

Session: LAND – Thursday, May 08, 2008 – Morning Session
Major Group: WORKERS & TRADE UNIONS

Thank you Chair,

Trade unions have a stake in land management reforms that guarantee and sustain easy and equitable access to land. This is because land generates income, food and employment for over 60% of households in Africa. In Africa, many workers are also small-scale farmers while small-scale farmers earn some form of wage incomes.

Two dramatic examples from Nigeria illustrates the crisis in land management. In the oil-rich Niger Delta in Nigeria, oil-producing and oil-prospecting multinationals displace entire communities, small agricultural holdings and small-scale agro-based businesses. This process is often backed with massive use of violence and forced evictions.

This has implications for food security, employment and income security. It escalates rural-urban migration, which in turns put pressure on an already dysfunctional labour market.

The environmental impact also lead to voluntary evictions arising from the poor productivity of land resources.

With the decision of the Nigerian government to accommodate large-scale farmers displaced from Zimbabwe, the issue of forced evictions has intensified.

Mr. Chair, in general, land management situation, specially in Africa, calls for policy measures that guarantee equal access to land titles. We need measures to protect the rights of individual farmers, small hldings and communities. We need as well institutional mechanisms to address compensation issues and effective remedies for the grievances of displaced persons. Governments need to empower stakeholders to deal with big business in the event of pollution and other measures which adversely affect the productivity of land resources. Above all land issues need to be addressed in the context of social dialogue, consultaion and a rights-based approach in furtherance of our concerns about decent work, sustainable livelihood and individual and comunal welfare.

Finally, we call for increased policy space for trade unions and workers organisations to improve the quality of land management.