

Malawi Confederation of Chambers of Commerce & Industry (MCCCI), Tea Association of Malawi and Interlaken Group have been chosen to spearhead the establishment of a platform where Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Companies will discuss community land rights issues as a way of reducing conflicts between local communities and investors.

This was agreed at a Land-Based Investments and Community Rights informational workshop on Customary Land Act held in Lilongwe recently organized by the Interlaken Group (IG).

The Interlaken Group is a network of stakeholders whose aim is to expand and leverage private sector action to secure community land rights.

The Group noted that there is need for a multi stakeholder dialogue to enhance collaboration and ensure tailored strategies to address land tenure risks and reduce tenure-driven conflicts.

Said IG: "Tensions between local communities and investors pose significant risks to local communities, companies and their investors and risk frustrating government's objectives for sustainable development,"

The workshop oriented participants with the new Customary Land Act and its enabling legislation with an emphasis on implications for investors and communities.

"The new Customary Land Act promotes tenure reforms that guarantees security of tenure. As such land-based investments are expected to be profitable for companies, respect land rights of communities and enhance relationship with communities,"

Participants at the workshop noted, long term investment but with limited tenure, unavailability of patient capital vis a vis long term investment and start-ups- years of costs before income as some of the land related risks to investors.

They also bemoaned long lead time where companies have to work with communities before they can start investing hence increasing costs, compromise investment viability, delay projects and cause reputational damage to investors.