



## AFRICA MUST STOP MORTGAGING NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE NAME OF FDI

*By Simiso Mlevu Posted May 25, 2021 In Front, Press Releases*

THE Centre for Natural Resource Governance joins the rest of the African continent in commemorating Africa Day. The 25<sup>th</sup> of May was set aside to celebrate the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now African Union (AU). The theme for 2021 is Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want”.

The founding fathers of the OAU envisioned integration of the African peoples and economies so as to improve the dignity and wellbeing of the African people. For centuries Africans laboured under successive epochs of domination through slavery and colonialism. African liberation movements, that comprised a determined African mass, ultimately freed Africa from foreign domination and exploitation.

Nevertheless, the African Union as it stands today has proved to be just a Trade Union of African Presidents and monarchs. It is now serving the selfish purpose of maintaining and protecting the seats of incumbent presidents. The African Union is now far detached from the struggles and tribulations of the African people who remain marooned between poverty, corruption, dictatorships and violent conflict. Africa is the poster child of misery and hopelessness in the world.

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Africa and indeed Zimbabwe, has failed to tap into its vast natural resource endowments because of undemocratic governance. The leaders are mortgaging the continent's wealth in the name of attracting Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs). According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, an estimated \$88.6 billion, which is equivalent to 3.7% of Africa's GDP, leaves the continent through illicit capital flight every year. This amount is half the annual financing gap of the continent. Cumulatively this translates to 1 trillion having been lost since 2011. Africa is enduring massive resource depletion; and environmental and social cost of natural resources extraction. It is the biggest contradiction of our time that Africa, the largest supplier of natural resources to the world, is experiencing an exponential rise in the population of people living in extreme poverty. African people are dying prematurely due to a combination of poverty, violent conflicts and climate change effects – all driven by poor governance.

Natural resource extraction is accompanied by gross human rights violations and environmental crimes. Children growing up in resource-rich communities have remote chances of succeeding in life because of the inhuman and violent conditions they are raised in. The Africa We Want must invest Africa's wealth in the African people. We want an African Union that defends the rights of the African people to live in peace and dignity. We demand an African Union that protects African children from predatory and unpatriotic elites that personalize the wealth of their countries at the expense of their citizens, especially children. For Africans to be treated with dignity and respect in the world, they must be treated as such in Africa first.

The laws that govern our natural resources in Africa have remained exotic and colonial, years after gaining independence. Zimbabwe has maintained colonial and oppressive laws which relegate communal people to second class citizens in their own country. The Mines and Minerals Act, specifically designed to protect the interests of capitalists is used to trample on the rights of Zimbabweans. Chilonga in Chiredzi, Dinde and Cross Dete in Hwange rural, Rimbi in Chipinge, Murehwa and Fort Rixon in Insiza are a few of many communities in Zimbabwe that are at risk of forced displacement just to massage and cushion the accounts of capitalists. These communities are deprived of their right to self-determination as enshrined in the African Charter on Human and People's Rights.

We thus call upon the Government of Zimbabwe and the African Union to respect and prioritise the socio-economic development and cultural wellbeing of its citizens.

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