

# Land in an interconnected world: Whose land? Whose agenda?

## Abstract

Africa possesses about 60 percent of the world's agricultural lands, attracting considerable investment interests particularly over the past two decades. However, the literature is replete with failed investments to the detriment of the economies and citizens of the destination countries. Suggestions for failures have included lack of transparency and participation in investment decisions and land acquisitions, absence of social contracts between investors and local communities which lends legitimacy to the investment, bad project planning, poor implementation monitoring, absence of social and environmental impact assessments, etc. Land acquisitions by governments and private companies that fail to meet minimum national, regional or international standards contribute to insecurity of rural land rights, with negative effects on livelihoods, well-being, local environments, and ecosystem services. On the other hand, effective land governance is pivotal to successful land based investments. Challenges related to the influx of investors and the seemingly uncontrolled acquisition of large tracts of land in Member States led to calls for action at the continental level. The result was the Nairobi Plan of Action on Large Scale Land Based investments, followed by the African Union Guiding Principles on Large Scale Land Based Investments.

Land is central to Africa's socio-economic development. Achieving Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030 depends on Africa's ability to unlock the potential of its land to boost productivity, eradicate hunger, and realize inclusive economic growth. In this regard, Africa urgently needs comprehensive and responsive policies, laws, and institutions that facilitate equitable access to land and security of tenure for land users. Effective land administration supported by appropriate infrastructure creates an enabling environment for efficient land and property markets, often a pre-condition for land based investments. Good land governance is also a basis for effective rural and urban land use planning to supports growth of African cities in a manner that enhances rural-urban linkages. In essence, good land governance is critical to the realization of an inclusive structural transformation of Africa's economies. African governments must therefore lead land policy formulation and implementation and drive the agenda for responsible land based development.

To strengthen the capacity to drive land governance reforms in Africa, LPI announced the establishment a Network of Excellence on Land Governance in Africa (NELGA) in 2015, which

was launched in April 2016. It involves developing curricula that meet the specific needs of the African continent in developing capacities across the board for effective land governance that yield positive dividends for African men and women.

The high level policy dialogue will discuss Africa's land issues within the framework of the theme for the conference, the AU Declaration on Land Issues and Challenges, the Nairobi Plan of Action on LSLBI and the capacity development needed to better position Africa to claim its rightful place and compete in an increasingly interconnected and competitive world:

1. Setting the agenda for Government's catalytic role in harnessing land resources for socio-economic development. Discussion will be led by a Minister of Lands from a Member State and will highlight government efforts to create an enabling environment for advancing ownership, access to land, and successful harnessing of land resources for inclusive development. (DRC – Hon Lumeya Dhu Maleghi)
2. Underscoring the role of customary authorities in facilitating good land governance. Discussion will be led by a traditional leader who will situate the discussion within the context of mobilizing African traditional leaders to support development efforts through the Forum for African Traditional Authorities (FATA) and in collaboration with governments. (FATA – HRH Drani Stephen Izakare)
3. Developing requisite capacities across the board for effective land governance in Africa. Discussion will be led by an academic and will focus on meeting the capacity gaps on the African continent, and developing the appropriate skills, knowledge and attitude to respond to the particular needs of the African continent. (NELGA – Prof Tchawa)
4. Securing land rights and sustainable agricultural investments. Discussion will be led by a Minister of Agriculture from a Member State and will address the specific issue of agricultural investments in the Member State and how the State is taking advantage of opportunities provided by the Continental initiatives to improve the agricultural value chains, starting from land acquisition. (Madagascar – M. Harison Randriarimanana)
5. Land governance impacts heavily on land use planning and the management of competition among various land uses and land users. Discussion on these relations will be led by a Minister from a Member State and will focus specifically on the relationship between land use and land governance. (Ethiopia – Ato Belete Tafere)
6. Putting it all together. Whose land? Whose Agenda? The ALPC will put all the pieces together and provide the way forward for Africa. (ALPC – Joan Kagwanja)

The session will be moderated by Mr. Ibrahim Mwathane