



## Economic and Social Council

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**High-level segment: annual ministerial review**

### **Statement submitted by Ethiopian World Federation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council**

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* E/2012/100.



## Statement

The Ethiopian World Federation believes that it is necessary to address the unchecked land grab affecting indigenous peoples worldwide before any realistic discussion can be held on the topic of jobs, decent work and inclusive development in respect of emerging African, Pacific Rim and South American economies. These emerging economies are being pushed from traditional self-sustainable aquatic, agrarian or pastoral-based societies into the global industrial, commercial and technologically based marketplace by an investor-driven motive, forcing indigenous peoples into the instability that comes with capitalism and modern commerce where profit is king.

The supposition that forms the basis of discussion on jobs, decent work and inclusive development is that there is a civilizing and modernizing benefit to moving indigenous populations into commercial and industrial economies. Instead, when you take away access of people to land, you are ensuring them a destiny of impoverishment. Let us be clear that investment is not the same as aid.

The neocolonizing aspect of foreign interests and/or investors being given priority over the lands and water rights of indigenous peoples negatively affects the entire social, economic and political landscape. Only investors win, getting millions of acres of land, rights to the world's last pristine waters and unlimited forced labour at the lowest price.

Which Governments in the "developed" world would allow such disparities in the access and distribution of land and water in their own domains?

It is universally accepted that access to land is the primary antidote to poverty. The poor social and economic conditions of Africans throughout the diaspora, up to this day, are a direct result of the plantation society where enslaved Africans and their progeny were deprived of land rights. These underdeveloped economies are making a 360-degree return to serfdom because of the present land grab by multinationals and multimillionaire foreign investors. In Africa, this is already creating a second-class citizenry based on race, skin colour and lack of wealth, not unlike the experience of descendants of African slaves in the Americas.

For world Powers and international agencies to stand by and ignore these issues is equivalent to enabling the impoverishment of these populations. Most international agencies emphasize that underdeveloped countries need more aid to promote jobs, work and inclusive development. The Ethiopian World Federation disagrees, based on the misuse of much of the aid and cronyism, meaning that the aid hardly ever reaches the ordinary citizen. Interference with the receiving Government's international relations, internal politics and social norms is also at issue. Sovereignty and self-determination must always be respected.

The world cannot afford to regress to the South African apartheid model, in which owners of the land, Africans, needed to have street passes just to move about or risk incarceration.

The international community must develop an internationally accepted set of processes and procedures in the granting and effective monitoring of aid and investments to counter political self-interest and ensure that funds are expended for the maximum benefit of the country's most needy.