



## **Statement of solidarity with the communities of Ndian Division, Southwest Region of Cameroon**

We are 40 participants who have united in Mundemba, Cameroon, for an international workshop on the tactics and strategies of oil palm companies, from 28 to 31 January 2016. We have gathered to share our experiences from Cameroon, West and Central Africa, Asia and South America, and to understand the realities of the local communities in Ndian Division, Southwest Region of Cameroon.

We share the concerns of local communities regarding the growing interest in community land for corporate oil palm plantations. The experiences shared during the workshop by the different participants—who came from several countries affected by oil palm plantations and from the home countries of companies involved in this expansion—attest to the dangers communities are facing. In Indonesia, communities have had millions of hectares of land fraudulently taken and destroyed by oil palm companies, and many of these companies are now grabbing lands for plantations in Africa. In many African countries, we see companies systematically failing to keep promises they have made to communities whose lands they have taken through corruption, bribery, lies, intimidation and other devious tactics.

From our field visits to Ndian Town, Fabe, Meangwe II and Ikondo-Kondo resettlement, we witnessed and heard about the tactics and strategies used by oil palm companies. The devastating impacts that plantations have had in other countries are more or less reflected in this part of Cameroon. We witnessed how companies in the area have failed to respect court rulings in favour of the communities or to abide by laws pertaining to the protection of the environment and the acquisition of lands. We are deeply troubled by the intimidation and criminalisation of community leaders and organisers opposed to projects, including the local organiser of this workshop, the Mundemba-based organisation SEFE. We have seen how companies are not providing the basic services and support they promised to communities, such as scholarships, employment,

community farms, bridges and roads, royalties, housing, health care, water or utilities. And we have also seen how companies have used divide and conquer tactics to try to break the unity of communities. The companies are not bringing development, but are merely generating poverty, food insecurity, social conflict and environmental destruction.

We are moved by the peaceful efforts of communities and those working with them to protect and maintain control over the traditional use of their lands, which they have looked after for generations. Despite the challenges and difficulties faced by the communities in this area, we appreciate their efforts to defend their interests and we acknowledge their courage. We are inspired by the successes some of these communities have had in preventing companies from taking land in their areas.

Lastly, the participants gathered in Mundemba from various parts of the world for this workshop would like to thank the local government authorities for having made this event possible by guaranteeing the security of all the participants. And we commit to providing all possible support and solidarity to the communities of Ndian Division in their struggle to defend their lands in a peaceful and non-violent way.

*Signed in Mundemba, 31 January 2016*

## **Signatories from Cameroon**

- Struggle to Economise Future Environment (SEFE), Cameroon
- Centre pour l'Environnement et le Développement (CED), Cameroon
- Réseau des acteurs du Développement Durable (RADD), Cameroon
- SYNAPARCAM, Cameroon
- Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement Cameroon (JVE- Cameroon)
- Réseau de Lutte contre la Faim (RELUFA), Cameroon
- Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), Cameroon
- Green Development Advocates, Cameroon
- Nature Cameroon
- FUFEDA-Edea, Cameroon
- Africa Movement Force For Freedom, Cameroon
- Korup Rainforest Conservation Society, Cameroon
- Environmental Resources Management and Social Issue Center, Cameroon
- Chief WANGOE Philp, Fabe, Cameroon
- Chief Moto Divine, Ndiba, Cameroon
- Chiel Mbote Patrick Eleli, Menagwe II, Cameroon
- Chief Okanda Alex, Esoki, Cameroon
- Chief Orume S. Orume, Mosongiseli, Cameroon
- Chief Akama Orume, Idibayanga, Cameroon
- Mosembe Cornelius, Sikam, Cameroon
- Salvadoe Tambe, Ebanga, Cameroon
- Cooperative Agropastorale Filles et Femmes, Libamba, Cameroon
- Colette Um, Cameroon
- Lotsmart Fonjong, Université de Buéa, Cameroon
- Bila Ellem, Bweme, Cameroon
- Ebokely Martin Esono, Dikome Balue, Cameroon
- Momene Wilson, Esoki, Cameroon
- Violet Fokum, IDRC-Université de Buéa, Cameroon
- Njuma Leslie, Ndian Town, Cameroon
- John Arreybor, Divisional Delegate of Environment, Cameroon
- Efokoa Charles, Buea, Cameroon
- Oku Nelvis, Ikoti, Cameroon
- Okpo wa Namolongo, Lipenja II, Cameroon
- Gregory Orume, Mosongiseli, Cameroon
- NGOE Gabriel Iselle, Fabe, Cameroon
- Prince Akama, Ndian Town, Cameroon
- Cameroon Ekale Cecilia, Ndian Town, Cameroon
- Epamba Verine, Meangwe II, Cameroon
- Njuma Larry, Mundemba, Cameroon

## International signatories

- Association pour le Développement Durable et la Protection de l'Environnement en Guinée (ADAPE), Guinea
- ATTAC-Gabon, Gabon
- Brainforest, Gabon
- Pain pour le prochain, Switzerland
- Community Forest Watch Network, Nigeria
- Environmental Rights Action (ERA), Nigeria
- Forum pour la gouvernance et les droits de l'Homme (FGDH), Congo-Brazzaville
- GRAIN
- Observatoire congolais des droits de l'Homme (OCDH), Congo-Brazzaville
- Réseau d'information et d'appui aux ONG nationales (RIO), Congo-Kinshasa
- Alliance Caféière, Congo-Kinshasa
- WALHI, Indonesia
- World Rainforest Movement (WRM), Uruguay
- YETIHO, Ivory Coast



Mundemba workshop participants say NO to the expansion of oil palm plantations

## **Mundemba declaration: women and the expansion of oil palm plantations and industrial palm oil**

Considering that the aspiration to human dignity is a common ideal for humankind, and that the United Nations Charter asserts this aspiration in its preamble and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

Considering the key role women play in the global economy, a role also recognized by the Millennium Development Goals;

Considering the role that women play in the local economies of each country in the region;

Considering the pivotal role that women play in maintaining their families, which is at the heart of our societies;

Aware of the fact that women are always at the forefront of the struggle against poverty, through their many interventions, especially in the field of agriculture;

**We, leaders of groups of women affected by the expansion of industrial monoculture plantations, particularly oil palm plantations;**

**We, national and international organizations involved in the struggle for the rights of women and local communities in Africa, Latin America and Asia, signatories of this declaration, met from 27 to 28 January 2016 in Mundemba, south-western Cameroon;**

### **After having:**

- shared testimonies of the painful daily struggle of women living in and around oil palm plantations and analysed the impact on women and families of the rapid, brutal expansion of monocultures promoted by multinationals in different communities and countries;
- considered the numerous social, economic, environmental, cultural and culinary advantages of traditional palm oil; and
- exchanged strategies and solutions that women who have become victims of land grabs, particularly for the expansion of industrial oil palm plantations, have put in place to defend their interests.

### **Having found that:**

- Monoculture plantations, particularly oil palm plantations:
  - trap women living in and around such plantations in a system of growing impoverishment that affects the whole family;
  - rob women of fertile agricultural lands once used for family agriculture through which women fed the family and the entire community; this threatens the food security and sovereignty of populations in and around these industrial plantations; these plantations are causing the disappearance of many agricultural and cultural practices thereby contributing to the disappearance of many traditional crafts and skills, causing entire communities to become dependent on consumerism due to the loss of autonomy in food production;
  - cannot feed families in the way that women's family farming does;
  - are a threat to the conservation of biodiversity and contribute to the loss of non-timber forest products, which are an important source of income for women, because they cause massive and rampant deforestation, thus also worsening global warming and climate change;

- lead to the disappearance of traditional oil palm cultivation, the traditional, medicinal, nutritional and cultural virtues of which are valued by women for their contribution to the wellbeing of the family and society as a whole;
- The creation of land policies and the transfer of land are often carried out without real involvement of the women who are affected; and
- Plantations of oil palm trees can never replace a forest.

#### **We reaffirm our commitment to invest in:**

- investigate and document cases of abuse and assaults experienced by women living around and in large-scale industrial plantations, particularly oil palm plantations, and to widely distribute this documentation;
- establish a platform for action and exchange among women engaged in the struggle for the defence of their interests that are threatened by tree monocultures and particularly oil palm plantations;
- establish a multi-stakeholder platform (private sector, local communities and NGOs) with the participation of women leaders;
- explore the creation of a support fund for women in and around the agro-industrial plantations who have become victims of abuse;
- support the development of economic alternatives for affected women;
- engage in advocacy for the greater involvement of women in decision-making on land rights issues and land sales;
- promote traditional oil palm cultivation;
- create a women's observatory focused on the large-scale transfer of land and the impact of monoculture plantations on family farming;
- strengthen the capacity of women to better defend their interests and give them the tools to resist the many forms of abuse caused by large-scale agro-industry; and
- support studies that explore legal frameworks and advocacy for influencing legislative and regulatory reforms in related sectors.

#### **WE RECOMMEND**

##### **To public authorities:**

- make the problems associated with the expansion of industrial oil palm plantations a national priority;
- create multi-sector policies adapted to the situation of rural women affected by the expansion of industrial oil palm; and
- enact legislative and regulatory reforms (that strengthen women's rights) related to the expansion of industrial oil palm.

##### **To donors and technical partners:**

- provide support in various forms to actions that strengthen women's struggle against the expansion of industrial oil palm;
- take every opportunity in their co-operation with public authorities to raise the issue of the detrimental impacts of the expansion of industrial oil palm plantations; and
- support women's initiatives to promote the cultivation of traditional oil palm and the use of traditional palm oil and other products in order to strengthen rural livelihoods.

##### **To local and international NGOs**

- take up and join women's struggle against the expansion of industrial oil palm plantations;
- advocate for clear, effective and appropriate solutions to the problem of expanding industrial oil palm plantations and make this a national priority; and

- strengthen the capacity of women so that they may be better equipped for the struggle against the expansion of industrial oil palm.

**To women:**

- take the lead in the struggle against the expansion of the industrial palm oil industry;
- organise associations and networks in order to be stronger; and
- denounce any violation of rights caused by the expansion of the industrial palm oil industry.

*Mundemba, Cameroon, 28 January 2016*

**Signed, the following participating organisations:**

- RELUFA, Yaoundé, Cameroon
- BACUDA, Kribi-Cameroon
- ERA/FOE, Nigeria
- FERAFAM, Cameroon
- CAFIFEL, Cameroon
- OCDH, Congo
- Brainforest, Gabon
- Bread for all, Switzerland
- SEFE, Cameroon
- Green Development Advocates, Cameroon
- Struggle to Economize Future Environment-SEFE, Cameroon
- Social Centre, Mundemba, Cameroon
- CED-Cameroon
- SFDD, Cameroon
- ADAPE, Guinea
- GRAIN
- JJFE, Cameroon
- Buéa University, Cameroon
- World Rainforest Movement (WRM)
- FUFEDA, Cameroon
- Alliance Dame Active de Batschenga (DABA)



Women resist industrial palm oil