

# **Mozambique: Statement concerning the peoples' demonstration on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2010**

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## **NO TO VIOLENCE! NO TO REPRESSION! YES TO FOOD SOVEREIGNTY!**

On 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> September, in popular neighbourhoods of Maputo, capital of Mozambique, and in the town of Matola, in the industrial belt of Maputo, there were extremely violent demonstrations and looting of both public and private property by some elements of the population. There was also very violent police aggression, with the regrettable deaths by shooting of a confirmed 13 people, 2 of whom were children.

UNAC, the National Union of Peasant Farmers, condemns both the use of blind repression and lethal force on the part of the forces of law and order, and the unjustifiable destruction by some elements of the population of buildings, vehicles, filling stations and other structures. Furthermore, UNAC profoundly condemns the death of innocent victims, who were in the wrong place at the wrong time. We urge that, in a country where "the rule of law" is established, this situation is NEVER AGAIN repeated.

One of the causes of the popular uprisings is the rise in the price of bread – almost simultaneous with the increase in tariffs of electricity, drinking water and fuel (these last two have risen regularly in recent months). Tension has been mounting for months due to the increase in the cost of living. We lament the fact that, once again, the authorities have not recognised that the demonstrations last week took place.

Although Mozambique is not a producer of wheat, bread has become a daily staple food of thousands of city-dwelling families in the country. Wheat, together with other foodstuffs, is quoted on the world stock markets, and has a very volatile value, subject to speculation, which varies according to fluctuations in the markets. In this case, the rise in the price of wheat on a worldwide scale has been caused by, among other reasons, the reduction in supply from Russia, which has suffered in recent weeks from massive fires which have affected the cereal-producing areas. How is it that forest fires in Russia can have such disastrous consequences for African populations, particularly the people of Mozambique?

If we look at what has recently happened in our country (which will probably be repeated, not just in Mozambique, but in other African countries too, as happened in 2008 for the same reasons, the so-called "hunger riots" following the rise in price for rice in various parts of the continent), it is obvious that "there is something rotten in the kingdom of globalisation". This is highlighted in the fact that once more the so-called "third world" countries are the victims of the crises that the "first world" has caused. Thus our strong doubts whether this really is the model that our "poor countries" should follow.

We at UNAC restate today what we have demanded both at national and international level through Via Campesina: our governments – and the government of Mozambique in particular – must carry

out political commitments in the long term, in order to reconstruct national food economies. The donor countries have very significant impact on the country's budget. We call on the governments of these countries to honour the agreements of Paris and Accra concerning respect for national sovereignty in setting the agenda of our country.

Priority should be given to domestic food production in order to minimize dependence on the international market. Farmers and smallholders should be encouraged, by means of better prices for their products and stable markets, to produce foodstuffs for themselves, for their communities and for their towns. This will mean more investment in family-run agriculture and in small and medium sized businesses to cope with the internal market, together with taking steps to restrict cheap imports of foodstuffs.

UNAC wishes to insist on the term "peasant farming" as opposed to "large scale agriculture for export": peasant farming means that it is based around the rural people, who play a social and cultural role and fight for the production of quality, organic food which suits local food habits and customs, free from speculation on world markets.

UNAC insists on the need to look on peasant farming in a more positive light. Neoliberal politics have gradually been influencing some of us, so we think "peasant farmers only produce enough for subsistence", so "they are not going to help us make the qualitative leap to development, and what we need is for agriculture to become more and more of a business". This is where the paranoia of large scale agriculture or "agribusiness" comes from. Various examples in defence of this argument have been presented to us, which we therefore must follow. This is what is disseminated and implemented in so-called developed countries and others.

What is happening is that one food crisis follows another in a regular pattern, and they are moving in our direction. It is true, however, that the countries which follow this model produce far more than they need, but a large part of their population goes hungry. One commonly cited example of this model is that of our neighbour South Africa. It is common knowledge, however, that millions of people in this country go hungry, even worse in some cases than in our rural areas. And this is where the problem lies.

With the family sector benefitting from incentives and with politics leading to growth - access to credit, land, water, technology, all the infrastructure needed for expansion - they can produce a great deal more, and also, from the outset, contribute to distribution on a large scale. Production and distribution are closely linked. The food producers do not need to be business speculators in order to make a large contribution to sustainable development and Food Sovereignty of the people. This must be thoroughly analysed, as the biggest mistake would be not to learn from mistakes.

What happened last week in Mozambique confirms our view of the struggle: food is not just any commodity. It is unacceptable that a mostly poor population eat or don't eat at the mercy of world markets, when a country like Mozambique has more than sufficient land and resources to ensure food for both the towns and countryside.

We welcome the measures announced by the government of Mozambique on 7<sup>th</sup> September, to curb price rises and calm the mood. However, we ask the government to move forward with sustainable measures in the long term so that those measures already taken are not merely palliative, necessitating a complete review of our country's food system. We also ask the government to improve the mechanisms of collaboration with peasant farmers in government plans for the future.

As UNAC, our duty and our mission is to continue to fight so that all our families in Mozambique, rural and urban, in short, our whole country, achieve Food Sovereignty.

NO TO VIOLENCE! NO TO REPRESSION! YES TO FOOD SOVEREIGNTY!

**United Peasant Farmers Always Win**

Maputo 8<sup>th</sup> September 2010

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