

Final Declaration: "Land, Territory and Dignity" Forum

Porto Alegre – 6-9 March 2006

For a new agrarian reform based on food sovereignty!

We are representatives of organizations of peasants, family farmers, indigenous peoples, landless peoples, artisanal fisherfolk, rural workers, migrants, pastoralists, forest communities, rural women, rural youth, and defenders of human rights, rural development, the environment, and others. We come from the whole world, to participate in the "Land, Territory and Dignity," to defend our land, our territory, and our dignity.

States and the international system have not been capable of defeating poverty and hunger in the world. We reiterate our call to our governments, to the FAO (with its founding mandate), to the other institutions of the United Nations system, and to the other actors who will be present in the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD), and on our societies, to decisively commit themselves to carrying out a New Agrarian Reform based on Food Sovereignty, Territory dignity of the Peoples, and which guarantees us, as peasants, family farmers, indigenous peoples, communities of artisanal fisherfolk, pastoralists, landless peoples, rural workers, afro-descendants, unemployed workers, Dalit communities and other rural communities, the effective access and control over the natural and productive resources that we need to truly realize our human rights.

We call on the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD), the States, and FAO to assume a real political will that defeats the hunger and poverty from which millions of the men and women in the world suffer. If this conference does not recognize the demands of the Parallel Forum, it cannot be considered a success.

Food Sovereignty and Agrarian Reform

The new agrarian reform must recognize the socio-environmental function of land, the sea, and natural resources, in the context of food sovereignty, to which should commit at the highest level of will. We understand that food sovereignty implies policies of redistribution, equitable access and control over natural and productive resources (credit, appropriate technology, etc.), by peasants, indigenous peoples, communities of artisanal fisherfolk, pastoralists, unemployed workers, Dalit communities, afro-descendant communities and other rural communities; rural development policies based on agroecological strategies centered on peasant and family agricultural and artisanal fishing; trade policies against dumping and in favor of peasant and indigenous production for local, regional and national markets; and complementary public sector policies like health care, education and infrastructure for the countryside.

The use of natural resources should first of all be at the service of food production. The new agrarian reform must be a high priority of the public agenda. In the context of food sovereignty, agrarian reform benefits all of society, providing healthy, accessible and culturally appropriate food, and social justice. Agrarian reform can put an end to the massive and forced rural exodus from the countryside to the city, which has made cities grow at unsustainable rates and under inhuman conditions; would help provide a life with dignity for all members of our

societies; would open the way toward a more broad-based and inclusive local, regional and national economic development, that benefits the majority of the population; and could put an end to unsustainable practices of intensive monoculture that make wasteful use of water and poison our land and water with chemicals, and of industrial fishing that over-exploits and exhausts our fishing grounds and leaves the sea without life. For all these reasons, agrarian reform is not just needed in the so-called "developing countries," but also in Northern, so-called "developed" countries. Food sovereignty is based on the human rights to food, to self-determination, on indigenous rights to territory, and on the rights of rural peoples to produce food for local and national markets. Food sovereignty defends agriculture with farmers, fisheries with artisanal fishing families, forestry with forest communities, and steppes with nomadic pastoralists...

Furthermore, agrarian reform should guarantee rights to education, to healthcare, to housing, to social security and to recreation. Agrarian reform should assure the creation of the spaces of life where we maintain our culture, to provide a home to children and youth, so that our communities can develop in their full diversity and so we can construct a citizenry on the basis of our relationship to the land, the sea, the forests....

Role of the State

The State must play a strong role in policies of agrarian reform and food production. The State must apply policies that recognize rights and democratize access to land, to coastal areas, forests, etc., in cases where access to these resources concentrated in the hands of a few.

Furthermore, the State should guarantee community control over natural resources by peasants, fisherfolk, pastoralist, and forest communities, and by indigenous peoples, so that they can continue to live and work in the countryside and on the coasts by means of collective and community rights. Agrarian reform should create productive occupations, jobs with dignity and strengthen the rights of rural workers. States have the right and the obligation to sovereignty define, without external conditions, their own agrarian, agricultural, fishing and food policies in such a way as to guarantee the right to food and the other economic, social and cultural rights of the entire population. The small-scale producers must have access to credit at low interest rates and adapted to local conditions, and to fair prices and market conditions. Research and systems of support for collection of harvests and distributing them to local and regional markets must have strong state support and must work for the common good.

Recognition of the Concept of Territory

No agrarian reform is acceptable that is based only on land distribution. We believe that the new agrarian reform must include a cosmic vision of the territories of communities of peasants, the landless, indigenous peoples, rural workers, fisherfolk, nomadic pastoralists, tribes, afrodescendants, ethnic minorities, and displaced peoples, who base their work on the production of food and who maintain a relationship of respect and harmony with Mother Earth and with the oceans.

All of the original peoples, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, tribes, fisherfolk, rural workers, peasants, the landless, nomadic pastoralists and displaced peoples, have the right maintain their own spiritual and material relationships; to possess, develop, control, use and reconstruct their social structures; to politically and socially administer their lands and territories, including their full environment, the air, water, seas, rivers, lakes, ice floes, flora,

fauna and other resources that they have traditionally possessed, occupied and/or utilized. This implies the recognition of their laws, traditions, customs, tenure systems, and institutions, as well as the recognition of territorial borders and the cultures of peoples. This all constitutes the recognition of the self-determination and autonomy of peoples.

The expression of gender and youth in the struggle for agrarian reform

We recognize the fundamental role of women in agriculture and fishing and in the use and management of natural resources. There can be no genuine agrarian reform without gender equity. Therefore we demand and we commit ourselves to ensuring that women receive full equality of opportunities and rights to land and natural resources, recognize their diversity, and that past discrimination against rural women and the social disadvantages have faced be redressed. We also recognize that without young people who stay in the countryside there is no future for our societies. The new agrarian reform must give priority both to women's rights and to guaranteeing a future with dignity for today's rural youth.

Women and youth in rural areas are demanding equal living standards and environmental, economic, and culturally-sustainable policies. We must be involved in the decision-making processes that serve our needs. As such, we demand that governments honor their commitments and obligations that they assumed in various international conferences such as the Beijing Conference and the World Conference on Racism. In particular, their commitments to gender equality and racial diversity that are upheld in the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Peasant Letter that was adopted in the World Conference On Agrarian Reform and Rural Development. We demand the implementation of a redistributive agrarian reform that provides access and jurisdiction to women and youth in the decision-making structures on all levels – local, national, and international. A prerequisite is the ability to count on adequate financial resources for the political education, technical training, and training in sexual and reproductive health for youth.

The privatization of natural and technological resources has increased social inequality between men and women, ethnic groups, castes, classes, and generation. These state policies are perpetuating the displacement, persecution, and criminalization of these already-marginalized groups.

No to the Privatization of the Seas and the Land, Counter-Agrarian Reforms, Neoliberal Policies of the World Bank on Land and Access to Resources, and the Dominant Model of Production and Development

Together with the privatization of land and coastal areas we are seeing the privation of biodiversity. Life is not a commodity.

We will continue to resist the neoliberal policies implemented by our government and imposed by the World Bank, the WTO and other actors, and implemented by our governments, with all our ability. We reject the approach to privatize agrarian reform. We consider that it is illegitimate. It is the people and not the World Bank who should decide agrarian, fishing, and food policies. Privatizing means plundering the formal and traditional rights over their lands, territories, coastal zones, and natural resources. For this reason we oppose the policies of land administration with intentions of privatization, the policies of decollectivization, markets for buying, selling and renting of lands, the privatization of water, the sea, seeds, forests, fishing areas, and other resources, as well as extension services, credit public sector support for

peasant production, and the marketing of their products. We roundly oppose the introduction of transgenic seeds and the suicide or "terminator" seed technology that expropriates control over seeds from our rural communities and transfers it to a handful of transnational corporations.

By the same token, we will continue to resist the dominant model of production and development, with its processes of neoliberal globalization and recolonization, the transformation and insertion of farming, fishing and forestry into the production chains of transnational corporations, industrial agriculture, forestry and current fisheries practices (contract production, export monocultures, plantations, big-boat fishing, biofuels, genetic engineering and GMOs, nanotechnology,.). Investments in mining, agro-exports, mega-projects, biopiracy, and green neoliberalism destroy our territories, our agriculture and fishing and cause the displacement of rural "reconstruction" after natural disasters and wars, , and the trade and financial policies that drive further exodus and destruction in the countryside (WTO, FTAs, CAP, EPA, Farm Bill, International Financial Flows, etc.).

Agrarian policies that finance agricultural and fishing exports through dumping should be substituted by other policies that carry out food sovereignty and respect the endogenous development of peoples.

We recognize and value the initiatives such as ALBA for regional integration and the exercise of food sovereignty in whose context agrarian reform and rural development are and must be an integral part.

Criminalization and repression of social movements.

We raise our voices to repudiate and condemn the repression that we face, that any person who fights for agrarian reform faces, in almost all countries—in the Americas as in Asia, in Europe, in Africa. We denounce the militarization and military occupation that displaces our peoples from our territories, the so-called "war against terrorism" that serves as a pretext to repress us, and the criminalization (labeling us as "criminals") of our movements. To fight for our rights and dignity is an obligation; and it is our human right to do so.

We demand that the States establish mechanisms for protection of life and security of persons who are threatened by the processes of the struggle for land, water, the seas, and natural resources. They must guarantee effective legal mechanisms for punishing those who are guilty of such crimes.

Land Occupations, and the Recovery and Defense of Territories. Social mobilization as a strategy of struggle and construction of proposals.

We defend our actions of land occupation and the recovery and active defense of our land, territories, seeds, forests, fishing grounds, housing, etc., as necessary and legitimate to realize and defend our rights. If our day-by-day experience in the struggle for human dignity has taught us anything, it is that self-defense actions like land occupations, and recuperations and active defense of territories, are absolutely necessary in order to move governments to fulfill their obligations and implement effective policies and programs of agrarian reform. We pledge to keep carrying out these non-violent actions for as long as is necessary to achieve a world with social justice, which gives each and everyone the real possibility of having a life with dignity. Without the mobilization and full participation of social movements, there will be no genuine agrarian reform.

Food sovereignty is not just a vision but is also a common platform of struggle that allows to keep building unity in our diversity. We believe that access and control over natural resources, food production, and the increase of decision-making power are three main themes that bring us together.

Agrarian reform and food sovereignty commit us to a larger struggle to change the dominant neoliberal model. We must build alliances with other sectors of society, a citizens power that can guarantee deep agrarian reforms. We commit ourselves to promote joint actions, articulations, exchanges, and all the forms of pressure that are underway, especially through the international campaigns that our organizations and networks are carrying out or developing. We are convinced that only the power of organized peoples and mobilization can achieve the needed changes, thus our principal task is to inform, conscientize, debate, organize and mobilize with the people. We call on all the actors and forces present here to keep building our unity, and we will carry these conclusions back to debate with our social bases, and will use these ideas to confront the policies of international bodies like the FAO, and our governments. We ask that the mechanism of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) give priority to the follow-up of these conclusions.

Land, sea, and territory for life. Land, sea, and territory for dreams. Land, sea, and territory to affirm our dignity. Now!

<http://www.alainet.org/active/10811>