

CELADA Outcomes Document

CELADA ROUNDTABLE ON AFRICAN LAND-GRABS

Convened Feb. 25, 2014

The Coalition for Equitable Land Acquisitions and Development in Africa (CELADA) organized a roundtable in Ottawa to bring together Members of Parliament, academics, researchers and members of the development NGO community. Speakers included Robert Fox, Executive Director of Oxfam Canada; Obang Metho, Executive Director of Solidarity Movement for the New Ethiopia; and Maggy Razafimbahiny, member of CELADA and development activist. Joining them on a discussion panel were Annie Brunton, University of Ottawa student, and Bruce Moore, President of People Centred Development. The event was convened by H el ene Laverdi ere, Member of Parliament for Laurier-Ste. Marie and official opposition critic for international development. The discussion was moderated by Roy Culpeper, Senior Fellow at the University of Ottawa’s School of International Development and Global Studies, and Chair of CELADA. The roundtable took place at a conference room in 1 Wellington Street near Parliament Hill.

The discussion generated a number of ideas and suggestions to tackle the rising tide of land-grabs resulting in involuntary displacement of customary inhabitants in Africa and other developing countries. These may be summarized as follows:

1. There was a call for greater leadership, coherence and transparency in Canada on the issue to support the rights of African farmers and pastoralists with hereditary claims to land.
2. To this end, it was proposed that hearings be held by the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development to consider the views and recommendations of experts and, if possible, local residents from countries dealing with land-grabs.
3. It was suggested that Parliament consider legislative action similar to that recently taken by the U.S. Congress, notably, to ensure that foreign aid is not associated directly or indirectly with the involuntary displacement of customary occupants of African farmland.
4. It was suggested that the status of people involuntarily displaced by land-grabs be recognized.
5. It was recommended that human rights impact assessments be included in the disclosure requirements for land acquisitions.
6. The principle of “free, prior and informed consent” should be observed in land acquisitions; consultations with affected populations are not sufficient to prevent abuses.
7. Canada should support the guidelines under preparation by the UN’s Committee on Food Security to ensure Responsible Agricultural Investment, with the proviso that these guidelines are clearly aligned with the rights and interests of customary land dwellers.
8. It was suggested that, analogous to existing laws with extraterritorial application (bribery and corruption of foreign officials, sexual exploitation abroad) that Canada consider prosecution of individuals or businesses that acquire lands abroad through processes inconsistent with Canadian law.
9. The eligibility of countries for food aid should be reconsidered where such countries facilitate food exports through questionable land acquisitions.
10. State sovereignty should not be used as a pretext to defend or justify governments forcefully removing people from their land.