

## **PETITION**

### **Urgent call for an end to financing the establishment of eucalyptus and pine tree plantations in Mozambique September 2011**

To whom it may concern.

In previous years, the Diocese of Vasteras, the Lutheran Swedish Church and the Norwegian Lutheran Church Endowment, have been investing heavily in the expansion of pine and eucalyptus tree monocultures in central and northern Mozambique through the companies Chikweti Forests de Niassa, Tectona Forests of Zambezia, Ntacia Florestas de Zambezia and Florestas de Messangulo.

To finance these large-scale projects, these churches and church institutions mentioned above founded the Global Solidarity Forest Fund (GSFF). It is a Sweden-based private equity, supposedly ethical investment fund focused on the establishment of industrial timber plantations in southern Africa. The Dutch Pension Fund ABP and other institutions have also invested in this Fund.

Contrary to official statements of the GSFF, many of the tree monocultures concerned are planted on fertile farmland in rural areas, land primarily used by local communities with customary land rights, for small-scale and self-sufficient farming and, therefore, vital to the food security of these people.

Further, natural indigenous forests are chopped down at an alarming rate to give space to the monoculture tree plantations, which seriously impact on both the food security and biodiversity in those areas.

In addition, following the establishment of the Ntacia Forests eucalyptus plantations in 2008, due to the extremely high water consumption of the alien plants - each eucalyptus tree uses at least 50 liters of water a day - , the availability of water, which, in most rural areas of Mozambique where only 42% of the total population have access to improved drinking water sources, is a scarce and valuable resource, is worsening as reported by several members of an affected community in Zambezia Province.

The plantations of Ntacia Florestas de Zambezia, contrary to the promises of the company, do not increase the job security in affected areas, since subsequent to the clearing of the land and the planting of the trees, there is no need for workers in the plantations anymore; except for a few security guards.

The few people who are working in the plantations as is the case in Zambezia and Niassa suffer from bad working conditions, such as the payment of inhumane wages which sometimes are under the legal minimum wage in Mozambique, lack of adequate transport and huge differences in income and working conditions among „white“ and „black“ employees. Once employed, they have no time to grow food for their families which affects

food security. It is extremely irresponsible for a church institution that should place special emphasis on social factors in all its operations to exploit impoverished communities for profit.

By establishing these large-scale monocultures, the churches destroy the possibility of small-scale farming in these areas, which is due to a massive degradation of the soil and the destruction of areas reserved for agricultural fields (“machambas”). This is devastating for affected communities, especially since 80% of the economically active population is working in agriculture and living in rural areas and depend directly on self-sufficient farming to feed themselves and their families. The lack of solution for these problems have lead to extreme situations such as the very grave conflicts that have happened in Niassa province where angry and despaired farmes have destroyed tree plantations.

Furthermore, there was no proper consultation of local communities. In most cases, the public consultation process was fraud. Instead of equally informing the communities about the pros and cons of industrial timber plantations, the communities were only told lies of food security and poverty alleviation through massive job creation. Concerning as well is that in some cases, the members of the communities were not asked permission to plant the trees on the land utilized by them.

The establishment of plantations in those areas will have dire long-term consequences for the local population as has been reported in other places in the global South where these plantations have been established as is the case of near-by South Africa – degradation of fertile soil, drying up of water sources, invasion of fields by Eucalyptus and Pine trees and the loss of complete livelihoods. Also, the large-scale destruction of indigenous vegetations already has and will have a huge impact on vital biodiversity, the integrated ecosystem and the natural services provided by real forests.

For those reasons the stated targets of the organizations, which include *reforestation, restoration and responsible management*, are not reached at all! Instead, people are deprived of their land and are promised secure job creation and poverty alleviation which has not become true. Instead, frustration, anger and despair have increased in communities that already have suffered a lot over the past decades.

We do not see why church institutions and other investment funds would invest their member’s money in projects that exploit the poorest of the poor – can money be worth all of this?

Therefore, we demand the immediate stop of every sort of support for the further establishment and expansion of tree monocultures in Mozambique and the active restoration and rehabilitation of the already affected farmland by the responsible institutions.

Yours sincerely,

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