- In a sense, the current dominant framework has reduced land into a pure economic asset, valued for bringing profit rather than for ensuring the country's food security and for promoting a people-centered sustainable development agenda
- Land grabbing has lead to: displacement of communities, hunger and poverty, destruction of the environment and violation of human rights
- Social and environmental costs, together with the costs of rehabilitation and restoration are not internalized or included in the equation

Some Proposals:

- Recognize that land is NOT just an economic commodity BUT a necessary instrument of equity for the poor; access to land contributes to peace and social justice, enhances food security and leads to sustainable management of resources
- In the hierarchy of policies, the highest consideration should be given to domestic staple food production
- There is a need to suspend and review the conversion of agricultural lands to other uses;
- As in most countries in the south, there is a need for the passage of a national land use act
- Need to uphold the right to food and stop human rights abuses. Use the international agreements (i.e., voluntary guidelines on the right to food; ILO Convention 169) to make governments and corporations accountable
- Require TNCs and investors to adhere to best practice and international standards and full respect for national legislation and food sovereignty
- Governments should establish effective legal mechanisms to hold companies/investors to account for environmental damage, human rights violations and all practices involving any form of bribery and corruption

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- Uphold the right to self determination and obtain free and prior informed consent; ensure that the right to self-determination and priority rights to ancestral domains be given precedence over the economic interests
- Challenge inappropriate and non-participatory environmental and social impact assessment processes; need to raise the concern for transparency and a more inclusive process, with strong emphasis for women's participation, be instituted
- Need to empower communities, social movements and CSOs for common action and joint negotiation towards food sovereignty and sustainable livelihoods; recognize though the diversity within these stakeholders and respect their differences