

International Conference of Peasants and Farmers: Stop land grabbing!



La Via Campesina Notebooks

Mali, 17 to 19 November 2011
Report and Conclusions of the Conference



"These people think that Africa is a country of animals, that we do not think, that we know nothing, but they are wrong. We are human beings, we know what we want and we will fight onto victory."

A conference participant (Zimbabwe)

Jakarta, April 2012

Contacts of La Via Campesina

International peasant movement

Operative secretariat:

Jln. Mampang Prapatan XIV no 5 Jakarta Selatan, Jakarta 12790 Indonesia

Tel/fax: +62-21-7991890/+62-21-7993426 Email: viacampesina@viacampesina.org

Contacts of CNOP

CNOP – BP: E2169 Bamako, Mali, Rue 200 Porte 727 Kalabancoura;

Tel/Fax: 00223 20 28 60 00;

Crédits Photos : Philippe Revelli (unless specified)

Thanks to those who have contributed to the success of this forum as by their presence (Farmers delegates, NGOs, technical and financial partners) or by their active participation in the backstage (CNOP team, cooks, the Nyeleni staff persons, performers and technicians ...)

Contents

1. Introduction	1
Opening speech by Ibrahima Coulibaly	1
Presentation of the conference	1
2. Land grabbing: What is it?	3
Old phenomenon, new appearance	3
Scale and speed	4
The “Everyone wins!” myth	4
3. Testimonies and analyses by peasants and family farmers from different continents	6
Africa	6
Latin America	8
Asia	10
Europe	12
4. La Via Campesina and the struggle for access to land	13
A permanent campaign for land reform	13
The Declaration of the Rights of Peasants and other people working in rural areas	14
Opposition to the mercantile policies of the World Bank.	14
The FAO voluntary guidelines on tenure of land, fisheries and forests	14
5. Statements in support of the conference	15
6. In conclusion	16

This report is but a summary of the debates and presentations held at the conference. It gives priority to the testimonies of peasants and small-scale farmers and does not claim to render in detail the contributions of all resource persons and participants, or to mention them by name. We hope that it will open doors and enlist readers on the road to resistance against this unprecedented offensive. The documents presented during the conference are available on our website: <http://viacampesina.org/fr/> (look for "Conference documents")

1. Introduction

Opening speech by Ibrahima Coulibaly^(*)

The land employs many people and these families of peasants and small-scale farmers feed the rest of the population. In 2011 in Mali many of these families do not even own a plough. This is the sad reality. In spite of this, families manage more or less to feed themselves, but they have no social security, or health insurance. The government says it wants to take care of these families, and yet it seizes their land to give to investors. Land grabbing is increasing at an alarming rate, like a rocket, in fact. More than 30 thousand hectares have been grabbed on the African continent. In Mali alone, the government has committed itself to granting 800 thousand hectares. This is land that belongs to villages, as land always belongs to someone, from generation to generation. Peasants and family farmers have been imprisoned for demanding their rights. This is a denial of the historic rights of peoples. These rights have existed for centuries and sometimes for millennia, while states have only existed for the past 60 years. Leaders do not hear these villagers.

This is why numerous initiatives are being undertaken to oppose these violations. During the World Social Forum, we published the Dakar Appeal against land grabbing. We must unite to find solutions. Therefore, it is with great hope that we organized this conference in order to get together, find solutions, develop synergies, work together and speak the same language. We are going to reflect on what we are going through, with members of parliament, journalists and international organizations. It is up to us, peasants and small-scale farmers, women and men, to decide what to do. We want this conference to lead to clear action. We will also take advantage of the opportunity to communicate with the media, something which is often difficult for us. Our only solution is to organize our own conference to solve this painful issue. We have been beaten, imprisoned and killed. There is nothing we can do on an individual basis and this problem does not only concern us, peasants and family farmers, but everyone with a human sensibility. Exclusion is the cause of all these problems.

() Summary of speech*

Presentation of the conference

Although numerous colloquia, articles and broadcasts have addressed land grabbing, the voice of peasants and small-scale farmers has been little heard to date. Faced with the urgency of strengthening alliances and developing strategies with other actors, La Via Campesina and the National Coordination of Peasant Organizations (CNOP) of Mali have taken the initiative of organizing a large international conference against land grabbing, from 17 to 19 November 2011. Non-governmental organizations, citizen networks and political personalities were invited to listen, share and support the men and women who experience this reality on a daily basis, not only through their suffering, but also through their resistance and proposals. We left this conference with a roadmap by organizations of peasants and family farmers, and NGOs, to combat these land grabs at the local, national and international level. The development of the conference, the participation and the activities were in the hands of peasants and small-scale farmers, both women and men. They were the fruit of a collective labour that was very committed and strongly motivated by the testimonies.

The international conference of peasants and family farmers took place at the Nyéléni training centre at Sélingué (140 km from Bamako/Mali), created by organizations of peasants and small-scale farmers to hold the first World Forum for Food Sovereignty in 2007. The centre was built in traditional fashion with local materials.

The conference in short

250 men and women participants from 40 countries. Peasants and other people working in rural areas, as well as African participation, were in the majority.

- A total of 135 peasants and sustainable family farmers, both women and men
- 15 African delegations of peasants and small-scale farmers, one man/one woman: South Africa (FSC), Angola (UNAC-Angola), Burkina-Faso (ROPPA), Congo Brazzaville (CNOP-Congo), Ghana (ECARSARD), Guinea-Bissau (ONCOP), Madagascar (CPM), Mali (CNOP, AOPP,SEXAGON, FARANSISO, ASPROFER), Mozambique (UNAC), Niger (PFPN), Democratic Republic of Congo (COPACO), Senegal (CNCR), Tanzania (MVIMATA), Togo (CTOP) and Zimbabwe (ZIMSOFF).
- A strong Malian presence including victims faced with the violent grabbing of their land who were able to follow and testify at the conference.
- Peasant and small-scale farmer representatives, male and female, from other continents : Belgium (ECVC), Brazil (MST), France (Confédération paysanne), Guatemala (CUC), Haiti (MPP), Honduras (MUCA), India (KRRS), Indonesia (SPI) , Mauritania (CCSAF), Nepal (ANPF), Nicaragua (ATC), Basque Country (Ehne Biskaia) and Thailand (NPF).
- A mobilization of **8 volunteer interpreters** - African/Malian, European and Asian – who provided interpretation in Bambara, French, English, Portuguese, Spanish, Thai and Indonesian.
- More than 30 local people provided welcoming services, catering based on local culinary know-how, accommodation, the required sound systems and transport.
- **41 NGOs, associations, universities and institutions:** AEN (Mali), AGTER (France), AMASSA AFRIQUE VERTE (Mali), AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL (the Netherlands), ARGA (Mali), CAD-Mali (Mali), CAFO (Mali), CCSSA (Mauritania), COLLECTIF TANY (Madagascar), COMMISSION FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE (Colombia), CRBM (Italy), CRDI/IDRC (Senegal), ENDAT-PRONAT (Senegal), FAHAMOU (Senegal), FENSUAGRO (Colombia), FIAN (Germany), FRIENDS OF THE EARTH International (Uruguay), FUNDATION HABITAT AFRICA (Mali), FOCUS ON THE GLOBAL SOUTH (India), GRAIN (France), GRAF (Burkina-Faso), HUB-RURAL (Senegal), INSTITUT GLOBALNEJ ODPOWIEDZIALNOSCI (Poland), INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL STUDIES (the Netherlands), OXFAM (Belgium, Mauritania, Senegal), MDPL (Spain), MORE AND BETTER (Italy), NARE (Uganda), OHCHR/ONU (Switzerland), PELUM (Kenya), RBM (Mali), ROAPE (Italy), ROSA (Senegal), SNV (the Netherlands), UACDDD/UNION (Mali), TERRA NUOVA (Italy), USC-Canada (Mali), UNIVERSITY OF PADUA (Italy), UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND (Australia), and WORLD RAINFOREST MOVEMENT (Uruguay)
- **Media :** DS PRODUCT (Mali), GUINTAN (Mali), LE COMBAT (Mali), LE TAMBOUR (Mali), L'INDEPENDANT (Mali), L'INDICATEUR (Mali), MEDIA INDEPENDANT (USA), NORMAL LIFE PICTURE (France), PHILIPPE REVELLI (France), PRETOIRE (Mali), RADIO KAIRA (Mali), SOURCED TV (United Kingdom).



The conference opens with a *mística* organized by African regions. This scene depicts international investors who arrive with large sums of money and pressure the government and local authorities to accept their proposals for industrial agriculture and the processing industry on the pretext of creating jobs. In exchange, they receive the vast stretches of land they are requesting. The government, with the help of local authorities, use force to evict peasants and other people working in rural areas, but they resist under the banner of La Via Campesina.

2. Land Grabbing: What is it? (*)

Old phenomenon, new appearance

Land grabbing is not a new phenomenon. It resembles the colonization process as well as the expansion of large plantations onto the land of sustainable family farming over the centuries.

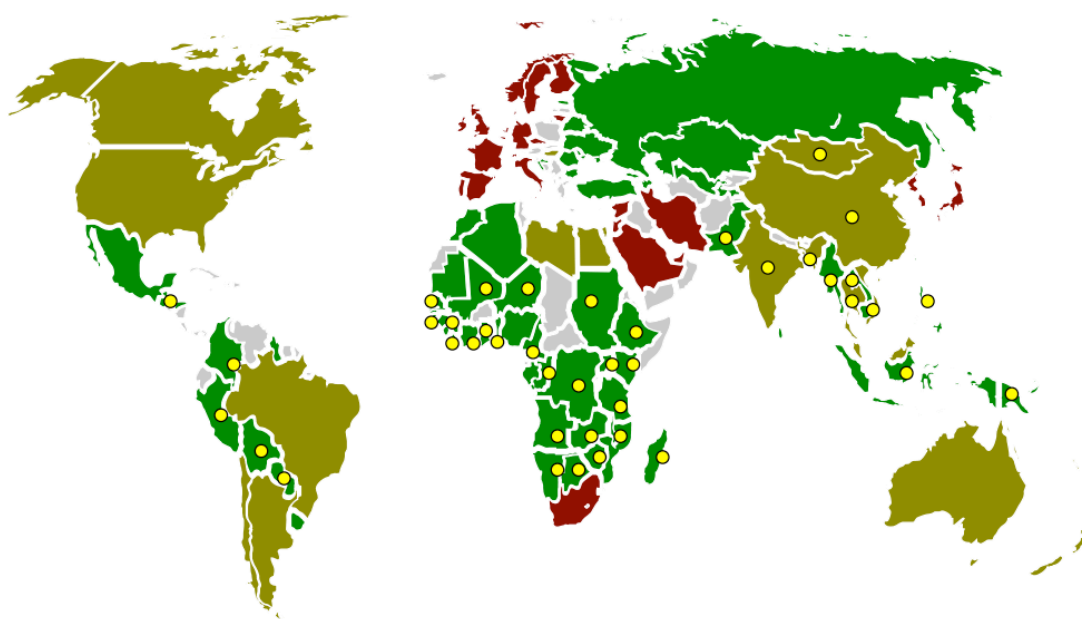
If you look at the reality of our villages, land grabbing takes on extremely varied forms: women are expelled from their land when their husband dies, mining companies expel peasants and small-scale farmers, as do oil and tourist projects, plantations, military bases, and so forth. Investors are not always multinational companies or foreigners. Sometimes, they are local or domestic. These expulsions of peasants and family farmers, both women and men, from their land are all de facto land grabs.

What is new today is the massive offensive carried out by firms and states as they acquire, for long periods of time ranging from 30 to 99 years, vast tracts of cultivable land abroad in order to produce staple products (usually foodstuffs) earmarked for export.

This new offensive of land grabbing originates in the food and financial crises of 2007 and 2008. Faced with the increase of food prices on world markets, some countries delocalize their agricultural production abroad to guarantee their supply of food. In addition, the financial crisis had turned land ownership into a new source of profits for the financial industry. Land ownership currently yields more than the three large investment groups of gold, the stock market and the property business. It appears that in the case of land investments, the largest part of the wealth is distributed directly to capital. Therefore, it is more a matter of theft, than investment.

The African continent is most affected by land grabbing because the land is fertile and cheap compared with other continents. Most of the land is not covered by title deeds, which facilitates the action of multinationals. However, Asia and Latin America are also affected by land grabbing.

"The geography of land grabs"



- Landgrabbers: countries of origin of investors acquiring farmland overseas for food production
- Landgrabbed: countries targeted by these investors
- Both: countries that are both sources and targets of these investors
- Countries where over 10 % of the population is undernourished

Scale and speed

- More than 60 countries targeted by hundreds of firms and a dozen governments.
- The World Bank (2011) reports that 56 million hectares were rented or sold worldwide in 2008-2009. According to the International Land Committee (2011), this figure reaches 80 million in the period since 2001, and according to the Matrice foncière (2012), a total of 227 million hectares have already been granted.
- The Global Land Project (2010) reports that in Africa 62 million hectares were exchanged in 27 countries in 2009. The Oakland Institute (2011) speaks of 50 million hectares in 20 countries.
- According to High Quest Partners, 15 to 50 billion US dollars have already been invested by the private sector. This sum is expected to triple in the short term (from 45 to 150 billion US dollars).

The main actors of land grabbing are states, private companies and multilateral agencies.

In certain cases, it is the states which ask for, advocate and/or facilitate the agreements. The “requesting” governments are particularly those of the Gulf states, South Korea, China, Japan and the former Libyan regime. However, they also include countries and entities like Singapore, India, Malaysia, Mauritius, South Africa, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), and others. For example, the Philippine government has offered land to the Gulf states and China.

Therefore, it is not always a question of countries of the North buying land from countries of the South. However, it is always a question of industrial agriculture replacing sustainable family farming.

States intervene by opening up the doors to investors and enacting legislation in their favour. Numerous international documents are not submitted to arbitration organizations to find out whether the land was acquired legally, or whether the transaction affects human rights. Agreements are signed exempting investors from taxes for a period of 100 years.

States are active, but it is the companies that lead the projects (of their own accord or with the encouragement of states). Investment funds count among the large investors that acquire land in Africa and around the world, and enter into competition with the food-processing industry and sector.

Finally, multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, development banks, organizations for bilateral cooperation and international bodies also promote these agreements.

International financial institutions intervene on different levels, through:

1. Capital distribution: by granting loans to states.
2. The elaboration of ideas and policies: by generalizing services and counsel given to states to work out their policies.
3. Direct foreign investment.
4. Monetary power: by influencing national decisions.

The "Everyone wins!" myth

Land grabbing is often presented as an improvement for society and a modernization of agriculture which would benefit investors, peasants and other people working in rural areas, and populations in general. It is often also said that the land is “uninhabited” or poorly worked. This is usually not the case: men and women peasants and family farmers lose the land they cultivate and industrial agriculture destroys both the environment and rural communities.



Family farmers lose the land they cultivate and industrial agriculture destroys both the environment and rural communities.

In addition, the main beneficiary is the food security of “grabbing” countries. The “grabbed” themselves suffer from hunger, at the same time that world food production is sufficient to feed 10 billion people. In Africa, as on other continents, it is mainly family farms that feed the population. Therefore, access to land for peasants and small-scale farmers, both women and men, would contribute to eradicate hunger in the world.

() based on the presentations of Grain and AGTER and the reactions of participants*

3. Testimonies and Analyses by Peasants and Family Farmers from Various Continents¹

1. Africa

The current context is dominated by land grabbing in the 15 represented countries that shared their experiences during the meeting. Land grabbing is not a new phenomenon. Most of our countries are acquainted with it since colonial times. In some cases the colonial legal system carries on to this day. The best agricultural land and the water resources are given to investors and speculators.

Land grabbing takes different forms depending on the main actor or the specific context: grabbing carried out by states, multinationals (for agrofuels, monocultures or food production), by local leaders or village chiefs, etc. It was also recognized that there are certain mechanisms within our own families and communities that lead to land grabbing, such as patriarchal ownership of land, discrimination towards young peasants and small-scale farmers, both women and men, and the domination by local elites.

There is a general consensus that land grabbing negatively and directly affects peasants and family farmers, in particular women, who constitute a majority and who are more active than men in agriculture in all the countries present. This is a threat to food sovereignty as it is these peasants and small-scale farmers who feed about 80 % of local populations.

Actions at the local level

In all our countries, peasants and family farmers organize themselves under different forms to defend their right to land and to their means of subsistence. Certain fighting strategies involve organizing mobilizations and meetings with government officials. Peasants and other people working in rural areas also unite in common interests groups to present and debate problems, and to raise awareness in order to deepen their own understanding of the negative effects of grabbing on themselves and on society as a whole. Peasants and small-scale farmers, both men and women, from 15 African countries presented cases of land grabbing at the conference. They established that it was nothing new and that the best land had been granted to foreign investors since colonial times. It represents slavery and the marginalization of peoples. Here is but a part of the presented testimonies.

A few testimonies

-Senegal: In Senegal we organized a strong mobilization against the land grabs that are on the increase in the country (including mining companies, agrofuel plantations, and property projects for the extension of cities). In Fanaye, an Italian company (SENETHANOL) requested land to produce agrofuels. When local communities discovered they were about to lose their land and villages, they decided to resist. Following the violent death of two peasants, who were killed by local elites corrupted by the project, we organized a large protest in the capital, Dakar. Due to the pressure the prime minister finally suspended the project. However, we know that the government has already received the money and we fear that the company may obtain land elsewhere.

-Mozambique: I would like to talk about land grabs at the family level, as it directly affects women. When a young girl grows up and marries she goes to live with her in-laws. Sometimes the young woman is not treated well by her few family. If her husband happens to fall ill, she takes care of him, does her very best, but if her husband dies, that is when her problems begin. She is asked to marry her brother-in-law. If she refuses she is accused of having killed her husband, is subjected to slander and sent back to her parents. When she arrives there, her sisters-in-law have already occupied the land. She doesn't have the smallest patch of land. She must start from scratch. Women work in the fields with men, do

¹ *Most of the testimonies were made during the preparatory meeting for the conference.*

more than men, are often alone to take care of the work, the harvest and the market, but when the money comes in, it is the man who controls the household money. If the woman needs something, she must ask the man for money. When he is willing we go and do the shopping together and it is he who pays. In Mozambique, there is a very strong discrimination against women. This is also why I decided to become member of the national union of peasants and family farmers. I know I am becoming much stronger thanks to this conference. I will be able to help other women who suffer very much. Many are illiterate and need education. Once educated, they no longer tolerate their husband's aggression because they know where to turn. If you are ignorant of laws and rights, how do you know where to seek help? Each one of these exchanges makes me more capable of helping others.

-Mauritania: I am member of a follow-up group on food security. The cases of land grabbing in Mauritania create slavery. In 1989, disputes between cattle breeders caused problems between Mauritania and Senegal. Mauritanian authorities seized the opportunity to deport from the country the black community composed of Malians and Senegalese. In Mauritania we have a Moorish community and a black community that is closer to Senegal. The Mauritanian government redistributed the land of the people who had been deported. The land was sold. When the deported populations returned, they were not able to recover their land. This creates inter-ethnic conflicts and confrontations between population groups. We encourage dialogue in our regions.

-Burkina Faso: We carried out field research on land grabs, and then decided to focus on national investors as this type of investment is not monitored and we feel that these investments are as important as the others. The land is grabbed by national investors for industrial agriculture. Now the majority of the population works in this sector where they are being exploited. We soon saw that it was a huge phenomenon, and very difficult to study. However, we know that the number and size of the acquisitions have increased since 2000, and that there are more and more investments and speculation. In Burkina, the political discourse encourages this type of investment. The state has contracts with the investors. Who are these investors? In certain specific cases, they are new investors who open up the market and are specialized in seeds and food production. The innovations come from the large farms. There is no collaboration between peasants and small-scale farmers, on the one hand, and investors on the other. Peasants and family farmers say that the investors set up a lot of infrastructure. They say that they only come to build airports. The land grabs are also linked to the water issue: it is the best irrigated land that is grabbed.

Some of these areas are in conflict. A 2010 survey by our organization shows that if things continue as they are, there will be no land left for peasants and small-scale farmers within 10 years. Peasants and other people working in rural areas will be forced to emigrate. In 2011, we organized awareness raising campaigns in different areas affected by the issue, in order to put a stop to land grabs, and to encourage peasants and family farmers to stand up to investors. Peasants and small-scale farmers are not giving the land. It is being taken from them. We must carry out consultations with those sectors of society that control land.

Local governments have started to intervene in these transactions, sometimes to slow down the process.

-Mali:



In 2009, Jeeps arrived on our land, without prior warning. They said they were government representatives. We went to see our customary chiefs. They wanted to conclude an agreement to take our land. But for us, the land is our inheritance. We cannot give it away. What they were suggesting, were unfair exchanges. Mad exchanges. What they were giving me in compensation was a drop in the ocean. And if you don't agree, there is no other way out. They threatened to take the entire village. They sent police officers. They asked me to convince the villagers to let go of their land. That was the first land grab. I did not accept what they were offering, as it was not to the advantage of the

population. A pregnant woman lost her baby because she was beaten. She is here to testify. The Kolongo Forum² helped us very much. We were waiting for this opportunity to come and work with you. I ask all these leaders to take pity on the population.

- A canal has replaced the fields that our families cultivated for years.³ 150 people live in the village and we have paid taxes for the past three years. It is as though the government wants to get rid of us. Our leaders have been imprisoned. These people are destroying the environment. Peasants and family farmers signed a petition that was sent to the government, declaring that we do not agree with what is happening. It was the most fertile area. They told us: "If you speak up, we'll put you in jail."

- We were ready to harvest, but they took the production to make way for the canal. We are human beings and we are going to tell the government that this is wrong. We are not going to live in mud. No one will let their crop be stolen from them! We have an enemy, and it's the government.

- We must carry on fighting. Others have spoken of similar problems, so we must establish common strategies.



"The issue of land grabs began in 2007, with our mayor. Our land is our inheritance and they gave it to other people. They called the police. Hundreds of people were beaten. The elders were imprisoned. That's our problem. Without the help of this organization that is fighting back, we would have lost hope. We would welcome help from all the organizations."

Conference participant (from Burkina Faso)

2. Latin America

Latin America suffers from high levels of inequality and land concentration. This is the result of historical processes that followed the colonial invasion, the building of nation states and several decades of neoliberalism.

These past years a new phenomenon has grafted itself onto this: land grabs by national and transnational companies, specialized in the agro-industry or finance. From now on, agriculture, water, food and our natural resources are the main object of big financial capital. Large agricultural investors are speeding up the concentration of the production, processing and commercialization of agricultural products and reinforcing the dependence on chemical inputs.

In Latin America and the Caribbean peasants and family farmers, both women and men, are expelled from their land by agro-industrial projects and other mega projects such as hydroelectric dams and open sky mining concerns. These are iron, silver and other mineral concerns. The land grabs are increasingly frequent, which naturally leads to a regression of land reform. As a result, land is increasingly concentrated by the holders of capital: we are therefore witnessing a land counterreform. We see that many governments are accomplices to these land grabs.

² *Kolongo Forum: the first peasant and farmer forum against land grabs organized in Mali in November 2010 by various organizations including CNOP and La Via Campesina.*

³ *This is a 40 km canal to irrigate the 100 000 ha of the Malibya project, in the Office du Niger area.*

Big capital criminalizes social movements. In Honduras, 50 peasants and small-scale farmers were killed in one year (2010-2011). In Guatemala, peasants and family farmers are being expelled and are losing their land and homes. Three people were killed and many imprisoned.



“Farmers March toward capital of Guatemala to claim their right to land after being expelled from their land. March 2012. Credits CLOC/Via Campesina”

The phenomenon is also increasing in scale in Brazil. Five people were killed in Para State, all of them rural leaders who were fighting to defend the Amazon. These struggles are also taking place in Paraguay and Argentina. Colombia is facing an armed struggle. Haiti is a small country, but it is also resisting. The Brazilian government is attempting to set up free zones in Brazil, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, expelling inhabitants from their land.

In Honduras, the Bajo Aguán case is particularly shocking. For two years we have been defending our land against large landowners who cultivate oil palm. The land was granted to them unfairly during a process of land counterreform. An association counting 500 families decided to move onto the land and to occupy it in order to recover it. Fifty of our friends lost their lives, killed by the security forces of the owners, the police or the national army.

In Latin America the movement of peasants and small-scale farmers remains strongly mobilized in its struggle for land reform. We also had encouraging experiences, as in the case of Cuba which is showing the example on the subject of land reform. Moreover, interesting processes are being undertaken by ALBA countries (the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our Americas), which currently includes Bolivia, Venezuela, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Antigua and Barbuda.

In our struggle for land reform, we are currently facing multinationals and transnational capital, which is more difficult than facing national companies or authorities. We are fighting to defend land and our territories. We are fighting for another model of agriculture which gives priority to agro-ecology, and for a model of food production that feeds people rather than cars, and involves the participation of women and young people. Land reform, the struggle for land and for

territories, is the very basis of food sovereignty. We show solidarity with all peasants and other people working in rural areas, men and women, who have been killed, injured or imprisoned in the struggle. We ask for a minute of silence to express our solidarity with those who died fighting.

The climate crisis brought about by production and consumption models imposed by capitalism affects the peoples of the land, and more particularly those who live from agriculture as we do. From now on, putting an end to capitalism is no longer a mere social objective. It has become a necessary step for the survival of humanity and the planet. We must stop the agro-industrial, agro-exporter and hyper-concentrated model that is responsible for the current climate and social crises.

3. Asia

In Asia we notice a worsening of the economic situation in rural areas, especially that of peasants and small-scale farmers, both women and men. Several factors are to blame for this:

1. A drop in subsidies and support by the public sector

- The economic and financial policies of many Asian countries are dictated by international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. However, governments are also adopting their own neoliberal policies independently from these institutions, including cuts in education, health, water and electricity budgets, as well as in agricultural subsidies.
- Governments are privatizing all essential sectors, including agricultural services, seeds, water and credit services. This means that the families of peasants and small-scale farmers have great difficulty accessing education, health services, electricity, agricultural inputs, water for domestic and agricultural use, and so forth. Peasants and family farmers are becoming indebted and lose their land due to their inability to reimburse. The drop in subsidies for family agriculture increases production costs, at the same time that the sale price of products drops because prices are generally no longer protected by government policies. Therefore, these products compete with cheaper imported products. To continue to work the land, or in case of illness, peasants and small-scale farmers must borrow and sink even deeper into debt.
- Financial institutions such as the Banque de promotion agricole, which still grants loans to peasants and family farmers, are aggravating the indebtedness. The banks provide no assurance in case of bad crop or natural catastrophe. Peasants and small-scale farmers also resort to money lenders, with very high interest rates. The debt can lead to the loss of land.

2. The impact of the economic, social and cultural crises in rural areas

It is increasingly difficult to live from agriculture and many peasants and family farmers are forced to leave their land. This has very serious consequences, including suicides in India, Indonesia, Cambodia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Nepal. Furthermore, many men and in particular women peasants and small-scale farmers have become immigrant workers, in their home country or abroad. In certain countries, a flourishing sex industry recruits large numbers of young rural women and forces them into work. Local solidarity, rural culture and agricultural practices are being lost. Young people without work are forced to look for work elsewhere, but they usually do not find decent work.

3. Water presents serious problems in rural areas

Water is about to be privatized at the source (the spring, lake, or watercourse). Multinational companies control water production and peasants and family farmers, both women and men, have no access to it. Asia has many forests coveted by REDD programmes (*carbon credit programmes to reduce emissions from deforestation*) and other conservation programmes. Indigenous peoples are expelled from the forest, losing their means of subsistence in Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia and India.

4. In Asia land grabbing is a problem both old and new

During colonial times, colonizing powers (represented by private companies) seized land for mining concerns, plantations, various industries, and so forth. We are now in the era of neo-colonialism: Asian governments use the same model of centralized politico-economic power to seize land from their own citizens, as well as from the citizens of other countries.

5. National governments have neoliberal policies and ideologies

National policies are inscribed in market capitalism – a free market for foodstuffs and investments. Policies and laws support investments by multinationals, as for example in Indonesia, Thailand and Cambodia.

6. Multinational companies and governments seize land

Multinationals and governments seize vast tracts of land to create large plantations intended for industrial or food production, mining concerns, large dams or other infrastructural or tourist projects. When they seize land we also lose the ecosystem, the culture, the know-how, and the population.

7. Repression of peasants and small-scale farmers, both men and women

When the local population protests or refuses to budge, peasants and family farmers are arrested. These rural workers and indigenous peoples are criminalized when they defend their rights. Many members of la Via Campesina are the victim of legal proceedings. Many have been imprisoned, injured by the police, the army or paramilitaries, and some have been killed.

8. The investor rush in Asia

Following the crises in the United States and Europe, many investors turned towards Asia to expand their commercial operations. Likewise, new Asian companies are also investing in Asia and elsewhere. This phenomenon increases and intensifies the exploitation of rural populations, the environment and ecosystems. Practically all Asian countries have special economic zones that facilitate the setting up of large companies. Governments acquire the land needed by investors, and give them fiscal advantages and all the required services at subsidized rates, as well as the unlimited right to export products and profits. Workers, peasants and small-scale farmers and the environment enjoy no protection whatsoever in these areas.

To conclude, we have identified several important challenges in our struggle against land grabbing:

- A growing militarization of certain areas – soldiers occupy much land
- A constant decrease in the protection by states of the right to land of populations, and their refusal to institute comprehensive land reform
- Private banks are increasingly powerful and control large quantities of land and natural resources, and influence policies
- Land grabs are being legalized
- Prevailing arguments on this development justify the land grabs and are supported by many academics and NGOs

4. Europe

In Europe, we have a common agricultural policy. It was introduced to regulate markets during the reconstruction of Europe after the Second World War. It had important consequences for farms and we rapidly reached overproduction. This is when an export model financed by public funds was adopted. Large-scale farms are leading to the disappearance of small farms. We also note that Europe depends on soya exports to feed cattle. Everywhere, we witness in particular a concentration of land and the disappearance of small farms. Every year, 70 thousand hectares of arable land are absorbed by infrastructural and other projects.

In Eastern Europe, many people, men and women, still work in agriculture, as opposed to Western Europe, where they only represent a very small part of the active population.

Land grabs are frequent in Eastern Europe. Hundreds of thousands of hectares have already been grabbed. Urban development has invaded our land. The Spanish coast has been urbanized. In France, 17,000 hectares of agricultural land are earmarked for infrastructural development every year. Land has become a commodity on the entire continent. The most common system of land tenure is private property and prices are very high. Young people who want to set up on their own as a peasant or small-scale farmer encounter great difficulties. The privatization of land is leading to speculation. Rural communities are disappearing.

In France our rural areas are becoming empty of people and industrial agriculture is destroying the environment. In Brittany, for example, water is polluted by pesticides and industrial pig farms.

Forty years ago, in Larzac (France), we fought against the setting up of a military camp. After ten years of peaceful resistance we won the case. We are defending the idea that land at affordable prices can contribute to the development of countries. The lesson to be drawn from these struggles is that we must secure land for future generations. Private property did not have this effect. On the contrary, it tended to cause an accumulation of land in the hands of a few large landowners. This spelt the death of small farmers in France.

In Europe, the land grabbing phenomenon must be viewed from a different angle. Nonetheless it is clear that we are losing agricultural land and that we must look elsewhere for land to feed the population. Civil society organizations closely embrace our struggle to maintain small-scale sustainable family farming. As a minority population group, we work to establish alliances. We must muster all our strength.

4. La Via Campesina and the struggle for access to land

La Via Campesina is about to turn 20. The beginnings were difficult but we see that the organization is now very successful – and this, because we remained true to our operating methods, and developed our policies and mechanisms based on the proposals of peasants and sustainable family farmers, both men and women. These parties were sent to participate in negotiations at all levels, with our allies. They took the concept of food sovereignty to Rome and beyond. Thanks to many years of mobilization, peasants and other people working in rural areas are currently negotiating directly with certain governments and in international arenas, particularly the Committee for Food Security in Rome.

A permanent campaign for land reform

The requirement of comprehensive land reform granting peasants and sustainable family farmers, both men and women, control over the land they cultivate, has been at the heart of La Via Campesina's demands since the creation of the movement in 1993. This theme is being dealt with by the movement's agrarian reform commission which counts two representatives from each region (one woman and one man). The commission has implemented a Global Campaign for Agrarian Reform in collaboration with various partner organizations.

In 2006 in Brazil, at the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD) organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), a strong mobilization of peasants and small-scale farmers put land reform back on the world political agenda. The final declaration of the conference, signed by 92 governments, recognizes the elements of the struggle for food sovereignty by peasants and other people working in rural areas, including the need to support sustainable family farming and the redistribution of land and other agrarian resources, the need to establish more equitable agricultural policies in favour of the peoples, the importance of local and domestic markets and the role of peasant and other rural organizations in the definition of agricultural policies.

However, due to strong resistance on the part of "developed" countries, the declaration was never implemented, as shown by the new wave of land grabbing we are witnessing today.

Landless peasants and family farmers are nonetheless active in demanding their rights. In spite of the criminalization they are subjected to, many movements of rural men and women are demanding land for cultivation, are occupying land to produce food for their families and communities, and are demanding just land legislation from their authorities. These resistance movements can be found in many countries, such as Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia, Honduras, Nicaragua, Indonesia, Thailand and India, as well as in most African countries as we saw at the conference.



Poster for agrarian reform campaign in Brazil. Credits Cloc/Viacampesina.

Representatives of Zimbabwe's peasant and farmer organization who attended the conference gave an in-depth explanation of the important social advances achieved since the implementation of land reform in their country.

In parallel to the demand for land, the movement of peasants and other people working in rural areas is developing sustainable family farming, often called "agroecology", based on the respect of populations and of the environment.

The Declaration of the Rights of Peasants and other people working in rural areas

In the early 2000s, La Via Campesina initiated an internal process on the need to protect the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas, women and men. In 2008 and 2009 this approach was validated by the whole movement. The movement defends before the Human Rights Council in Geneva the adoption of a declaration recognizing these rights.

Article IV of the Declaration of the Rights of Peasants, Women and Men, and of other people working in rural areas, as presented by La Via Campesina to the United Nations, details the rights to land and territory. This includes not only the right to access land ownership, collectively or individually, but also the right to control water resources, the right to have access to farming equipment, the right not to be expelled through force, and so forth.

Opposition to the mercantile policies of the World Bank

Since its very beginnings La Via Campesina has opposed land reform policies based on the free market as promoted by the World Bank since the 1980s. These policies aim to allocate title deeds to land in order to facilitate the purchase and sale of landed property. In the end, poor peasants and other rural people lose out to the benefit of those who have the means to purchase land.

Furthermore, in 2010, La Via Campesina also protested against a set of principles for “socially responsible” land grabbing, published by the World Bank in collaboration with other institutions. These seven "Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment" (RAI) are meant to regulate mass acquisitions of land, although they in fact legitimize it. The transfer of land from local communities to large companies with the goal of producing industrial monocultures earmarked for export will never create a situation favourable to communities, or to food sovereignty.

The FAO voluntary guidelines on tenure of land, fisheries and forests ^(*)

Since ICARRD, La Via Campesina has been demanding that the implementation of the ICARRD principles be put as a priority on the FAO's and the international agenda. The process of adopting FAO Guidelines on tenure of land, fisheries and forests is expected to partly contribute to the realization of this aim. The guidelines will set out principles and internationally accepted standards in order to provide practical guidance on responsible governance of tenure to states, civil society and the private sector. Even though the Guidelines are called “voluntary”, they explicitly refer to existing binding international human rights obligations related to land and natural resources. This reference will give peasant organizations a strong leverage to demand the implementation of the guidelines as a matter of right. The text of the Guidelines has been negotiated among governments with a strong participation of La Via Campesina and other small-scale food producer organizations. So far the text has a clear emphasis on putting the groups most affected by hunger - namely landless and land-scarce people like rural women, peasants, indigenous peoples, pastoralists and fisherfolk - at the very core of public tenure policies in order to defend and broaden their rights to land, fisheries and forests. Nevertheless, since the text is a negotiated text among governments, it remains open and ambiguous on several issues. Negotiations are expected to be concluded in March 2012.

(*) Based on the contribution of FIAN and other participants.

5. Statements in support of the Conference

Extracts from presentations and messages of support sent by key figures to the conference. The unabridged text is available on our website, together with the documents of the conference (www.viacampesina.org)

Presentation by Asako Hattori of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights⁴

"Access to and control over land and other natural resources, such as water, is an indispensable element of the enjoyment of human rights. This is especially relevant for people whose livelihoods are dependent on such resources.

For example, if small scale farmers are deprived of their access to land and water for cultivation, it could impact their right to food as they will lose the basis for producing or procuring the food they need. If people are rendered homeless as a consequence of eviction from land, their right to adequate housing is directly compromised. For communities whose cultural and spiritual identities are strongly linked with their ancestral land, the denial of access to such land could also lead to the violation of the right to participate in cultural life.

Human rights are also relevant for the processes of how decisions on land are made and implemented."

Message by the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier De Schutter

"My third comment is that we must reject the alternative that is sometimes presented to us: either you accept large-scale investments in agriculture, or you deprive yourselves of all investment whatsoever. No. Investments are necessary. We must improve the access by small farmers to credit, inputs and information. We must improve storage and communication means, and therefore the access to markets. But all these investments, before or after production, must not affect the rights to land: they must – and can – leave intact the access by users to the resources that are indispensable for their subsistence. What matters, is to steer investments towards that which can best help family farming, for three reasons: investing in family farming is the best way to fight against rural poverty; it also means supporting the revenues of masses of inhabitants of rural areas, who today are too poor to buy goods and services from local producers, but who, when their incomes increase, will also be able to benefit these other sectors, with strong multiplier effects on the local economy; and finally, family agriculture is better equipped to promote diversity in the fields and to support ecosystems, all of which has a particularly vital function in the face of the threat presented by climate change."

Message by Ole Sankas Nkoidile from the Pan African Parliament

"Africa has an estimated 80 million small-scale farmers. Most of those working the land are women. Agriculture plays a key role in providing livelihoods to many of our poorest citizens, and in feeding not only them, but also our urban dwellers. Agriculture is important.

We have to notice that Africa is at the centre because of the perceived abundance of available land and water, a weak or non-existent land tenure system and the failure of governments to adequately protect land users."

⁴ Whole statement available here : [UN Human Rights Office \(OHCHR\)'s statement at the conference in Selingué, Mali](#)

6. In Conclusion

Global land grabbing: some critical reflections

*Jun Borras*⁵

It has been an extremely vibrant and productive conference, systematically organized by CNOP and Via Campesina Africa. Discussions were frank and comradely, analysis sharp and profound, tackling complicated issues and difficult questions. The majority of the participants are representatives of social movements. The overall tone addressed to the outside world debating about global land grabbing has been “not about us without us”.

For me, the many highlights of the discussions in this conference include:

The phenomenon of global land grabbing has occurred because of the 2007-08 food crisis, which in turn was largely caused by: (a) population increases and changing food consumption (quantity and preferences), and (b) the emerging global biofuels complex (the initial “food versus fuel” view). But while this is true, the insights of various participants in the conference informed us that the reasons for and mechanisms of land grabbing are not only those linked to food issues. There are four mechanisms as far as I can summarize from the exchange: food-related, biofuels-related, land grabs related to climate change mitigation strategies such as conservation and REDD+ (leading to what observers call “green grabbing”, i.e. land grabbing in the name of the environment), and demands from newer hubs of (global) capital, especially from the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa).

The changes in the global agrofood system made some financially powerful countries (primarily China, South Korea and the Gulf states) feel insecure, as they could not produce sufficient food domestically, and so they started to seek control over vast tracts of lands overseas to secure their food supply, leading to land grabbing. Again, this is true, but exchanges from participants have informed us that land grabbers are not only from China, India, South Korea and the Gulf states. They are from the traditional centres of imperialist power (on both sides of the Atlantic), as well as from the emerging centres of global capital, namely BRICS and some emerging powerful MICs (middle income countries). This suggests a far more “polycentric” agrofood-feed-fuel regime, that is to say, a global regime that has many centres of power. And while any land deal involves foreign companies and governments, most of them involve partnership with national/domestic capital. This has complicated the targets and venues of our campaign against land grabbing.

The principal target is Africa where vast empty expanses of land are thought to be available cheaply. It is generally assumed that 70 per cent of all grabbed land is on this continent. While the exchanges have validated and underscored the gravity of the situation of land grabbing in Africa, they also emphasized that land grabbing occurs to a significant extent in other regions too, namely Asia, Latin America, and the former Soviet Eurasia.

(Inter)national public policymaking aimed at addressing some of the serious concerns in the current land rush (expulsion of peasants from their land, corrupt land deals, and so on) has been underway. The assumption is that land investments are essentially good; they only need to be regulated. And so, the World Bank is leading the way for the promotion of some kind of voluntary code of conduct... for land grabbing, called the Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment (RAI). Central to this position is the advocacy for transparency. While we would not disagree on the relevance and importance of the principles outlined, as well as of transparency, to make these the overarching response to the problem of land grabbing is fundamentally problematic, as if transparent land grabbing were better than non-transparent land grabbing. But this thinking is quite popular in many quarters. It builds on the twin assumption of the assumed “inevitability of land grabbing” and the “impossibility of redistributive land policies”. And so the mainstream argument is to search for “win-win” formulas around these land investments. These groups even refused to use the term “land grabbing” because it is

⁵

Associate Professor, International Institute of Social Studies, The Hague; Fellow, Transnational Institute (TNI) and Food First

political. They prefer to use the term used by the World Bank, “land investments”, or “large-scale land acquisitions”, terms that are de-politicized. During the past days at the conference, we never heard those terms. We only heard one term, “land grabbing”. In general, the many voices at the conference loudly expressed disagreement with the flawed assumptions and conservative advocacy positions that are quite seductive for many institutions, donors and big NGOs. What we heard at the conference, from representatives of social movements, is the call “Stop grabbing, now!” To me that is the most fundamental starting point of a meaningful anti-land grabbing campaign.

During the past days, we also heard in so many testimonials that land deals impact differently on different sections and groups of affected communities. As such, reactions from below to land deals are variegated: some support land deals, others not; some of the fault-lines are class-based, others not. What this tells us is that the most difficult and urgent challenge now is also the basic work: painstaking community organizing. Arouse, organize and mobilize along class lines and beyond. More generally, different sections of the classes of labour – peasants, rural labourers, indigenous peoples, fishersfolk and pastoralists – men and women, are affected by land grabbing in adverse ways. Naturally and logically, any broad struggle front against land grabbing will be cross-class alliance. Creative coalition work is therefore key and urgent. But coalition work will also cut through at least four types of movements of the working poor: agrarian justice movements, environmental justice movements, labour movements, and food movements. Forging an alliance between these four key social justice movements across the Global South-North divide will be critical. It will not be easy and smooth. It will be tension-filled as we know, because of important class and ideological fault-lines between these movements. It will be a great challenge. But it is most crucial that this basic alliance be at the forefront of the global struggle against land grabbing to challenge the emerging relatively conservative pole dealing with land grab issues led by international financial institutions like the World Bank in alliance with some international inter-government agencies, donor agencies and big NGOs working on finding “win-win” formulas to maximize opportunities within – and not challenge and stop – land grabbing.

Finally, what we heard these past days during the conference is that land grabbing is not only an issue about land. It is essentially about the accumulation imperatives of global capital, be it land grabs for food, land grabs for biofuels, green grabs – land grabs in the name of the environment – and land grabs for resources demanded by newer hubs of global capital. Ultimately, then, an anti-land grabbing struggle is necessarily an anti-capitalist struggle.

"This is the first time I attend a meeting like this. I have been hurting since I lost my baby three years ago, after having been beaten by police because I did not want them to cut the shea-trees. I was hurting, I no longer slept. I leave with my mind at rest. I am no longer alone. My baby was not lost for nothing. Now I know that we are many to suffer and that we are going to fight together."

Testimony by a Malian family farmer, victim of a land grab

Declaration and Action Plan



Stop land grabbing!

We, peasants and sustainable family farmers, pastoralists, indigenous peoples and our allies, both men and women, meeting for the first time in Nyéléni from 17 to 19 November 2011, have come from the four corners of the world to share our experiences and struggles against land grabbing.

One year ago, we supported the Kolongo Appeal launched by organizations of peasants and small-scale farmers in Mali, which are in the vanguard of local resistance against agricultural land grabbing and the disposal of the land of peasants and family farmers in Africa.

We have come together in Nyéléni in response to the Dakar Appeal that calls on the peoples of the world to form a global alliance against land grabbing. We are determined to defend food sovereignty, common goods and the rights of small food producers to access natural resources.

In Mali, the government has a policy of promoting private investments in agriculture and it has transferred close to 800,000 hectares of land to private investors. The land belongs to communities that have been living on it for generations, if not centuries, whereas the Malian state was only created in the 1960s. The same situation can be found in many other countries that do not recognize customary law. To dispossess

communities of their land is a violation of both their customary and historical rights.

To be able to benefit from a safe access to land and to have control over land and natural resources are rights that are inextricably linked to the rights recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as by many other regional and international conventions on human rights, such as, for instance, the right to self-determination, the right to an adequate standard of living, or the right to housing, food, health, culture, property and participation.

We note with grave concern that states are not respecting their obligations in this regard and that they consider the interests of the business world as more important than the rights of peoples.

Land grabbing is a global phenomenon, initiated by local and transnational elites, governments and multinationals in order to control the most precious resources in the world. The world crisis in the fields of finance, food and the climate have triggered a rush by investors and governments from rich countries to acquire and lay hold of agricultural land and natural resources. These resources are the only remaining “safe investments” that can still guarantee the safety of financial returns.

Pension and other investment funds have become powerful actors in land grabbing, while wars continue to be waged for the control of natural resources. The World Bank and regional development banks still encourage land grabbing and the stranglehold on water by pushing for the implementation of policies favourable to the business world, facilitating capital and guarantees for industrial investors and, more generally, promoting a predatory and harmful economic development model.

The World Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) have proposed seven principles that legitimize agricultural land grabbing by private and state investors.

Led by some of the largest multinationals in the world, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) aims to convert sustainable family farming into industrial agriculture and to integrate peasants and small-scale farmers into global value chains, considerably increasing their vulnerability in the face of their loss of land.

Land grabbing exceeds the traditional North-South split that characterizes imperialist structures. Grabbing transnational companies may be based in the United States and Europe, but also in Chile, Mexico, Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Thailand, Malaysia and South Korea, to name but a few.

This is a crisis that affects rural and urban areas alike. The land grabs occur in Asia, Africa, the Americas and even Europe, in the framework of industrial agricultural projects, mining concerns, infrastructural development and dams. This is done for tourism, in the name of the creation of national parks, for the needs of industry, to allow for urban expansion, or yet again, for military purposes.

Indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities are driven out of their territories by armed force, further increasing their precariousness, indeed in certain cases reducing them to slavery. The false solutions to climate change that rely on market mechanisms only reinforce the alienation of local communities from their land and natural resources.

Although women are the main food producers in the world and the first responsible for the well-being of their families and communities, existing patriarchal structures continue to despoil them, by despoiling them of the land they cultivate and by depriving them of their right to access natural resources. As most women peasants and family farmers do not enjoy perennial, legitimately recognized access to land they are particularly vulnerable in the face of expulsions and expropriations.

The struggle against land grabbing is a struggle against capitalism, neoliberalism and a predatory economic model. Testimonies by our sisters and brothers from Brazil, Burkina Faso, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, France, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Senegal, South Africa, Thailand and Uganda have made us realize the extent to which land grabbing threatens peasants and family farming, as well as nature, the environment and food sovereignty.

Land grabbing displaces and dislocates communities, destroys local economies, cultures and the social fabric. It endangers the identity of communities, be they peasants, small-scale farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, workers, indigenous peoples or the “casteless”. Those who dare stand up to defend their legitimate rights and the survival of their families and communities are beaten, imprisoned and killed.

There is no way to attenuate the impact of this economic model and of the power structures that defend it. Our land and identities are not for sale, or rent. But we do not admit defeat. In organizing and mobilizing ourselves, and in ensuring the cohesion of our communities, we have been able to foil land grabbing in many places.

Furthermore, our societies increasingly recognize that sustainable family farming and small-scale food production represent the most sustainable model – socially, economically or environmentally – for the use of resources and to guarantee the right to food for all.

We recall the terms of the Dakar Appeal and reiterate our commitment to resist and fight against land grabbing through all available means, to support all those who fight against land grabs and despoilments, and to pressure our national governments and international institutions so they fulfil their obligations towards the rights of peoples.

We commit ourselves more particularly to:

- *Organize rural and urban communities in order to fight against land grabbing in all its forms.*
- *Capacity building for our communities and movements in terms of demanding, recovering and defending our rights, our land and our access to natural resources.*
- *Obtain and perpetuate, within our communities, the rights of women to access land and natural resources.*
- *Raise public awareness to the fact that land grabbing causes crises that affect society as a whole.*
- *Build alliances between various sectors, population groups and regions in order to mobilize our societies and put an end to land grabbing.*
- *Strengthen our movements to better promote and achieve food sovereignty as well as true land reform.*

In order to fulfil the above commitments we are going to develop the following actions:

Regarding capacity building to organize local resistance

- Give our communities an account of the deliberations and commitments that took place and were made during the conference.

- Put in place our own information databases on the issue of land grabbing, by documenting cases and gathering relevant information, and evidence backed up with figures, on the processes, the actors and the impact of land grabbing, etc.
- Ensure that our communities have at their disposal the information they need regarding laws, their rights, the investors, contracts, and so forth, so they can stand up in an efficient manner to the manoeuvring of private sector investors and governments that attempt to take hold of our land and natural resources.
- Put in place early warning systems to alert communities to risks and threats.
- Strengthen our communities through political and technical training initiatives, restore the pride of being men and women peasants, small-scale farmers and producers, who provide the food that feeds the planet in a healthy and sustainable manner, and this especially among the young.
- Guarantee land rights and rights to access resources for women through the awareness raising of our communities and movements, based on the importance of protecting land rights for women, especially in customary systems.
- Develop and use local media to organize members of our communities and of other population sectors and share with them information on land grabbing.
- Make sure our leaders respect the rules established by our communities and obligate them to account to us, our communities and our organizations.

Regarding legal aid for our defence

- Develop our own legal aid systems and work in collaboration with legal and human rights experts.
- Condemn all forms of violence as well as the criminalization of our struggles and mobilizations for the protection of our rights.
- Mobilize to obtain the immediate release of all persons imprisoned because of their commitment to the struggle for land and territory, and set up as a matter of urgency solidarity campaigns with all those who are faced with this type of conflict.

Regarding advocacy and mobilization

- Institutionalize 17 April as the day of worldwide mobilization against land grabbing, but also identify other appropriate dates that could serve as a rallying point for mobilization in order to defend our land and common goods.



- Develop political arguments to denounce and discredit the economic model that underlies land grabbing and the different actors and initiatives that aim to promote and legitimize these practices.

- Establish an Observatory of the peoples on land grabbing to facilitate and centralize the collection of data, communications, planning actions, lobbying initiatives, awareness raising, research, analysis, and so forth.
- Promote women's land rights through land redistribution initiatives targeted on women, and other actions. Push for the promotion of laws and the establishment of policies that answer the specific needs of women.
- Take our messages and demands to our parliaments, governments and international institutions. Carry on with our commitment towards the Committee on World Food Security and demand that processes such as the FAO voluntary guidelines on the Responsible Government of Tenure of Land and Other Natural Resources truly contribute to the protection and promotion of the rights to land of peasants and small-scale food producers, as well as their access to natural resources.
- Identify and target local forums and national and international spaces where we can undertake actions to mobilize and sensitize the public in order to create in society a broad movement of resistance to land grabbing.
- Plan actions that target private companies (including financial companies), the World Bank and other multilateral development banks that promote, encourage and profit from projects involving the grabbing of land and natural resources.
- Carry on with our opposition to industrial self-regulatory regimes such as the Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment (RAI).
- Develop and strengthen our actions to achieve food sovereignty and land reform, in order to promote the recognition of customary systems, while guaranteeing the access to land and natural resources for women and young people.
- Support the right of peoples to enjoy their resources through the occupation of land, the occupation of the offices of private investors, as well as through other protests and actions aimed at recovering common goods.
- Demand that our governments fulfil their obligations as regards human rights, that they immediately put a halt to transfers of land and natural resources to private investors, that they cancel existing contracts and return grabbed land, and that they protect rural and urban communities from current and future grabbing operations.

Regarding the strengthening of alliances

- Build strong networks of organizations and alliances at different levels – local, regional and international – based on the Dakar Appeal and put peasants, family farmers and small-scale food producers at the very centre of these alliances.
- Create alliances with members and share-holders of pension funds to prevent fund managers from investing in projects that lead to land grabbing.
- Build strategic alliances with the press and the media, so they accurately report our messages and reality. Fight against prejudices spread by the prevailing media with regard to the struggle for land and agrarian reform in Zimbabwe.

We remind all organizations that share these principles and support these actions to join our Global Alliance Against Land Grabbing, an alliance that we solemnly create on this day, here in Nyéléni.

Globalize the struggle! Globalize hope!

More information see :

Philippe Revelli portofolio on Mali : [_http://philipperevelli.com/journal/?p=1197_](http://philipperevelli.com/journal/?p=1197_)

New Film Exposes the Devastating Impact Land Investments are having in Mali :
http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1251:new-film-exposes-the-devastating-impact-land-investments-are-having-in-mali&catid=23:agrarian-reform&Itemid=36

and the blog of the Alliance against Land grabbing : stopauxaccaparementsdesterres.over-blog.com

La Via Campesina is the international movement which brings together millions of peasants, small and medium-size farmers, landless people, women farmers, indigenous people, migrants and agricultural workers from around the world. It defends small-scale sustainable agriculture as a way to promote social justice and dignity. It strongly opposes corporate driven agriculture and transnational companies that are destroying people and nature.

La Via Campesina comprises about 150 local and national organizations in 70 countries from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. Altogether, it represents about 200 million farmers. It is an autonomous, pluralist and multicultural movement, independent from any political, economic or other type of affiliation.

More on www.viacampesina.org



Operative secretariat:

Jln. Mampang Prapatan XIV no 5 Jakarta Selatan, Jakarta 12790 Indonesia

Tel/fax: +62-21-7991890/+62-21-7993426

Email: viacampesina@viacampesina.org