

To the SADC Ministerial Committee responsible for Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment

To the relevant line Ministries of East African Community member States

Honourable Ministers

Subject: Open Letter for the member States of Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the East Africa Community (EAC)

We, La Via Campesina Southern and East Africa Region, are part of a global social movement made up of many different kinds of food producers—peasants, small-scale farmers, fisherfolk and fish workers, indigenous and traditional peoples, pastoralists and nomads, agricultural and food workers, the landless, urban communities, consumers, youth, and women. We are writing to you to express our concern with many issues related to climate change, and to insist that our governments understand these problems from the perspective of small-scale food producers.. As people directly impacted by climate change, we hereby strongly demand climate justice for a better, cleaner world.

Our territories within Southern and Eastern Africa are particularly threatened by the effects of climate change. We are facing consecutive years of declining summer rainfalls, and changing and unpredictable weather patterns. These are causing widespread scarcity of food and water. The United Nations has declared multiple famines in recent years in many countries including Somalia, Sudan, Burundi and Ethiopia. Floods from extreme rainfall are claiming many lives and displacing thousands of people in Mozambique, Kenya, Malawi and Zimbabwe. Moreover, recent climate models and emerging research suggests that, in the coming years, temperatures in Southern Africa will increase one and a half times quicker than the global average. This is a grim picture of the future for our region unless real global action is taken to reverse the current trends.

From our perspective, real solutions to the climate crisis, will not come from conforming to the industrial model of food production and consumption. Instead solutions will come from peasant agroecology, rooted in food sovereignty. Food sovereignty is a key form of resistance to an economic system that puts profit before life. It defends local food systems which are the foundations of creating new rural-urban links based on truly agroecological food production by peasants, artisanal fishers, pastoralists and urban farmers. Peasant agroecology is the answer to how to transform and repair our food system and rural world, and is a core solution to global climate change.

We are the ones who will feed our families, our communities and our world. We totally reject market-based mechanisms, and false solutions including Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA), REDD+, Blue Carbon, and geoengineering, among others. We call these false solutions because they are aimed at driving small-scale farmers away from diverse and healthy food production towards monoculture businessmodels, continued dependence on corporate controlled and toxic farm inputs, and the commodification of Nature and Nature's services.

Indeed, real solutions impact positively on the lives of the people most affected by climate change.

We see a number of crucial issues in our regions that need to be addressed in order to effect real solutions to climate change:

The full application of the Maputo Declaration is necessary for climate justice. Application must democratically distribute sufficient and appropriate resources towards peasant production systems, rather than towards government sector agencies who are often not held accountable for the use of these resources. The common people from our countries must have control over public budget allocation.

An important area of focus is adaptation. We call on our governments to take a stronger position vis-à-vis global north governments and transnational corporations (TNCs) who are most historically responsible for global greenhouse gas emissions. As our communities continue to suffer, we see gatekeepers maintain a lack of transparency and paralysing bureaucracy which makes climate finance inaccessible to those who need it most.

We join the global voices in denouncing the critical failures of the Paris Agreement. With regards to mitigation of climate change, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)—the cornerstone of the Paris Agreement—do not add up to enough emissions reductions to tackle climate change. Actually, the current NDCs take us beyond 3 degrees average global temperature rise above pre-industrial levels. This is more than double the required levels of 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels!

Land reform in many countries in Africa, including the most successful examples, such as Zimbabwe, hasn't reached the level of total agrarian reform yet. These countries still operate within the context of programs that do not give equality to majority of their citizens. Instead, they allocate huge amounts of arable land to big investors (including mining conglomerates), who consistently make false promises to local populations, destroying communities, culture, environment, livelihoods, and local food systems – all in the name of maximising profit. This includes the growing trend of land-grabbing through contract farming.

The centralization and privatization of ownership and utilization of energy for corporate purposes is also a problem: the proliferation of mega-projects for energy production, such as mega-dams, coal and shale-gas extraction projects, as well as the many large-scale infrastructure projects, are not needed and ultimately do not cater to the needs and interests of the majority of our African Peoples.

The multi-dimensional nature of climate crisis requires concerted regional effort across the multitude of global policy negotiation spaces. As an engaged social movement committed to real solutions, we regret that our regional blocks are still failing to act in an articulated and harmonized manner across the relevant spaces (UN Human Rights Council, UNFCCC, WTO, ARIPO) in favour of the climate justice and food sovereignty.

We further regret to see our regional policy development and implementation captured by global North governments, TNCs, and private foundations, serving as enablers to the autocratic and often violent tendencies of our governing elites.

We believe that the highlighted issues lead to a number challenges currently experienced by our communities with regards to mitigating and adapting to climate change effects:

National allocations to agricultural research in national budgets of member states is deliberately insufficient and inappropriate, creating the space for public-private partnerships that undermine policy and advance profit-driven interests at the expense of those communities that such support is meant to help. Large portions of our public budgets are being allocated to initiatives that further aggravate or fail to address the global climate crisis. In addition, African governments' over-reliance on foreign aid, foreign direct investments (FDIs), and their capitulation to global North governments and international finance has been a major challenge. Such support comes with stringent conditionalities which favour multinational and multilateral interests. This dependency, aggravated by the severe poverty levels across our regions, creates a situation where global creditors use our governments' public debts as leverage to force them to accept and capitulate to the whims of the global North's governments and TNCs.

It is a shame that many foreign investors come into our countries without meeting the basic eligibility threshold, choosing to pay a "visit" to political leaders and make serious decisions without the participation of affected communities, CSOs, and the relevant line Ministries mandated to safeguard the interests of the state and its peasantry.

Fundamental to the ongoing process of criminalization of the peasant way of life is the persecution of human rights defenders including those of us who give our lives to defend the interests of peasant peoples across the regions. Widespread resource-grabbing is affecting peasant communities the most. Resource grabbing comes in many forms: We remain concerned with the current efforts to harmonize seed laws that make it illegal for peasant farmers to exchange, sell and in some cases even save their own traditional and indigenous seeds. This impoverishes and further disempowers peasants and the majority of local populations. Forced displacement of local populations and ensuing changes in land-use patterns severely undermines the resilience of communities in the face of climate change, and further destroys the stability of the Earth's life systems and Human survival on this Planet. These forced displacements have a particularly harsh impact on youth and women. Youth are forced to migrate, leaving their communities in search of a better life only to find that our society has no place for them. The exploitation of women's lives and bodies takes on more violent forms. The rise of women's resistance in our region is a testament to urgency and severity of the crisis. Peasant and urban women across the continent are at the forefront of our struggles.

There is a major problem with the lack of democracy and transparency in regards to the development and implementation of various climate-related projects. Information about different programs being implemented by governments and NGOs in our communities is not being shared freely with those who are directly affected. There is also a false perception that the participation of major global NGOs suffices as representation of civil society in such deliberations. Nothing could be further from the truth. The participation of local grassroots organisations is critical. Therefore local organizations must be part and parcel of identifying and addressing the climate concerns of the grassroots.

We the signatories to this Open Letter to the SADC and EAC governments demand:

- Recognition, adoption, and promotion of peasant agroecology as a viable alternative to industrial agriculture.
- Promotion of food sovereignty as the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.
- Recognition of Climate Justice as a core foundation for the development and implementation of real solutions to climate change.
- Meaningful representation of women and girls, children, youth, persons with disabilities and the poorest of the poor in policy and other interventions addressing climate change.
- Our governments reject externally driven false solutions, especially Climate Smart Agriculture and REDD+.
- Commitment to comprehensive and people-centred Agrarian Reforms for the improvement of small-scale food producers' livelihoods in EAC and SADC.
- An increase in member states' national budget allocations to their agriculture ministries, and the allocation of such funds to be guided by sound decisions anchored in the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent by small-scale food producers. Special focus should be given to seeking justice for communities engaged in agreements made with foreign investors. Agreements should be revised or nullified, as needed, to benefit and protect local communities.
- Support for farmer-led research centres and development of farming methods and technical packages that enhance local solutions based on indigenous knowledge systems.
- Interventions to protect local people in areas affected by destructive mining activities.
- Pro-peasant spaces for participatory policy formulation and legislation that protects the rights of peasants and peasant communities.
- Training programs and curricula in agricultural education that are holistic and that centralize indigenous knowledge systems, peasant agroecology and pathways for enhancing food security with food sovereignty.

We the peasants of La Via Campesina Southern and Eastern Africa Region and our allies express our solidarity with all struggles against false solutions to climate change and for climate justice across the globe. Standing in solidarity and hope with all the peoples of our

region, we remain committed to the struggle for food sovereignty, agroecology, and rights to our territories, culture and identity as the basis for climate justice.

WE FEED THE PEOPLES AND BUILD THE MOVEMENT TO CHANGE THE WORLD!

GLOBALIZE THE STRUGGLE, GLOBALIZE HOPE!

MY STRUGGLE IS YOUR STRUGGLE! YOUR STRUGGLE IS MY STRUGGLE!

AMANDLA! AWETU!

HARARE 17 MAY 2018

The signatory organizations/social movements:

The subscribed organizations/social movements: