

Resolution on Tanzania, notably the issue of land grabbing

2015/2604(RSP) - 12/03/2015 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 626 votes to 4 with 11 abstentions a resolution on Tanzania, notably the issue of land grabbing.

The resolution was tabled by the EPP, S&D, ECR, ALDE, Greens/EFA, EFDD groups.

It called on the Tanzanian Government to immediately implement the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)'s Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT). It firmly condemned the illegal displacement of local rural communities, as well as condemned actions that did not recognise the legitimacy of customary tenure arrangements that provided statutory rights for individuals and communities, and prevent dispossession and abuses of land rights, which were especially prevalent among African communities.

Members cited in particular the Tanzanian authorities announcement of a plan to sell 1 500 square kilometres of Maasai land in Western Serengeti to a private hunting and safari company based in the United Arab Emirates, which plan involved the eviction of 40 000 Maasai pastoralists. To date, thousands of Maasai were illegally evicted from their lands, with recent reports indicating that over 200 houses had been destroyed and livestock confiscated by the Tanzanian authorities, leaving more than 3 000 people homeless and without shelter.

Parliament also called for an independent investigation into the land disputes in Loliondo, where, in 1992 the foreign-owned Ortello Business Corporation (OBC) was granted hunting rights within the Loliondo Game Control Area, which was inhabited and legally owned by Maasai pastoralists. It called on the Commission to engage actively with the Tanzanian authorities in order to strongly encourage them to bring forward a legally binding and codified acknowledgement of the rights of the Maasai, with particular reference to their ancestral land, therefore providing the necessary legal protection to prevent future disputes.

It asked the Commission to ensure the alignment of its land policy guidelines with the VGGT and to give greater importance to it in its development cooperation programmes, trade and investment policy and involvement in multilateral financing institutions. Parliament also stated that:

- human rights and the rules prohibiting land grabbing should be mainstreamed in the EU's trade and investment agreements, including the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP);
- it was crucial to ensure full transparency and accountability of the operations of EU companies and financial institutions in large-scale agri-business investments and land acquisitions in Tanzania, and establish a strong and efficient EU mechanism to monitor these operations;

Members called on the Commission to submit a report to Parliament on expenditure under development programmes and the EU budget related to land governance, with a view to ensuring that those programmes promote human rights and tackle the challenges linked to land-grabbing.

Lastly, Parliament recalled that indigenous people had been granted specific forms of protection of their land rights under international law. In line with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, any shift in land use should take place only with the free, prior and informed consent of the local

communities concerned, and states must provide effective mechanisms for prevention of, and redress for, any action which had the aim or effect of dispossessing indigenous peoples of their lands, territories or resources.