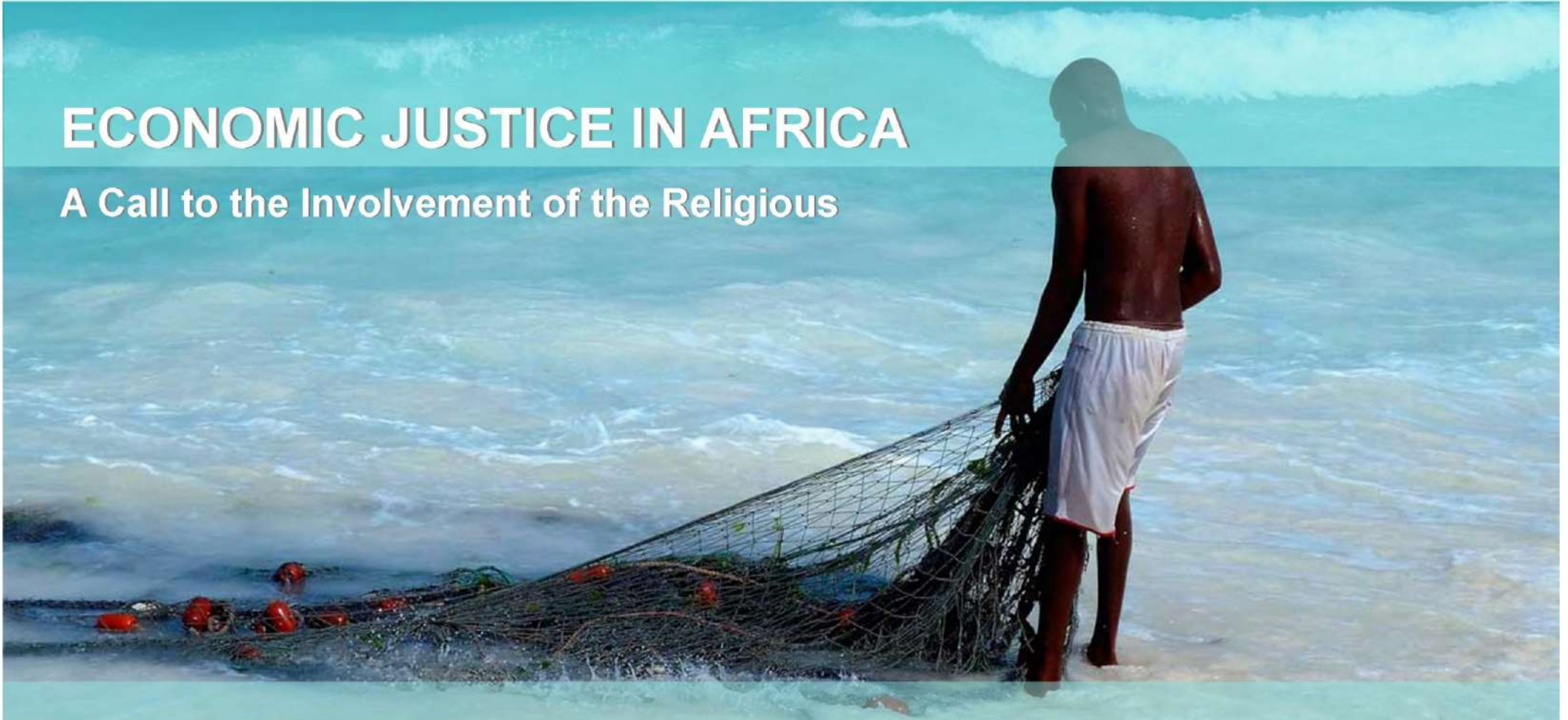




**Africa Europe Faith
and Justice Network**

ECONOMIC JUSTICE IN AFRICA

A Call to the Involvement of the Religious



The Case of the UN Global Corporate Regulation Campaign

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**ADVOCACY
IN AFRICA:
The Way of
AEFJN Antennae**



THE CHALLENGE OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

Sr Mary runs a dispensary located in the sprawling slums of an African city. Every day she visits and treats hundreds of patients, who line up for hours waiting to be cured. She feels good when she can help people heal, and she experiences the joy of the Gospel.

However, over the last few years she has also experienced mounting stress and anxiety: the amount of people who cannot afford treatment keeps on swelling, pathologies are on the increase and raising funds to run the health structure is ever more difficult.

After a particularly challenging working day, she asks herself: “Are we really going to make it next year?”.

Many religious have spent their lives and others are still spending their lives working with rural African communities on different development projects. However, in spite of their human efforts and of mobilizing enormous material resources, the burden of poverty in these communities is still on the increase.

Now let's look at it this way: as an African religious, you work tirelessly to get foreign donor agencies to support your project of a local dispensary to alleviate the health care deficits of a rural community; but do you wonder why is it that your national government is not able to fulfil this and other obligations to her citizens?



- There are intimate connections between the various forms of **poverty** that they want to alleviate and the **national** and **global economic policies**, which support big business at the expense of poor people.
- **Transnational Corporations** (TNCs) that come to Africa cart away African natural resources, grab farmlands and forests reserves, destroy our sacred places, and use our citizens as cheap labour with a lot of promises for rural development and better living conditions for our people without fulfilling these promises.
- Most of them **evade paying their taxes** and it is with these taxes that the African national governments need to build roads, railways, good hospitals, and schools for their citizens.
- Citizens are **not organised to advocate** for economic justice. Yet, there are some **civil society organizations** and **networks** fully committed to contrast TNCs bad practices. And they do need the active involvement of citizens to succeed in restoring human dignity and social justice.





THE IMPORTANCE OF SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network

The realization of the need for systemic change motivated European Religious missionaries of various Congregations working in Africa to found Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN) in 1988.

Through these years, Religious Congregations in Europe have been organizing under the platform of AEFJN to **challenge the exploitative economic relations** between the European Union and Africa.

We are now offering our hand of fellowship to Religious communities in Africa to create **synergy** with us in this **non-violent struggle for economic freedom** and emancipation for the peoples of Africa.

Africans must now be called to drive themselves **systemic change** in Africa. In other words, African Religious communities are now called to be prophetically in the frontline of the endeavour for social transformation.



WHY SHOULD THE RELIGIOUS BE INVOLVED

St. John Paul II believed that the places where decisions are made are the points at which structures of poverty and roots of injustices are planted, hence the presence and active participation of the Religious in the policy making process contributes to avert some of the structures of injustice and poverty (“**sinful structures**”, cf. *Sollicitudo rei socialis* 36).

In the same vein, Pope Francis has denounced the global economic-financial system for its impact on the lives of the poor (“**this economy kills**”, *Evangelii gaudium* 53) called for policy spaces to save humanity from the impending disaster of the collapse of our common home (cf. *Laudato si'*, chapter 5).

In Africa in general, the Religious both command the **respect of decision-makers** and the **trust of rural and urban communities** to embody these calls. African Religious have this unique opportunity to help change structures and institutions that do not support life in Africa. They can have a **significant influence** on policy makers considering that:

- **The Religious are mediators:** they have excellent channels through which communicate with the bishops. Politicians like “go-betweens” who can liaise with the Church hierarchy.
- **The Religious have ‘grassroots’ experience:** that gives them credibility with politicians.
- **The Religious have many contacts:** they can influence public opinion.
- **The Religious vote** and politicians count votes! They respect your views if they know that you are strongly linked to rural communities.



HUMAN DEVELOPMENT and JPIC / ADVOCACY

One day, a group of **picnickers** along a river noticed the bodies of several babies floating down the river. They jumped in to rescue them and noticed even more babies floating down.

They called others to help them, and before long, there was a string of people involved in the rescue operation. As more and more babies appeared in the river, people began organising temporary shelters along the bank.

Medics were called in. Milk and other foods are gathered. Eventually, a team of social workers started to arrange for foster care for those babies healthy enough not to have to go to the hospital for care. Finally, one person started walking upstream along the shore. As babies continue to float down the river, others shouted at the person to stay back and help.

The person turned and answered: “I am going upstream to try to stop whoever or whatever is throwing the babies into the river.”

All the picnickers that were involved in schools, health programs, adoptions homes and so forth, can be said to be involved in **human development actions** while the one who went upstream can be described as taking up **advocacy action** about the same situation. Advocacy and development approaches to social issues are **complementary**, and each Congregation or organization decides on her own approach. However, **AEFJN** is a platform for different Congregations to undertake advocacy initiatives **together for economic justice and systemic change**.

- AEFJN is a faith-based International Network present in Africa and in Europe, promoting economic justice between the European Union and sub-Saharan Africa.
- Networking through our communities and churches we join with other civil society groups at national and international level to advocate for a respectful, compassionate and just world.
- We lobby decision-makers at a national level through our ‘Antenna’ groups and, at European level, through the International Secretariat in Brussels.

AEFJN VISION

- A world where all can enjoy their fair share of the gifts of creation and have the opportunity to fulfil their God-given potential;
- A culture where people, especially the poor, are at the heart of economic and social policy.
- An Africa that can hold its own in its relations with other world powers.

AEFJN VALUES

- Our Christian faith
- Our preferential option for the poor
- Our desire for global justice and a fair share of the gifts or creation for all and specially the people of Africa
- A profound respect for the dignity of each human being
- A concern for fair and just relationships between Africa and Europe and for the global common good





AEFJN ANTENNAE

What is an Antenna?

An Antenna is a group of volunteers, most of the time Religious persons, who monitor the impact of economic policies in their country and advocate at Parliament and national decision making bodies, if possible together with other NGOs with a similar purpose, in order to influence policy making to bring more justice in the relationships between Africa and Europe.

At times, antennae are organized to the level of having a standing Secretariat, which provides the AEFJN International Secretariat in Brussels with first-hand information about the impact of EU policies on the grassroots level so that they can do their lobby work more effectively; and influence their local policies to bring more justice and structural changes fostering sustainable development.

How does it operate?

The Antennae are all working on the Action Plan presented by the Executive Secretariat in Brussels and on items according to their national sensitivity or interest. An Antenna basically operates through networking with other stakeholders (public institutions as well as within civil society) advocating for policy change.



Where can you find ANTENNAE IN AFRICA?

CAMEROON

The Antenna started in 1997 with a group in Yaoundé and another in Maroua. The first commitment was towards the **Chad-Cameroon pipeline**. While many thought the Chad oil would bring prosperity to the region, the Antenna saw the adverse consequences of oil exploitation. After a decline, the Antenna has been revived since 2010 as ***Faith and Justice Cameroon***. Much of its current activity has been centred on **formation** –in both the French and the English zones– of **Religious and lay people** in understanding and combating social injustice, especially in the areas of **health and land-grabbing**.

The Antenna has a socio-political observatory ***Africae Munus*** to analyse the situation and unveil the causes of injustice. Working with the International Secretariat in Brussels, it has also lobbied the EU to prevent a large amount of EU Aid from going to PHP, a major French-owned, banana harvesting company that has taken land from small producers and maintains its workers in appalling working conditions.



KENYA

From 2002 till 2007 the Antenna called ***Catholic Economic Justice*** (CEJ) worked on economic justice issues.

The campaign ***'Debt is Slavery! Debt is Poverty! Refusing to pay is Justice!'*** extended to all the country with great participation in the Nairobi slums. Together with other religious communities they collected 85.000 postcard signatures. They met with the Minister of Finance, the Debt Management Department and the EU embassies to bring forward the concerns of the people

of Kenya and to explain the objectives of the campaign. The Network asked the screening of the public debt register for illegitimately used loans and to lobby for the cancellation of the illegitimate debts.

NIGERIA

As in most African countries, weak democratic institutions and endemic systemic corruption has made the Government of Nigeria unable to protect her citizens against corporate impunity with her national legislations. The impunity ranges from **water and environmental pollution** of oil companies in the creeks of Niger Delta to massive **land grabbing** of agro-corporations in Edo and Rivers States. The new Antenna of Nigeria accompanies the communities who are struggling against the grabbing of their ancestral land to make way for industrial palm plantations for palm oil export. The communities consider their food system, food sovereignty and biodiversity more important than working for the Trans-national Corporations as labourers. The antenna of Nigeria lobbies her national government to support the UN negotiations on mandatory due diligence for the TNCs as the only viable option left to protect the rural communities against corporate impunity.



CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

The devastation of the civil war, poverty and mistrust among the people are quite noticeable in the country. The confusion has given way to limitless **resource grabbing** and **environmental pollution**. This Antenna since its inception has an interfaith and **ecumenical nature**, bringing together Christians (Catholics and other Christian traditions) and Muslims. The structure of the Antenna is designed not only for the struggle against resource grabbing and economic exploitation but also an instrument for **peace building**.



JOIN OR START AN ANTENNA IN AFRICA!

Starting an Antenna is simple, you just need passion for justice and the capacity of taking responsibility for it! You may consider the following steps:

- **Identify a generative theme** related to economic justice that profoundly provokes you and the public. A “generative theme” is such because it generates strong emotions in people.
- **Form a group** of concerned pastoral agents, willing to engage issues of economic justice. Your generative theme would be a good starting point for motivating them and get the group organised.
- To form and launch the group, it often helps identifying a **practical issue** that the group really cares about and resolves to redress.
- **Sensitise** your communities and **seek endorsement** from them and your leaders.
- **Research** on the selected issue, gather facts and testimonies, identify other groups, organizations and networks dealing with the same issue. It is important not to “reinvent the wheel”, but to link up with what is already being done.

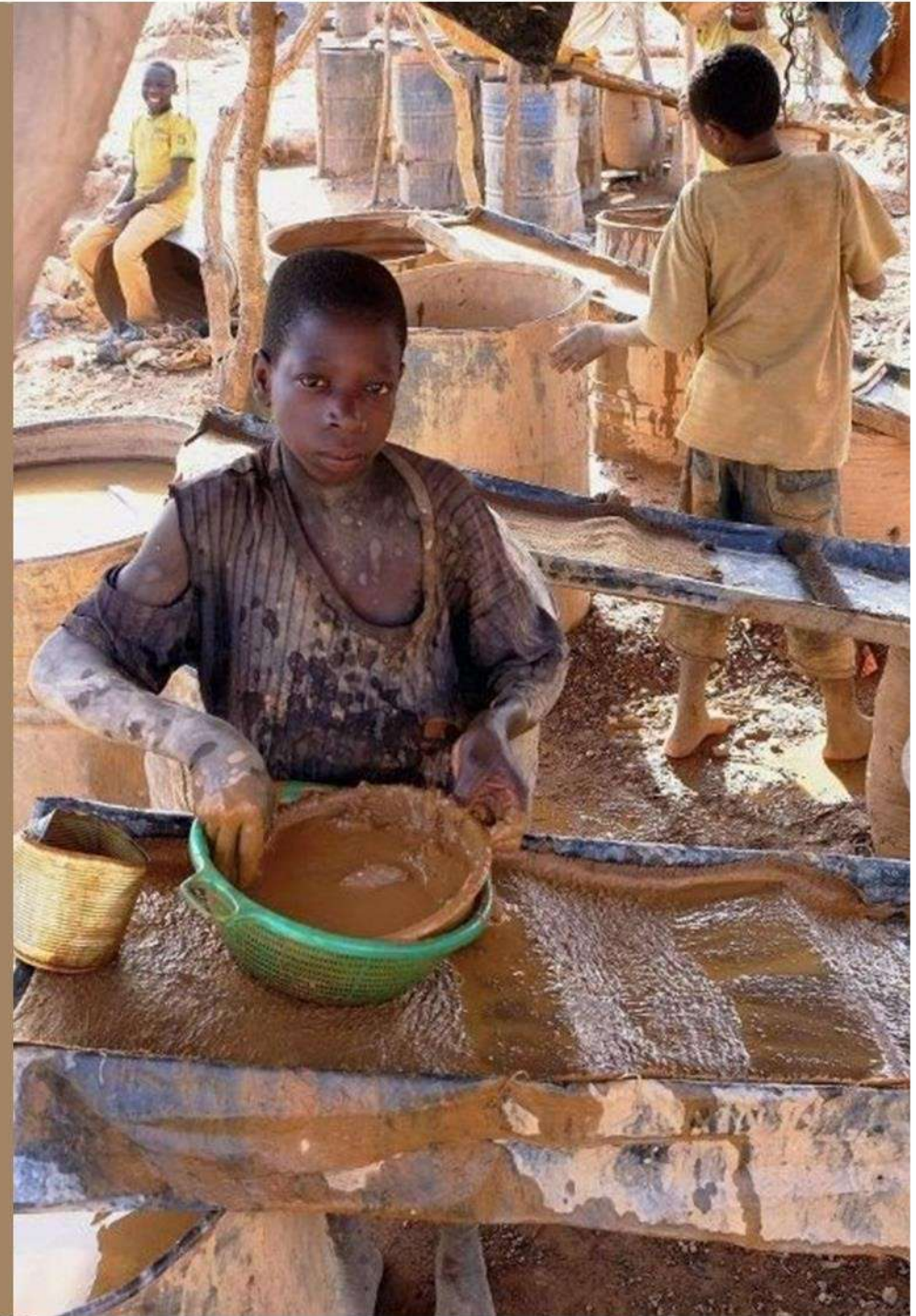
- **Raise awareness** about the issue among Christian Communities and accompany them along the process of discernment about how to respond to the situation. You may use the methodology of the Pastoral Cycle to develop your ministry (download the training module from: <http://aefjn.org/en/publications/>)
- **Network** with the local Church and promote **policy change** at national level, involving friends, volunteers and their competences.

If you wish to join or start an Antenna in Africa, contact the International Secretariat in Brussels:

AEFJN International Secretariat
174, rue Joseph II
B – 1000 Brussels
Belgium
Email: aefjn@aefjn.org



THE TREATY ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS



THE IMPACT ON AFRICA of Transnational Corporations

The activities carried out in recent decades by multinationals have had a particularly negative impact Africa in several areas.

First of all, these gigantic companies operating in the most varied economic sectors are taking advantage of the **weak democratic apparatus** of African countries. Secondly, the democratic apparatus is also infested with **corruption** that safeguards corporate interests rather than those of civil society.

Irresponsible companies have long been involved in abuses of various kinds: **tax evasion** that could be used to build and support public services such as hospitals or schools; soil, water and air **pollution**; complicity in serious violations of human rights worldwide, such as forced labour and **child labour**.

In addition, when environmental or social standards jeopardise the profits, there is clear evidence that in some cases the Transnational Corporations **threaten** States to take **legal action**, using the mechanism of investor-state dispute resolution (ISDS).



TREATY ON TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS AND THEIR SUPPLY CHAINS WITH REGARD TO HUMAN RIGHTS

TREATY TEXT PROPOSAL

GLOBAL CAMPAIGN TO RECLAIM PEOPLES SOVEREIGNTY,
DISMANTLE CORPORATE POWER AND STOP IMPUNITY

OCTOBER 2017 EDITION

ON OCCASION OF THE 3rd SESSION OF THE OEIGWG - GENEVA



THE NEED FOR A BINDING REGULATION

The United Nation and member States have a unique opportunity take a major step forward is securing an effective and robust legislation that establishes **due diligence obligations** on human rights and the environment for Transnational Corporations, makes it easier to obtain **justice for the victims** of human rights violations and obliges companies to take **responsibility for the damage** caused.

Guidelines and approaches assumed voluntarily fail to prevent environmental degradation and human rights violations, and to protect people and the Planet. In 2011 the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) unanimously approved the *Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights* (UNGPR), but for victim communities of abuse it has not changed much.

The States have implemented it based only on the goodwill of TNCs, without the possibility of applying any kind of sanctions. In 2014, the UNHRC adopted a resolution establishing an open-ended inter-governmental working group, with a mandate to develop an international instrument legally binding TNCs to the respect of human rights and the environment. But so far we have not seen a substantial and constructive commitment by national Governments.

CATHOLIC BISHOPS SPEAK OUT

In 2020, 110 Catholic Bishops from 33 different countries launched an appeal to establish in international law a binding regulation of TNCs. The legislation should introduce the obligation of **environmental** and **human rights due diligence**, i.e. identifying, assess, stop, prevent and mitigate risks of environmental degradation and human rights

violations along supply chains, and substantially improve the chances of people affected by seeking compensation in national civil courts.

In this way the States would comply with the their obligation to protect citizens from human rights violations perpetrated by TNCs, such as land grabbing, the murder of



human rights defenders, forced and child labour, gender-based violence, and environmental degradation and deforestation.

Accordingly, all states should have a constructive and active participation in the UN negotiations for a legally binding instrument regulating the activities of TNCs under international human rights law. Such a treaty would prevent any country or enterprise from using production models based on the exploitation and destruction of creation in order to improve its own competitiveness on the world market.



MAIN ELEMENTS OF THE TREATY

- The Treaty requires that TNCs carry out preventive due diligence in their supply chain.
- It ensures equal access to justice to victims of human rights abuses and environmental damages perpetrated by TNCs.
- Guarantee the primacy of Human Rights over Trade and Investments agreements.

CIVIL SOCIETY MAIN REQUESTS

- Free and prior informed consent should be included to prevent corporate abuse.
- Business relationship should be covered and not contractual relationships.
- Protection of Human Rights and environmental defenders be assured through specific measures
- Gender issues should be better included, through assessments.
- The reversal of the burden of proof: it should lie on the corporation, and not on the victims. It's crucial as corporations have more means.

HOW TO MOBILISE YOUR NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

The mobilization of the African national governments to participate actively is critical at this point to shape the Treaty for the future of Africa and her peoples. African religious and other Church actors have the opportunity to be the conscience of their national governments. **AEFJN International Secretariat** is positioned to accompany the African Religious to lobby their national governments. Here are some ideas and opportunities for the African religious to be actively engaged in this process.

The Global Inter-parliamentary Network in support of the UN Treaty

Peoples' representatives worldwide support the UN Binding Treaty on Transnational Corporations with respect to Human Rights. They urge states –and regional organisations– to actively engage in this UN process and to work towards an effective and legally binding international instrument on TNCs and other business enterprises with respect to human rights, in order to ensure that people's dignity, as enshrined by universal political, economic, social and cultural rights, is prioritised and guaranteed worldwide over private profits.

Visit <https://bindingtreaty.org/>

1. **Send letters asking your Government to support the process**, but also showing that civil society has been very involved in this process and can provide legal analysis and concrete proposals.¹
2. **Lobby the Conference of Major Superiors** of your country to issue a statement calling on your national government to support the Treaty on corporate regulation.²
3. **Organize and reach out to the Bishops' Conference** for the same.
4. **Document concrete Human and Environmental Rights violations** of TNC Corporations in your country. They are evidences to support the Treaty.³
5. **Identify and lobby your country's delegation** to the session of UN intergovernmental commission on Business and Human Right that hold in Geneva every October on the Treaty.⁴
6. **Be part of the grass root movement linking communities** impacted by resource grabbing. It is called CGLTE (Convergence globale des luttes pour la terre et l'eau).⁵

HOW TO GET THE SUPPORT YOU NEED

END NOTES

- ¹ There is a prototype you can adjust to your particular context. Governments don't necessarily have a lot of capacity to deal with these issues and the AEFJN International Secretariat is connected to a network of legal and technical experts who are readily available to clarify the texts for them and the issues at stake and strengthen their position at the negotiation table.
- ² Send a copy of the statement to the AEFJN Secretariat, Brussels. The Secretariat will use it to pressurize your embassy to the EU and your country's delegation drawing their attention to the voice of rural and voiceless communities that the religious represent.
- ³ If you are in doubt about how to go about it, contact the AEFJN Secretariat, we shall find a local resource person who knows how to do it.
- ⁴ Send us the report of your meeting for a follow up when they arrive in Geneva.
- ⁵ AEFJN is a key actor in this movement which organizes a caravan every two years through the West African region. The caravan gives rural communities the opportunity to speak directly to their decision makers demanding from them support for corporate regulation of TNCs.

= BUILD A CORE GROUP THAT SHARES VALUES AND IDEAS

Start with forming a core group of people who have clear opinions about specific issues of injustice and are ready to work from within the political system for change. This group will carry the most onerous burdens: studying issues, working out strategies, networking, informing, lobbying, mobilising the sympathisers for action, reporting, etc. Such a group needs a realistic plan of action to encourage and support each other, to work as a team and develop expertise in different areas.

= MOBILISE RESOURCES

Nothing is achieved without time, effort and money! Lobbying takes time and costs money! You will need to inform and convince members of your Institute to mobilise them. This requires finance to enable you to travel to meetings with other groups, to be connected to the internet, to meet with communities, to gather campaign materials, circulate information, etc.

= GET YOUR LEADERSHIP ACTIVELY INVOLVED

Discuss your interest in lobbying/advocacy with your General or Provincial leadership teams. Try to get their approval

and also a mandate for the group of those who want to get involved. The leadership of the Province or the institute should be the first to sign on to support an advocacy action. They should also encourage the involvement of all the members of the Congregation.

= INVITE PEOPLE TO JOIN IN

Only a minority of volunteers come forward. Most people are waiting to be asked to join a group or an activity. Being asked gives people a sense of the importance of being needed. We need them, so ask them to participate in an action.

= REPORT ON PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

It is crucial to keep your leadership, supporters and co-workers updated by sending them regular progress reports on actions undertaken and small achievements, as well as any lack of progress.

SOMETHING TO HOLD AT HEART

Many religious men and women have a deep desire to work for justice but only some are interested in politics. Create for them a forum where they can speak their mind freely and where their initiative and creativity can make the most appropriate contribution. But not all are the same:

- The “**system people**” are those who are familiar with their country’s political system. They are the best ones for advocacy work, ready to work for change from within the system.
- The “**sympathisers**” are ready to take part in actions provided their factual bases are convincing and clearly explained to them. They are happy to be involved if the action required does not appear to be too radical or “to rock the boat”.
- The “**prophets**” are those who feel called to pass on the message through radical action: demonstrations, sit-ins, distributing leaflets and even getting arrested! They are a precious gift to our Institutes. Support them and give them the space they need. They are very good to denounce injustice and raise critical awareness.
- The “**opposition people**” are the ones that will refuse to become involved out of principle. They are only a minority, so do not spend too much energy on them as they will only hamper your work.



When spiders unite their webs, they tie a lion

African Proverb

We must restore [the earth to be a home of life in abundance] with justice in mind, ensuring that those who have lived on the land for generations can regain control over its usage.

Indigenous communities must be protected from companies, particularly multinational companies, that “operate in less developed countries in ways they could never do at home” (LS, 51), through the destructive extraction of fossil fuels, minerals, timber and agroindustrial products.

This corporate misconduct is a “new version of colonialism”, one that shamefully exploits poorer countries and communities desperately seeking economic development.

We need to strengthen national and international legislation to regulate the activities of extractive companies and ensure access to justice for those affected.

Pope Francis

Message for the World Day of Prayer
for the Care of Creation

1st September 2020

