

Final declaration of International Conference on Peasants' Rights

In the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we peasants demand our own convention

Jakarta, 24 June 2008

We, the delegates of the small farmers, women and men, of the International movement La Via Campesina, coming from 26 different countries attended from 20 to 24 of June 2008 the International Conference on Peasant Rights in Jakarta, Indonesia. After seven years of intense discussions on the content and strategies, our spirits are high and full of confidence that we will achieve a UN convention on peasant rights. This convention will be one cornerstone to sustainable life for all human beings in our planet.

We peasants, women and men, landless people, agricultural workers, small –and medium-scale farmers, indigenous people and rural youth, represent almost half of the world population and are the backbone of the food systems. The food crisis shows us the massive and systematic violations of peasant rights.

We are being increasingly and violently expelled from our lands and alienated from our sources of livelihoods. Mega development projects such as big plantations for agro-fuels, large dams, infrastructure projects, industrial expansion, extractive industry and tourism have forcibly displaced our communities, and destroyed our lives. Many armed conflicts and wars are occurring in rural areas. Land grabbing and destruction of harvest are often being used as weapon against civilian rural population.

We can not earn an income which allows us to live in dignity. A mix of national policies and international framework conditions are responsible for driving us to extinction. Noteworthy among these policies are the processes of privatization of land, which have led to a re-concentration of land ownership; the dismantling of rural public services and those that supported production and commercialization by small and medium producers; the fostering of highly capitalized and high-inputs agro-exportation; the push toward the liberalization of agricultural trade and toward policies of food security based on international commerce.

In many countries, we are losing our seeds at great speed, our agricultural knowledge is disappearing and we are being forced to buy seeds from TNCs in order to increase their profits. These companies are creating GMOs and mono culture crops with the loss of many species and biodiversity in general.

In addition, we women peasants suffer from double marginalization: as peasants and as women. The responsibility of looking after the family is in our hands and the shortage and uncertainty of health care and education for the children make us work long hours for low wages. Women who work as laborers in the fields are being forced to use chemical fertilizers and are therefore at high risk for their health.

Moreover, violent oppression is a daily experience for us. Thousands of peasant leaders are arbitrarily arrested, detained, terrorized, tortured, killed and being criminalized because they were fighting for their rights. We women peasants also suffer violence at the hands of our husbands, partners, or employers. Such violence can be physical or mental and even life

threatening.

We have inherited a long history of peasants' struggles defending our rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the main human rights treaties are important instruments in our contemporary struggles. Nevertheless, we feel as other oppressed groups such as indigenous peoples, and women, that time has come to fully spell out our distinct individual and collective rights. It is time for food sovereignty. There are major gaps in the interpretation and implementation of the main human rights treaties when applied to peasants. Moreover, we face patterns of violations of our rights, by the crimes committed by TNCs and by Free-Trade Agreements (FTAs). In order to address these patterns of violations, we need specific provisions and mechanisms to fully protect our rights.

A future Convention on Peasant Rights will contain the values of the rights of peasants—and should particularly strengthen the rights of women peasants—which will have to be respected, protected and fulfilled by governments and international institutions.

For that purpose, we commit ourselves to develop a multi-level strategy working simultaneously at the national, regional and international level for raising awareness, mobilizing support and building alliances with not only peasants, but rural workers, migrant workers, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, fisher folks, environmentalists, women, legal experts, human rights, youth, faith-based, urban and consumers organizations as well.

We will also seek the support of governments, parliaments and human rights institutions for developing the convention on peasant rights. We call FAO and IFAD to uphold their mandates by contributing to the protection of peasant rights. We ask FAO's department of legal affairs to compile all FAO instruments protecting peasant rights as a first step towards this purpose. We will bring our declaration on peasant rights to the UN Human Rights Council.

In the light of the threats posed by the current neoliberal-capitalist attack on local food systems and peasants, we call on all the people to join hands for the sake of humankind.

We call all our members and allies to rallying for our Convention on Peasant Rights the next 10th of December, on the 60th anniversary of the UDHR.

Globalize the struggle, Globalize the hope!