



December 8, 2011

Mr. Robert Zoellick
President
World Bank
1818 H Street, NW
Washington, DC 20433
USA

Ms. Christiana Figueres
Executive Secretary
UNFCCC Secretariat
Haus Carstanjen
Martin-Luther-King-Strasse 8
53175 Bonn
Germany

Dear Mr. Zoellick and Ms. Figueres:

We write to express our concern with the debate surrounding climate change and the implications of policies to mitigate it on food security and poverty alleviation in Africa. With leading policymakers convening in Durban, South Africa, we urge you to stand with developing countries to ensure that policies do not undermine the ability of developing world producers to prosper and contribute to food security.

Agricultural development remains the most effective sector for economic prosperity and development, which leads to food security. In the World Bank's recent analysis of the palm oil sector, agriculture was demonstrated to be three times more effective at raising the incomes of producers and creating thousands of jobs.

Countries such as Liberia, Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire have attracted billions of dollars in investment to date for development of domestic palm oil production, illustrating the potential investment in the sector. Liberia alone has attracted more than USD 2.6 billion in investment in recent years, promising millions of dollars in government revenue and bringing more than 35,000 jobs to the country.

However, additional investment is being limited as a result of opposition from activist and Western governments to land conversion, with implications not just for the emerging palm oil industry but other agriculture sectors throughout Africa. This opposition, manifested in campaigns and vocal advocacy, has serious implications for food security in Africa, where most countries remain net importers of vital foods. And with Africa's population expected to more than double by 2030 to more than 2.3 billion people, continued reliance on food imports is not sustainable.

Denying developing countries the ability to undertake land conversion to meet domestic demand for food has contributed to significant hardship. This hardship leads to famine and food price

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inflation due to reliance on imports. The UN has reported that demand for food will increase by more than 70 percent by 2050, requiring expansion of land for, and investment in, agriculture. However, the priorities of development organizations, such as the World Bank, have been focused on a global climate change agenda, which runs contrary to its original development mandate.

The Bank's revised lending framework published in March 2011 limits financial support to companies who have only undertaken costly certification to satisfy the West, imposing a significant burden of auditing practices and operations on producers - a burden that is prohibitively costly for small producers which account for almost 40% of palm oil production in Africa.

Rather than causing environmental destruction as alleged by environmental campaigners and aid agencies, palm oil development brings vital resources to rural communities throughout the continent. Fifteen schools will be built in Liberia along with roads, clinics and hospitals by Malaysian plantation operator Sime Darby, providing vital services and resources to communities to support long-term education and social services. The result will be further integration of rural communities into national economies and society. Even an Anglican diocese in Ghana is investing in its local palm oil plantation in recognition of the sector's potential to increase incomes for farmers and add value to their production. These are just two examples.

While this development is underway, however, climate change negotiators meeting in Durban, will be considering measures that put at risk these developments by attempting to restrict land use in developing countries. The result could lead to greater food insecurity and hunger. Developing countries such as Brazil have already made it clear that they will not bow to international green pressure on their agricultural sector in the negotiations.

While negotiators enjoy the luxuries of green energy in energy poor South Africa and feast on the largesse accompanying international climate change fora, we urge your respective organizations to carry our message on behalf of Africa's poor and hungry that environmental priorities should not undermine Africa's right to food security and prosperity. While no one cares more about Africa's environment than those of us in Africa, ensuring that the needs of all Africans are met must remain a priority of the World Bank and United Nations.

Sincerely and respectfully yours,

John Kane-Berman, South African Institute of Race Relations (South Africa)
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