

## **Aspirations and Concerns of Communities along the proposed Lamu Port, South-Sudan, Ethiopia (LAPSSET) Transport Corridor**

*February 15, 2013*

*As communities that have long been disenfranchised, and that are in dire need of development, we commend the Kenyan government for its commitment to upgrading and modernising the country's infrastructure as per the proposed Lamu Port, South-Sudan, Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor outlined in the Government of Kenya's "Vision 2030". We appreciate the need for connecting communities along the northern corridor to facilitate national and international trade. However, we are deeply concerned by the lack of community consultation and transparency in the implementation of the project and hereby wish to express our concerns.*

Almost a year ago on March 2, 2012, President Mwai Kibaki held a ground breaking ceremony for the Lamu port with Presidents Silva Kir of South Sudan and the late Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi prior to community consultation, an environmental impact assessment, and compensation of affected communities. About one week ago on February 8, 2013, the Hon. President officially commissioned the construction of the Isiolo International Airport amidst conflict over land. The planned commissioning of the construction of the three berths in Lamu is now planned at the end of February, and we hope history will not repeat itself again.

It was not until the Lamu community demanded their rights a year ago by seeking legal redress in the Kenyan Court, that the Government made its first attempts to involve them by forming a Lamu Port Steering Committee a week after the community went to court, developed a resettlement action plan only a month ago, and initiating an environmental impact assessment (EIA) of the three berths. While we commend the efforts the Government has taken in listening to some of the concerns of the people, we are not satisfied in the pace at which the project is being rushed before comprehensive consultation and the initiation of mitigation measures. This is evidenced by the fact that even before the EIA for the three berths in Lamu has been gazetted by the National Environmental Management Authority and 30 day review period mandated by law, tenders for the three berths were announced in December 2012, and now the Hon. Mwai Kibaki plans to commission the construction of the port by the end of the month, contrary to the Environmental Management and Coordination Act.

The multibillion-dollar LAPSSET project will cut across communal lands in Lamu, Tana, Garissa, Isiolo, Meru, Samburu, Baringo, Marsabit and Turkana Counties. The LAPSSET region is endowed with rich biodiversity ranging from the desert savannahs of the Lake Turkana on the far north, to the marine life around Lamu town on the south, both UNESCO World Heritage Sites. A majority of the communities in the region still depend on nature-based livelihoods such as: pastoralism, fishing, mangrove cutting, hunting and gathering, farming, and eco-tourism. Considering the ecological and cultural uniqueness of the region, the failure of the government to assess the strategic environmental assessment (SEA) of the entire LAPSSET project reflects a disregard the rights of not only the people along LAPSSET corridor, but Kenyans as a whole to have a sustainable and green economy.

While not against development of infrastructure of the region, we cannot condone the violation of our laws and constitution as the project is hastened. LAPSSET is a major and critical national project belonging to the Kenyan people and not simply a Government project. As such, we find the lack of information and transparency on the financing and implementation plan of the project to be rather disconcerting and questionable. Furthermore, LAPSSET projects cannot be considered in isolation to one another and implemented without consideration of the cumulative effects of the smaller projects. As such, we reiterate that a comprehensive plan on LAPSSET Corridor and a strategic environmental assessment and environmental management plan that takes into accounts

best-practices and sustainable standards is required so as balance the needs of biodiversity, communities, and our national economy.

As communities across Kenya, connected by the LAPSSET Corridor, we speak in one voice to call upon the Government of Kenya to hear our concerns. We ask that in the spirit of devolved government, the Hon President Mwai Kibaki halt all tendering, financing, and construction activities related to LAPSSET until our new government is in place to put in remedial measures to deal with the pending land, environmental, and social issues of the project. His failure to do so, and rush to launch the projects just weeks before the general elections, could be translated as an attempt to maintain the status quo while still in power before we can express our constitutional right to elect the leaders we see fit to guide our respective Counties into “Vision 2030”. We also would like to invite dialogue between the government of Kenya and the communities along LAPSSET Corridor to ensure we work towards this joint vision of a sustainable, transparent, green and efficient Northern Corridor.

**This statement has been submitted by:**

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Friends of Lake Turkana, Lodwar

Indigenous Movement for Peace Advancement and conflict Transformation (IMPACT)

Kivulini Trust, Marsabit

Lokichoggio Peace Organization (LOPEO)

Pastoralist Development Network

Samburu Women Trust, Laikipia

Save Lamu, Lamu

Tana Development Network, Tana

Turkana Youth Coordinating Committee, Lodwar

Waso Trust, Isiolo

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