

Annex 1

Communiqué of the Southern African Regional Conference on Farm Workers Human Rights and Security.

Introduction

Delegates from seven SADC countries met in Harare to attend the Southern African Regional Conference on Farm Workers Human Rights and Security from the 10th to the 14th of September 2001. The conference noted with concern that:

- Farm workers constituted a significant proportion (10 – 20%) of the population of individual SADC countries, but they continue to be marginalised and excluded from mainstream development throughout the region
- Farm workers constitute the most vulnerable group and live in abject poverty despite their important role to the economic development of the region

In light of the above observations and concerns, the delegates recommended that:

National Governments should ensure that the living and working conditions and security of farm worker communities is acted upon and improved

Weak Labour Legislation

The Conference expressed concern that despite the fact that most SADC countries are party to the International Labour Organisation's conventions to protect all wage employees. There still exist :

- Discriminatory labour laws that marginalise farm workers throughout the region
- Weak legislative and policy provisions that do not protect farm workers

Delegates therefore called upon national Governments and SADC to put in place legislation and policies that protect and benefit Farm Workers.

CITIZENSHIP Rights

The delegates noted with concern that:

The majority of farm workers in the region are third or fourth generation migrants from neighbouring countries and contributed immensely to the economy of their host countries, but they are still considered as foreigners in these countries.

Delegates therefore call on member states to extend citizenship rights to the affected farm workers.

Basic Human Rights

Delegates noted that Farm Workers in all SADC countries do not enjoy the same basic human rights as their counterparts. National Governments consider farm Workers as second class citizens.

Delegates therefore call upon civil society, the Private Sector and other relevant stakeholders to strengthen national and regional bodies in articulating the human rights of farm workers

Women (Female) Farm Workers/dwellers

Delegates noted with concern the vulnerability of female farm workers and called upon Governments, civil society, and the Private Sector to develop programmes, activities and polices to protect the female farm workers from poverty and oppression.

HIV/AIDS

Delegates expressed concern at the extent and impact of HIV/AIDS in the farm communities and the inadequate resources available to these communities

Delegates call upon Governments in the region:

- **to put in place policies, legislation and programmes that provide farm workers and their families with free/ subsidised access to treatment.**
- To sponsor extensive education campaigns on HIV/AIDS in farm communities to influence behaviour and attitude change

Child Labour and Child Abuse

Delegates expressed concern at the increase in the use of child labour and child abuse throughout the region despite the fact that the SADC member states are party to the Charter on the Rights of the Child. Delegates were also concerned about the absence of clear legislation and policies to punish the perpetrators of such acts.

Delegates called upon governments in the region, Labour Federations, civil society and community groups to lobby and advocate for legislation to protect the rights of the child in line with the provisions of the Charter on the Rights of the child.

Globalization and the plight of farm workers

Delegates note with concern the negative impact of globalization caused by some of the agricultural and trade agreements, which have further marginalised the farm-workers. The delegates call upon SADC Governments to develop policies legislation, programs and activities,

that seek to protect and cushion the poor in general and farm-workers in particular against the negative effects of globalization.

Debt Cancellation

Delegates call upon the SADC governments to intensify the campaign for the existing debt cancellation and compensation for colonial injustices and to channel funds towards the improvement of social services infrastructure especially in farm communities.

Xenophobia

Delegates note with concern the growing xenophobia in the region and its effects on farm-workers. Delegates further note that xenophobia runs counter to the principles and ideals of African Renaissance. The delegates call upon all national governments throughout the SADC region to put in place, laws, policies and programs to eliminate all forms of discrimination especially against farm workers. Furthermore delegates call upon the SADC summit to expedite the move for a fully-fledged regional community with SADC citizenship.

Farm Workers and Land Reform

The conference acknowledges the historical injustices in terms of land disposition in the region, and the various governments' attempts to address them. However, delegates note with concern the systematic exclusion of farm workers from the process of land reform and land redistribution. Delegates therefore call upon all SADC governments: to implement transparent and gender sensitive land reform programs and ensure that the farm-workers are considered for resettlement under the land reform programs.

Further more delegates condemn the abuse of farm-workers political, social and economic rights by political parties, governments, and farm owners especially during land redistribution exercises. Delegates call upon all national governments to protect and promote the human rights of farm workers in line with the various international conventions they are party to.

CONCLUSION

Regional Summit

Delegates call for the holding of a regional Summit comprising governments, farm-worker representatives and supporting civic society organizations where issues of the plight of farm-workers could be discussed and governments make undertakings on dealing with the plight of the farm-workers human rights and security.