

**Press Release**

**Impacts of the security and military situation on agricultural development in Mozambique**

プレスリリース「モザンビークにおける政治状況と軍事活動が農業開発に及ぼす影響」

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<http://www.unac.org.mz/index.php/7-blog/74-os-impactos-da-situacao-politica-e-militar-no-desenvolvimento-da-agricultura-em-mocambique>

(Maputo, 13 February 2014) - The National Union of Mozambican Peasants (known by its Portuguese acronym, UNAC), a social movement fighting to defend the economic, social and cultural rights of Mozambican peasants, repudiates and expresses its deep outrage over the killing and displacement of thousands of comrades and fellow citizens due to the increasing deterioration and worsening of the current security and political situation. UNAC also expresses solidarity with all peasants – women and men alike – and other citizens who are victims of the dangerous situation that faces us now.

Twenty-one years ago, peace was achieved as a result of dialogue, understanding, reconciliation and the expression of a spirit of humanity and fraternity among Mozambicans. Since it began in April 2013, the current crisis has intensified to an alarming level, with political and military tension now threatening the reconciliation process and the consolidation and deepening of the democratic rule of law established in the country 20 years ago after the end of 16 years of war.

Our country is facing diverse negative impacts of this crisis, particularly in the communities, districts and provinces most affected by the military encounters.

Hundreds of thousands of peasant families – including children, women and people with special needs – have been forced to leave their homes, losing their assets and livelihoods. The constant attacks and the military clashes between armed men alleged to belong to the National Resistance of Mozambique (known by its Portuguese acronym, Renamo) and the Mozambican Armed Defence Forces, including security officials and officials of the Rapid Intervention Force, have led to serious social and economic consequences affecting agriculture, education, health, transport and trade.

Many sectors of the Mozambican population including intellectuals, activists, religious and other civil society organizations and individuals have warned about the harmful impacts of a return to war on the political and social stability of the country and have urgently called for the re-establishment of a climate of peace, democracy, development and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The worst political, economical and social effects of the current political and military crisis are being felt in the districts of Machanga, Chibabava, Maringué, Gorongosa, Nhamatanda and Dondo in Sofala; Moatize in Tete; Macossa in Manica; Rapale and Mecuburi in Nampula; Homoine, Funhalouro and Vilanculos

in Inhambane. Many families and citizens living in these districts have been forced to move and are now de facto "internal refugees" of war, though national and international authorities have not recognized them as such.

According to UNAC's sources, there are more than 16 million peasants in Mozambique who depend mainly on agricultural production for their livelihoods. The impacts of the political and military tension threaten to severely affect the growing season 2013/2014, launched by Mr Armando Guebuza, President of the Republic, on November 8, 2013, in Xai-Xai, Gaza Province. This puts both the objectives set out in the Economic and Social Plan of 2014 and the food sovereignty of the Mozambicans at risk.

According to the Mozambican government's projections in the Economic and Social Plan for 2014, total agricultural production is expected to grow 7.1%. Cereal production is expected to be approximately 2.3 millions of tonnes: including 1,679,000 tonnes of maize and 362,000 tonnes of rice. But the country's male and female peasants who produce more than 90% of the national food supply are the most affected by the current war in the country. If this situation continues until March this year, the impact on the growing and harvest season will be disastrous.

According to government data, Sofala – the province most affected by the conflict – produced approximately 1,789,010 tonnes of crops in the 2012/2013 harvest. The average productivity rate was of 2.39 tonnes per hectare, which represents an increase of about 20% compared with the 2010/2011 harvest. Agricultural production in the districts of Nhamatanda, Gorongosa, Marringué, Chibabava, Machanga and Dondo, which are responsible for 50% of the total production in this province, will be impaired this year due to the fact that peasants had to flee their fields or are only partially able to cultivate them due to the climate of uncertainty and the suspension of agricultural extension services.

Based on existing data, UNAC estimates that around 345,000 peasants (approx. 69,000 families) are directly or indirectly affected by the war in the districts of Machanga, Chibabava, Marringué, Gorongosa, Nhamatanda and Dondo in Sofala; Moatize in Tete; Macossa in Manica; Rapale and Mecuburi in Nampula; Homoine, Funhalouro and Vilanculos in Inhambane. These figures refer to refugee families and families whose movement and security is restricted by the climate of war, affecting their agricultural activities.

People's reports and credible sources have confirmed cases of intimidation and harassment of peasants, female and male, by both parties. Peasants have been accused of belonging to or collaborating with one of the parties to the conflict, simply for continuing to live in areas of conflict and carrying out agricultural activities. Many such cases have been reported in the districts of Gorongosa and Chibabava. On the other hand, many peasants have been displaced and housed in precarious accommodation centers without access to adequate housing clean water or food.

The existing climate of war and the consequent infringement of rights, including the right to life, the right to adequate housing, the right to adequate food, the

right to decent work, the right to freedom of movement and to live in any part of the country stands in contrast to the declaration of agriculture as a priority on the continental agenda by African Heads of State and Government (adopted at the 22<sup>nd</sup> African Union Summit on January 30-31 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

This apparent public recognition of agriculture by African leaders will make sense only if a climate of peace prevails in Mozambique, Africa and the world. We as an African country dream of the comprehensive fulfillment and the practical implementation of the Maputo Declaration of 2003 in which States, including Mozambique, committed to increase the budget for agriculture to ten percent of the total. In addition to these pledges to strengthen the agricultural sector, we also highlight the decision of the General Assembly of the United Nations to declare 2014 as the International Year of Family Farming. This supports peasant families in reaffirming their urgent need for peace so that they can continue meeting their essential commitments to the Mozambican people, always guided by the spirit of national reconciliation.

At this critical moment of fear and terror that hovers over peasant families across the country, we, peasant leaders, members and activists of all UNAC, reiterate our solidarity and full and unconditional support to the comrades, who, with courage and determination, have hosted the district unions and fellow refugees in their homes. Moreover, we reaffirm our inalienable commitment to peasant agriculture and to the struggle for the realization of the constitutional rights in defense of life. We remain firm in our fight, oriented and in full accordance with the constitutional provision under which agriculture is the basis of development of our country.

Peasants, female and male, demand from the warring parties an immediate end to hostilities, and the abandoning of armed struggle as the only way to resolve disputes. It is imperative to end all attacks and military clashes that affect the development of sovereign peasant agriculture and the wellbeing of all Mozambicans. Likewise we urge the parties to re-establish mechanism of dialogue which are broad, inclusive, transparent, effective and democratic.

"With shovels in our hands and our feet firmly on the earth, we dream of a better and viable Mozambique, where everyone can feel her/himself to be the sons and daughters of peasants of this land for which we fought and liberated!"

UNAC

A united peasantry will triumph!

Maputo, February13, 2014