

Input to the “Via Campensia” movement as an example of selforganized grass root organization

Moderation: Welcome to our Talkshow with today's topic of „The ecology of refuge and migration“.

In regard to the political debate on climate change, there are increasing warnings of climate and environmental refugees. There is a widespread belief that there is a direct link between climate change and migration. Climate mass migration is considered a future national and international security risk. Some studies have predicted that hundreds of millions of people will have to leave their homelands in the coming decades because of climate change, and that these migrations will trigger new domestic and interstate conflicts. New explanatory approaches are more complex, but largely in line with the conclusions. They note that no direct correlation between environmental changes and violent conflicts can be seen, but interactions with other factors can be seen as indirect effects. These include, for example, bad economic conditions, government failure or lack of conflict-resolution mechanisms. Migration plays a mediating or intermediary role. We want to discuss today the new EU-Africa approach to stop migration and have a look whether these new discoveries are being considered.

Therefore, we have invited Elizabeth Mpofu, the Chairperson of ZIMSOFF and also the International General Coordinator of La Via Campesina which is the largest International Peasant Movement in the world. Elizabeth would you like to say a few words about LVC.

EM: For almost 25 years, La Via Campesina is struggling all over the world for Peasants' rights, Food Sovereignty, Agroecology and Peasants' Seeds, access to Land, Water and Territories, Dignity for Migrants and Waged Workers, Climate Justice. It is the leading network of 182 local and national organisations in 81 countries from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. Altogether it represents about 200 million farmers. It is an autonomous, pluralist, multicultural movement, political in its demand for social justice while being independent from any political party, economic or other type of affiliation. I also brought a video clip which is trying to give an overview of our last 25 years: <https://tv.viacampesina.org/25-years-of-the-Struggles-of-La?lang=en>

Moderation: As our second guest we have invited Maurice Ponga, member of the European parliament, to discuss the current developments for the EU-Africa partnership. The french EPP member Maurice Ponga believes development could play a key role in stimulating economic growth in Africa and preventing people from having to leave their country. In his own-initiative report “the EU-Africa strategy: a boost for development”, which was adopted in November last year, he sets out how

development can make a difference. The EU has published this video to explain their strategy

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/world/20171009STO85656/migration-boosting-development-in-africa-to-create-alternatives> (video)

MP maybe you can elaborate on how this plan will work?

MP: As part of the European External Investment Plan, the new European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD) wants to encourage €44 billion in private investments in fragile states by offering a combination of grants, loans and financial guarantees worth €3.3 billion to boost jobs, growth and stability, thus addressing the root causes of migration. Strengthening the EU-Africa partnership will contribute to the development of both continents and help to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The EU is a major contributor to Africa's development, trade and security, but it must continue to invest, especially in education to offer prospects for younger generations. Our future is interlinked, so we must act together. By improving the business climate and attracting private investments where they are needed most, we can help to create better living conditions in our partner countries""

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20170629IPR78662/eu-investment-plan-on-track-to-tackle-root-causes-of-migration>

ME: First of all I would like to state that we as LVC strongly condemn the policy of the European Union and European governments- ratified by the measures taken in this last EU Council of Ministers this 18th of March. Rather than assuming their international responsibilities to human rights and global justice, EU member states have responded with more barriers, repression and media manipulation, condemning migrants to suffering, humiliation and death, with the sole purpose of defending their interests and profits above all humanity. The signing of agreements with third countries where money and favors are exchanged for humans beings places us on such levels of moral deprivation and institutional crime that it's impossible to remain unsettled.

The same political and economic powers that seek to destroy the peasantry, the environment and the food sovereignty of peoples around the world, are the ones that cause wars, climate change, impoverish local economies and constantly violate human rights around the world.

<https://viacampesina.org/en/in-union-with-refugees-and-migrants-denunciation-of-the-eu-s-and-european-government-s-inhuman-policies/>

Moderation: MP what do you have to state against these accusations?

MP: Well maybe I could state some of the successes of the Africa-EU partnership of the last years: Despite challenging times and a changing international environment the EU remained Africa's first trading partner in 2012. 28.2% of Africa's total trade (imports + exports) takes place with the EU. The EU was Africa's primary source of imports amounting to 25.9% of total African imports and also its primary export market (31%).

Similar developments can be observed for mutual Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows. Direct investment stocks held by African investors in the EU have increased by more than 700% over the last ten years, to reach the amount of €77 billion in 2012. Moreover, in 2012, the EU accounted for 48% (€ 221 billion) of FDI stocks in Africa and 21% (€ 7.8 billion) of global FDI flows to Africa

In line with the partnership priority to improve the investment climate in Africa, the EU and the AU are supporting a study on the elaboration of a Pan-African Investment Code. The latter will provide common guidelines to simplify investment-related legislation on the basis of existing best practices at national and regional levels in Africa. Also the Africa's Investor's Survey (AIS) supports the promotion of quality investment in Africa by offering details of more than 7000 local and foreign companies active in 19 African countries.

Moderation: So what is the added value of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy?

The Africa-EU Strategy complements the existing frameworks of cooperation with Sub-Saharan Africa and with the EU's Neighbourhood. It has to be underlined that this level of Africa-EU cooperation overarches all other existing channels of cooperation at the local, national and regional level. The JAES provides an added value to these frameworks by:

- Situating the Partnership in a global context by jointly addressing global common challenges such as climate change, the protection of the environment, or peace and security. Through joint positions Africa and Europe have more weight in global fora;
- Expanding Africa-EU cooperation into promising new areas of common interest such as governance and human rights, trade and regional integration, energy, climate change, migration, mobility and employment, or science, Information and Communication Technologies and space applications;
- Working towards a people-centred partnership by ensuring the effective participation of civil society and the private sector and delivering direct benefits for African and European citizens.

https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/regions/africa/continental-cooperation/joint-africa-eu-strategy_en

EM: As you can see there is an overall focus on growth. If there is economic growth then everything is good. There is no sort of discussion

about what kind of growth is wished for – is it a growth which creates a better future for the population of a country or is a growth which is ripping off a country and just a few people are getting rich? In this way, the development strategy is reduced to being an investment program for opening up new markets for European corporations while imprisoning the Global South as a source of income for the private sector.

In LVC we find it illegitimate that development is reduced to a consolation, placed by companies with their own interests in the front. Instead we are asking for a change of the development system. Too often, the well-meant "development" is part of legitimizing resource grabs to the benefit of the corporate elite. Therefore, we are supporting the global campaign "Stop Corporate Impunity". Through our calls for action, we are supporting the aim to take Transnational Corporations into responsibility for their violations of human rights, environmental plunder and mistreatment of communities whereas backing the demand for a UN binding treaty for international corporations and human rights. Nobody can see for example the influence of the European Union in the sugar industry in Swaziland, which supports the absolute monarchy in Swaziland through corporate power and trade policies. Therefore, we issue reports that show this involvement and others have been issued focusing on the corporate impunity in the extractive industry in South Africa and Zimbabwe. The reports are being used as a tool for dialogue with the EU and other key actors by local CSOs and offer legal empowerment for local communities to make use of their rights at international courts.

Moderation: one part of the strategy is the establishment of so called economic partnership agreements which are meant to promote the gradual integration of African economies into global markets, including by supporting African businesses to increase their participation in regional and global value chains.

MP: The trade chapter of the Agreement reflects the new trade relationship and the expiry of preferences at the end of 2007. It reaffirms the role of the Economic Partnership Agreements to boost economic development and integration into the world economy. The revised Agreement highlights the challenges ACP countries are facing to integrate better into the world economy, in particular the effects of preference erosion. It therefore underlines the importance of trade adaptation strategies and aid for trade .

Simply put, Africa cannot industrialise without guaranteed export markets; no country has ever done so – not Britain during the first Industrial Revolution, not China today. Even with its own Single Market, presumably under the putative Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA), Africa would still need to secure access to the markets of other economic blocs to become a major industrial and trading continent.

If the EPAs fail, Europe would lose influence in Africa but Africa risks losing access to its traditional European markets, as well as the impetus and

support to tackle its supply-side and trade constraints. So, Africa should ratify the EPAs, make use of their flexibilities, if necessary, and hold the EU's feet to the fire on the implementation of the EPA's development component.

We are ready to embark on a modern and dynamic partnership with Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. This new partnership will be a powerful tool to tackle global challenges — from poverty and inequality to peace and security; from climate change to sustainable growth for all

EM: EPAs are just there to lay the foundation stone for other FTAs. FTAs aren't just about 'trade'. They're comprehensive agreements to lock in free market capitalism, strengthen the power of global corporations, finance, and powerful governments, and advance their geopolitical objectives. There are direct links between FTAs, climate change, ecological devastation, and violations of Indigenous Peoples', workers' and farmers' rights. One of the main reasons to fight FTAs is that they hurt food sovereignty because they erase the possibility of public strategies supporting local markets, by removing tariffs on imported goods, hurting local small-scale food producers who cannot compete with large subsidised agribusiness imports. In addition, they harmonise standards on food safety, pesticides, GMOs and animal welfare benefitting corporations : the imposed lowest standards protect their profit margins. And that is not all: they rewrite patent laws, requiring countries to privatise plants and animals; criminalise peasants who save and exchange seeds and breeds thus damaging biodiverse food systems. They are just fundamentally anti-democratic in its form because they require to treat foreign investors better than domestic ones, which are gaining more access to land and water through investor-state arbitrations. Therefore, the civil society is losing their grip on democratic control mechanisms. We must struggle for real systemic change, saying "no to FTAs and global free market capitalism", combatting racist politics and defending mother earth.

<https://viacampesina.org/en/ftas-and-agriculture-new-edition-of-nyeleni-newsletter-is-out/>

Moderation: Thanks for the intense discussion and we will see which strategy will win at the high-level conference on Africa, hosted by the European Parliament, which will take place in Brussels on 22 November, in the run-up to the Africa-EU summit at the end of November in Abidjan, Ivory Coast.