



Adopted Resolution

On Land Grabs

Background

With rising commodity prices and concerns over climate change, land has become increasingly valuable. Across the globe a new round of enclosure has resulted. Indigenous people and small farmers are often removed from land that they either own privately or via customary communal right have access to.

Seized land often benefits corporations, sovereign and pension funds and multinationals, which produce on large-scale agrofuels and other agricultural commodities for export instead of food for the local population.

There is a long history of commons being enclosed and taken from commoners both within Europe and as a result of European colonialism across the world. Millions of native Americans, Asians, and Africans were dispossessed of their lands and resources. Land grabbing has been justified by notions such as the 'tragedy of the commons' and ignorance of alternative systems of property rights. The work of the late Professor Elinor Ostrom, who was the first woman to win a Nobel Prize in economics, for her research into common pool property, has shown that common pool property can be managed sustainably and fairly.

The European Green Party opposes such land grabs. Land grabs are a serious threat to local food security, food sovereignty and global food justice and increase inequality. EGP should declare that land can not be treated according to the Free Movement of Capital principle. In case of land-market free market mechanisms should always be overruled by the principles of sustainability and social justice.

The European Green Party Council in Madrid,

Notes that there is a long history of environmental degradation and social injustice fuelled by large scale land seizures.

Affirms its support for indigenous peoples, peasants and their social movement allies in opposing land seizures, securing land rights and struggling for land reforms.

Emphasises that customary land rights include collective ownership and access rights, which provide environmentally sustainable and equitable forms of ownership.

Furthermore we note that trade agreements, that do not acknowledge the variety of such property rights, can act to dispose communities from land. We oppose institutional support for land seizures both from the European Union and other bodies.

In addition, we oppose efforts at conservation or commercial land development that exclude the participation of local people.

Cites as an example the Varela National Park and the Boloma Bijagós Archipelago, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in the state Guinea-Bissau in West Africa, where the Diola people and the unique ecosystem are at risk from threatened exploitation of the local mineral wealth, including oil extraction and uranium mining, by commercial interests.

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The European Green Party Council in Madrid proposes the following specific measures,

1. The European Union and European countries should adhere to the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests, adopted in May 2012 by the 128 countries of the UN Committee on World Food Security as a first small step in a good direction. But, together with most NGOs and farmers' organisations, they underscore the voluntary nature of these guidelines as governments do not guarantee the cancellation of past land concessions and the continuation of such land grabs. The United Nations International convention on economic and social rights calls for protection from forced eviction regardless of person's land tenure status - whether it is formal or informal. States have to eliminate discrimination related to informal tenure and to prevent, prohibit and eliminate discriminatory practices.
2. Given that the main source of the food prices' spikes all over the world since 2006-07 have come from the huge and increasing volumes of US and EU cereals and oilseeds devoted to agrofuels, the European Union must oppose the sourcing of biofuels from food products worldwide, which clearly include lands grabbed from local people, as it is the case in countries such as Colombia and Indonesia, but also in the EU itself. We need strict sustainability criteria for the import of biofuel.
3. The European Union should activate the 2004 EU Land Policy Guidelines, which at present it largely ignores.
4. The European Union trade policy should provide concrete guidelines to help member states and traders to avoid activities which lead to the dispossession of developing country communities of their farm or collectively held lands, and upon both of which their livelihoods depend. The first thing to do is clearly to stop imposing the totally unfair Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) to ACP countries, as they would accelerate the dispossession of small family farmers as well as their very fragile small industries.
5. The European Union should set up a registry of all EU public and private actors involved in large-scale land acquisitions abroad and within the EU itself to promote transparency and progressive policy change. In addition we call on the newly elected EGP delegates to the Global Greens Coordination to propose a global initiative by Green politicians and campaigners on this issue.
6. The EU Commission should temporarily suspend trade preferences on agricultural products in cases where human rights abuses are identified in the framework of land concessions.
7. Requests our Green MEPs to call on the European Commission to raise the issue of exploitation of the Varela National Park with the Guinea-Bissau authorities and to seek to safeguard the integrity of the Park and its inhabitants.

REF

1. The European Union and Global Land Grabs

http://www.tni.org/files/download/european_union_and_the_global_land_grab-a5.pdf