



## **The Viotá Declaration of the Global Network for the Right to Food and Nutrition**

Global Meeting

Raúl Valbuena Peasant School – “María Cano” Latin American Agroecology Institute

Viotá, Cundinamarca, Colombia, May 28 – 31, 2017

We, the member organizations and friends of the Global Network for the Right to Food and Nutrition representing social movements, indigenous peoples and other civil society organizations met in Viotá for our fourth global meeting.<sup>1</sup>

We are grateful to FENSAUGRO, FIAN Colombia and to the social organizations and peasant movements for welcoming us to Viotá, in the department of Cundinamarca. We are very concerned about the violations of human rights, the criminalization of the peasant way of life, indigenous peoples, activists, and human rights defenders. And so, as Global Network, we commit to monitor and support the Colombian peace process which is a guarantee of the human right to adequate food and nutrition for the Colombian people and represents a yearning for peace for all social movements and indigenous peoples around the world.

We are meeting during a moment in which we are confronted by a constant and systemic violation of our rights to land, forests, water, other natural resources and livelihoods. We take note of the urgent need to confront the forced displacement, dispossession and emigration of peasants, indigenous peoples, fisherfolk, pastoralists and nomads and impacted by conflicts and instability, urbanization, grabbing of natural resources, including land, forests, oceans, rivers, lakes, lagoons, seeds and local animal genetic resources.

We are troubled about the negative impacts of mining and extractive industries, which in addition to vast displacement of communities is causing irreversible ecodestruction and pollution.

We are especially concerned that women, who are largely responsible for feeding the world, continue to live with violence, both physical and structural, having their rights continually violated in multiple forms simply because she is a woman.

With much indignation, we denounce the proliferation of corporate food systems that result in the erosion of food sovereignty, peasants’ rights and the right to food and nutrition as well as the peoples’ self-determination to cultivate, trade and consume their own food and breastfeed their children, which leads to hunger and malnutrition. We denounce the aggressive advertising of ultra-processed foods, breastmilk substitutes and sugar-laden beverages by corporations, which are responsible for putting the well-being of communities at risk.

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<sup>1</sup> The launch of the Global Network took place in Vienna in June 2013; the second global meeting in Kathmandu, Nepal, in July 2015, and the third in April 2016 in Dakar, Senegal.

We recognize that the practice of breastfeeding, which is the first act of food sovereignty, but is threatened by insufficient protection, promotion and support, including the inadequate implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes.

We recognize and value the food and resources produced from the work of pastoralist and nomadic peoples including the dairy, meat and fibers, and the need to respect and protect the pastoralist corridors that are fundamental to these peoples' lives and livelihoods.

We are concerned about the trend towards multi-stakeholder partnerships, such as Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN), which propose the involvement of food and related industries in programs and planning for food and nutrition issues, with no adequate conflict of interest safeguards. While many now acknowledge that governments, as duty bearers, must take the lead in policy making, in practice, the involvement of powerful industries alongside the pressure to reach consensus, undermines states' abilities to protect children's rights, to act in the best interest of the people, and address malnutrition in all its forms.

We reaffirm the primacy of human rights and their indivisibility, interdependence and universality. Among them, as a Network, we highlight the human right to food and adequate nutrition and the right of people to struggle for food sovereignty, and to have control and management over their natural resources, and to propel forward policies from the grassroots in the areas of food production, nutrition and the environment, including agrarian reform processes. In our vision, agroecology is the only path to develop policies and practices at the intersection of these three areas that defend Mother Earth or *Nabba*, as it is known among the Guna people.

We support the efforts by civil society and some governments to enshrine and uphold the right to food and nutrition within legal and institutional reforms on national and international levels; however, we are witnessing the shrinking support for human rights as a universal normative standard, within the broader context of the erosion of people's sovereignty. The ongoing regression of human rights commitments by States and in international institutions, and the weak language in international policy processes on climate change and development, further deteriorate the normative framework for policy, as well as the realization of the right to food and nutrition and related rights.

We emphasize that hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition exist in every part of the world – from the refugee camps in Western Sahara to the mountains of Oaxaca, from the rural plains of the Mid-West in the United States to the *barrios* of Spanish cities, from the tribal lands in North Dakota to the Guna Yala territories in Panama and Colombia. We condemn the limited approach of some national and international institutions which address hunger, malnutrition and other violations of the right to food and nutrition through technical solutions, charity or food aid, instead of tackling their structural causes in a holistic manner with the full participation of rights holders.

We recognize that food aid is at times of crisis and during an emergency an appropriate and necessary solution to prevent impacted communities from starving on the short term. But food aid is no longer used as an emergency measure -- it has become a core strategy to address chronic hunger spanning over generations. The dependency on food aid allows governments to rationalize the need for and support

science to develop technological fixes to food production and malnutrition, which leads to the proliferation of corporate consolidation, influence and wealth, and the widening chasm between the rich and the poor.

We denounce corporate concentration and all forms of colonialism and occupation, in whatever form they manifest, invading the land and seas of our people and our diets. These practices must be monitored and we demand that states, as duty bearers, use the legal mechanisms at their disposal to fulfill their human rights obligations, including the obligation to regulate corporations. We are rights holders, not merely “interested parties”, and as such we demand an end to the impunity of those who violate and abuse human rights. The rights of people must come before the interests of corporations.

We struggle for the dignity and freedom of people living under state occupation, such as our friends suffering in Western Sahara - the last colony in Africa - or whose rights are abused as a result of corporate interests/activities, like in the case of the POSCO mining project in India. The ongoing displacement and dispossession of people has resulted in a profound refugee and migrant crisis that impacts the rights of millions of persons who lack protection for their basic human rights, including the right to food and nutrition, and live in increasingly long-term precarity.

We are fighting for the full realization of women’s rights. Defending and promoting these rights requires a special emphasis. Women struggle against patriarchy in each aspect of their lives including sexuality, fertility and protecting the self-determination of their bodies. The structural violence against women includes gender inequity which must be overcome so that women can be a full participant and genuinely and fully participate in inclusive and democratic decision making. This is also applicable to the traditional systems which guarantee women’s access to and control over land, cattle and water. The organizations and movements present here are strongly committed to this effort and to feminism as the necessary path to equity.

We believe that this shared analysis by the organizations and movements meeting in Viotá is fundamental to converge and strengthen our individual struggles and develop common principles for the coordinated efforts to realize and defend the right to food and nutrition.

Therefore, the organizations and movements participating in this meeting reaffirm our commitment to:

- Reaffirm our commitment to the struggle against the grabbing of natural resources, including land, forests, oceans, rivers, lakes, lagoons, seeds, and local animal genetic resources. We prioritize our support to the process of developing the Declaration the Rights of Peasants that is a part of the United Nations framework in Geneva.
- Support and demand protection for the people who are defending our human rights from the repression, violence and criminalization to which they are often subjected.
- Defend and strengthen human rights systems at international, regional and national levels, and reinforce the state’s obligation to protect, respect and fulfill human rights, upholding the principles of nondiscrimination and non-regression. States obligations go beyond their national

borders: they have the obligation to cooperate internationally and guarantee human rights extraterritorially.

- Mobilize Network member and allied organizations to strengthen accountability for human rights and the application of legal frameworks for human rights at the local, national, regional and international levels.
- Promote the right to food and nutrition and food sovereignty as critical components to peace building and transitional justice processes.
- Take advantage of the presence of Network members in all global spaces related to the right to food and nutrition, including in the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the Committee on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and introduce the proposals of this declaration in national and regional workshops and meetings in which we participate.
- Further the development of feminism and our work on women's rights
- Strengthen alliances in the struggle for climate justice
- Denounce all false solutions to hunger and malnutrition, as they are a violation of the human right to food and nutrition.
- Reiterate that a mother remains fully sovereign over her own body, and has a right to decide how to feed her baby, based on adequate and accurate information free of conflicts of interest; emphasize that states have a duty to ensure that mothers do not face obstacles to exclusive breastfeeding for up to six months and continued breastfeeding for two years and beyond alongside culturally acceptable and nutritious complementary foods
- Improve the communication and the exchange of experiences between Network members to strengthen the Network and make the work more visible, including experiences of advocacy and popular autonomy. Work towards a convergence of activities on the part of the members of the Network in order to use and build our collective strength and avoid duplication of efforts.

In the face of a perverse system that violates, displaces, and pushes us aside, pretending that we are invisible, today in Viotá we reaffirm our strong commitment to the defense of people, groups and communities<sup>2</sup> that suffer from human rights violations, as well as our conviction that only through the human rights approach and collective force, with principles such as the sovereignty of people, solidarity, equity or justice, can we reach a world in which all people on the planet can realize their human right to adequate food and nutrition.

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<sup>2</sup> See Kathmandu Declaration of the Global Network for the Right to adequate Food and Nutrition for the list of marginalized groups at: <http://www.righttofoodandnutrition.org/node/23>