



DECLARATION ON THE EVENTS IN JOS, NIGERIA

1. In January 2010, clashes occurred in Jos situated in the Plateau State in Nigeria and have caused the loss of many lives and valuable properties. A few months later, in March, savage attacks on innocent persons were launched in villages around Jos resulting in heavy casualties. These attacks were widely believed to be reprisal to previous killings. This series of tragedies has been officially estimated to have claimed half a thousand lives and destroyed valuable properties.
2. The media has generally linked the crisis to ethno-religious struggles between Christians and Muslims. This kind of simplistic explanation would not facilitate a good understanding of the situation. It can however be clearly seen and understood within the context of land rights disputes and resources use crisis.
3. West African States including Nigeria have inherited a colonial land law that has never responded to the needs and expectations of local people. It is a situation of legal dualism that prevails with on one hand ineffective state land laws and on the other hand perennial local land tenure practices. The inadequacy of state policies and laws in West Africa, the poor involvement of vulnerable groups such as pastoralists, migrants and women, associated with a weakening of the customary land law due to environmental, demographic and socioeconomic changes, lead to a situation of tension between stakeholders experiencing greater competition for access to natural resources.
4. In the light of events in Jos, it seems more urgent for West African States to promulgate suitable, effective and consensual land policies through participatory processes. LandNet West Africa (LNWA) calls upon states to guarantee the safety of persons and properties and to develop land policies that promote peaceful and equitable access of all to land and natural resources. States should take ownership and implement the “Framework and Guidelines on land policy in Africa” adopted in 2009 under the auspices of the African Union.
5. LNWA is committed to continue working toward a better tenure security of poor rural producers, in synergy with other West African civil society organizations, particularly with farmers and herders' organizations. LNWA is ready to cooperate with all relevant sub-regional institutions in terms of developing, implementing and monitoring pro-poor land policies.

On behalf of LandNet West Africa
The Executive Secretariat