



At the end of 2002, it was agreed that the POPULAR COALITION TO ERADICATE HUNGER AND POVERTY, created in 1996, would become the INTERNATIONAL LAND COALITION, to better describe its primary areas of activity and the unique contribution it makes with its partners in the global battle against hunger and poverty.

**ASSEMBLY OF MEMBERS
17 February 2003**

SECRETARIAT REPORT

SECRETARIAT REPORT TO THE ASSEMBLY OF MEMBERS

Bruce H. Moore, Coordinator, International Land Coalition
Assembly of Members
Rome, 17 February 2003

Co-Chairpersons Phrang Roy and Manuel Chiriboga, Members and Partners of the International Land Coalition, Distinguished Guests, Colleagues in the Secretariat, Ladies and Gentleman,

Let me begin by thanking you for being here. The demands of your work means that time away from your organization is a significant contribution to the Coalition. Your presence and the ideas you will bring forward in this Assembly of Members will be a further manifestation of the essence of the Coalition. Unfortunately, current events, such as the crisis in Bolivia, have prevented some partners from travelling – having to cancel their plans in the past few days.

This Assembly marks a stage of achievement and a step into the future for the Coalition. I believe it is a truly decisive moment in the Coalition's history – a moment when the dream that fuelled its creation and sustained its early activities, has finally become a reality – a vision shared by many in this room and others around the world, but also fuelled in large measure, by Bahman Mansuri – our special guest today.

It is perhaps fitting, then, that I express this view of progress and our doorway to the future only a short while after an important, and I believe, a highly significant, change to our new name.

As President Båge explained, at the end of last year it was agreed to change the name of the Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty to the International Land Coalition – keeping the same abbreviated form – the Coalition. You may still be asking, why did the Secretariat propose this change to the Coalition's Interim Steering Committee? What was the purpose and reason for this name? This change captures the transformations that have taken place in the little over seven years since the establishment of the Coalition. It reflects the emergence of the precise niche of the Coalition and its contribution to the agenda for rural development. And, it overcomes a lesson we learnt and never anticipated: our previous name resulted in our being perceived as a popular movement or NGO. It meant that our unique quality of building an alliance of civil society, intergovernmental and governmental organizations was not projected. So let me pause to remind you of the mission.

The International Land Coalition is a global alliance of intergovernmental, governmental and civil-society organizations. The Coalition works together with the rural poor to increase their secure access to natural resources, especially land, and enable them to participate directly in policy and decision-making processes that affect their livelihoods at local, national, regional and international levels.

This is a moment for which we can all be proud of the various ways in which partners from around the world have shaped the development of the Coalition. But, it is important to temper the enthusiasm for our achievements with a recognition of the very difficult times that we are living through. On the one hand, and once again, the spectres of conflict and war cast their dark shadows over the world's horizons. And on the other hand, as President Båge also reminded us, more than one-fifth of the world's population continues to live in extreme poverty. This, we know, is unacceptable.

And let us not forget that at least 75 percent of these people – some 900 million – live in rural areas. The majority of them are dependent on land for their subsistence. In many cases, their access to land and related resources is both highly limited and very insecure.

With few, if any, assets, the rural poor frequently suffer food shortages, have little command over their livelihoods and are among the first to suffer the effects of low rainfall, declines in food production

resulting from environmental degradation, and increases in prices for agricultural inputs and basic household commodities. For most of the rural poor, secure access to land is fundamental to overcoming poverty.

It is important that we keep the link between land and poverty in the forefront. The International Land Coalition does not exist solely to bring about changes – however important – only in relation to land. No, the International Land Coalition – and all its Members and Partners, share the same common, unchanging goal: to rid this world of poverty. And as we recognize this, let us not forget the words of Mahatma Gandhi, who taught us that “poverty is the worst form of violence”.

In reporting on the progress and development of the Popular Coalition over these last seven years, I shall organize my report into three main sections: the past, the present and the future.

Let me begin by casting your minds back to two long days in November 1995 and the genesis of what became known as the Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty. After months of preparations and wide-ranging consultation and dialogue with an impressive range of stakeholders, almost a thousand people participated in the Conference on Hunger and Poverty convened by IFAD and held in Brussels on 20-21 November 1995.

The vision of the Conference was very much action-oriented and down to earth. Together, the delegates examined the possibilities of forming a coalition to increase the ability and the capacity to forge an alliance of stakeholders that would work together to empower the poor and hungry, provide them with appropriate and meaningful technology, strengthen the coping strategies of vulnerable groups and provide ways and means by which people and their local communities could reverse the degradation of their natural resource base.

In fact, I can allow myself a smile as I remember the seemingly endless night when the Conference drafting committee, Tony Quizon, Manuel Chiriboga and I, then the Director of a Canadian NGO, fuelled by caffeine, adrenalin and tight deadlines, put together, with the guidance of Bahman, the last few sections of what became known as the “Plan of Action”

It is worth recalling a few of the Plan’s words:

Participants recognized the many priorities necessitating action. This resulted in a commitment to form a coalition of actors who, though different in nature and mandate, must come together to support these civil society initiatives in combating hunger and poverty. As a concrete first step towards the creation of a broad framework for such a coalition, the Conference adopts a Plan of Action for a Popular Coalition. The Plan called for:

1. the establishment of a Coalition for the empowerment of the poor
2. the establishment of a knowledge network
3. the development of strategies to build public awareness and create political will
4. initiating a global programme in emergency prevention
5. ensuring early implementation of the convention to combat desertification.

With specific relation to the first of these, the establishment of a coalition, the Conference called upon the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to take the necessary action to initiate this process. IFAD was asked, for example, to help foster policy dialogue and create an enabling environment for development based on the empowerment of poor people. In particular, it was hoped that these initiatives would focus on enabling civil society organizations to take part in decision making from local to international levels. Furthermore, it was recognized that special attention should be given to the revival of agrarian reform on national and international agendas as a necessary condition for empowerment of, and sustainable development for, the poor.

The Plan of Action also highlighted the need to support the capacity building of civil- society organizations in combatting hunger and poverty, including direct financial support for people-to-people learning and exchanges, building on successful experiences in peoples' empowerment and community-level training delivered through civil-society organizations, with particular attention to the empowerment of rural women. To achieve this objective, the Plan of Action called on national and international institutions, such as IFAD, to pool part of their resources in a special grant fund to support innovative capacity-building programmes. Support was also requested for the replication and up-scaling of successful experiences.

So, what was the Conference saying? First, the Conference was calling for a new way of working – the building of a unique global alliance – a coalition – bringing together governments, intergovernmental organizations and civil society. Second was the affirmation of the central importance of enabling the rural poor to have secure access to land. This secure access, they were telling the world, is basic to the achievement of lasting solutions to hunger and poverty. Secure access to land results in greater productivity, increased family income and sustainable land use. Thirdly, and finally, they were highlighting the value of learning from civil society, from learning about what works...and what doesn't. They were telling us to look, and seek to understand practice rather than falling back on theory and ideas.

These three guiding principles can perhaps be summarized as follows: 1) work together in the fight against hunger; 2) increase the rural poor's access to land; and 3) learn from each other, particularly from civil society, about what works.

These remain the guiding principles that drive the work of the Coalition.

Much has happened since the evening of the 21st of November 1995 and the closing of the Conference on Hunger and Poverty.

These seven years have provided a unique opportunity for experimentation, for testing, for listening and for learning -- and most importantly for partnering with organizations in support of practical actions in some 40 countries. The result is a vibrant portfolio of programmes and activities with partners. Actions speak louder than words. The result, of the past and the ongoing activities and projects, is that the International Land Coalition has evolved into one of the leading global convening mechanisms for addressing land issues. In so doing, it has become an important support for partners already engaged in the land issue, be they a small community-based CSO, financial institutions such as the World Bank or UN agencies such as IFAD, FAO and WFP. At the same time, it has also become a vehicle for helping communities and civil society to more actively engage with the land issue. I can think, for example, of the Government of Belgium's Belgian Survival Fund, for which we are preparing a proposal for a new programme in Niger and Uganda along with IFAD and involving the Uganda Land Alliance and FAO, or the new activities and programmes that we are preparing with some of the regional divisions at IFAD. The Coalition has become a forum for debate and for the elaboration of exciting new ideas – the Common Platform and our LAND Partnerships Programme, for example, are the fruit of the process of coming together and sharing. However, I will come to some of these programmes later.

In turning to the progress of the Coalition's programmes I will start with the Agrarian Reform Network. ARnet, as it was commonly called, was the Coalition's vanguard programme. It provided the first systematic engagement with civil society which became the basis for consolidating our presence at national and regional levels. It was the beginning of the Coalition's efforts to capture and disseminate the knowledge of civil society and to build networks.

ARnet was made possible by the generous support of the Government of Italy through its Supplementary Trust Fund at IFAD. Two new programmes have emerged out of ARnet as we strive to identify the most effective and efficient means of contributing to the search for knowledge and supporting civil society. Once again, funding support from the Italian Government will allow the first tranche of activities of the

new Knowledge Programme and the Network Support Programme to be financed in 2003. Partner agreements already are being developed in some cases with others still being identified.

The initial Italy grant provided the basis for activities in 31 countries involving South Asia, South Eastern Asia, West Africa, Southern Africa, North Africa and the Middle East and Latin America. The initial activities, starting in 1999, were based on country and regional action plans that had been prepared through a lengthy consultative process convened on behalf of the Popular Coalition in consultation with the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD).

In the course of implementation, the interaction with partners has produced a range of lessons on how to strengthen the Coalition and its knowledge programme. The ongoing interaction, discussion and consultation with partners have involved electronic communication, missions by Secretariat staff to a large number of national nodes, the organization of regional workshops in Asia, Africa, Central and South America, and the participation of national nodes in a significant number of consultations and global events, including the World Summit on Sustainable Development, to which a delegation comprising many here today participated; the World Bank Regional Land Workshops in Asia, Latin America and Africa, where partners actively participated; and a number of other venues and programmes. This consultative process has led to three principal outcomes:

- many of the ARnet partners have now become engaged in the numerous programmes of the Coalition, becoming Coalition nodes in which the ARnet activities continue as one element of their involvement with the Coalition;
- supervision and monitoring missions by Coalition Secretariat Officers to national and regional nodes, bringing forward progressive ideas for strengthening the knowledge and networking roles of the Coalition; and,
- design and development of a new programme structure for 2003 and beyond.

As a result, we are currently in the processing of closing the last of the ARnet activities.

Building on the main lessons learnt and experiences gained, the focus is now on two discrete sets of related activities:

1. The Knowledge Programme, involving the identification, documentation and sharing of information on the practical ways in which civil-society organizations can contribute to increasing the rural poor's access to land and other natural resources; and
2. The Network Support Programme, which will provide targeted assistance to enable civil-society networks to strengthen their capacity to either overcome particular constraints and obstacles to their operational efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability or to help them seize new opportunities for increasing impact, up-scaling or collective influence.

Most importantly, the Knowledge Programme goal is to provide information to CSOs on practical approaches, methods and tools. At the same time, it constitutes a forum to deepen the understanding of a range of key issues and questions. And it seeks to open opportunities for CSOs to build new partnerships and establish new linkages. Finally, it acts as a vehicle for raising the awareness of other key stakeholders, such as governments, intergovernmental organizations and development practitioners, about the many and varied ways in which CSOs can contribute to increasing the rural poor's secure access to land and other productive resources.

In order to maximize their usefulness to CSOs, governments and other partners, the outputs of the Knowledge Programme are clustered around a series of evolving themes, which will be modified at appropriate.

One theme is *Land Literacy: Awareness-Raising and Community Empowerment*. The term ‘land literacy’ has been adopted by the Coalition to describe activities that are directly related to efforts to increase the awareness of poor households and communities about land rights and entitlements, as well as activities that provide practical tools and advice on how these rights can be claimed and enjoyed more effectively. Thus, land literacy involves more than conventional ‘community education’ programmes in that land literacy describes learning processes that give communities the power of knowledge and equips them with the tools to act in order to strengthen their land rights.

Another theme is *Working Together: Institutional Arrangements*. History has repeatedly demonstrated the power and importance of collective voice, organization and action. It has shown the value of working together and of combining forces. The Knowledge Programme shares information on the different ways in which diverse civil-society actors and other stakeholders have worked together to achieve their goals and bring about change. It describes different networks, alliances and partnership arrangements. It describes structures and procedures and outlines strengths and weaknesses. Above all, it provides others with both the justification and a series of practical options for bringing together different actors. Current activities range from international alliances to small community-based initiatives.

A third theme is *Successful Approaches to Policy and Advocacy*. CSOs and the communities they serve have the power to influence policy and public thinking. Laws, policies and programmes can all be shaped by effective advocacy and a strong voice. The Knowledge Programme describes successful strategies, approaches and campaigns that have led to concrete changes. It thereby provides a menu of ideas and options for CSOs.

A fourth theme is *The Reason Why: Demonstrating the Reasons for Improved Resource Access*. The Coalition’s partners recognize that the benefits of secure access to land and related resources are manifold; *inter alia*, land conflict reduction, improved natural resource management and reduced urban migration. The Knowledge Programme collects and disseminates evidence and examples of practical actions that support these arguments, thereby demonstrating the multiple benefits to the wider society from improving the resource access by the rural poor.

In each of the knowledge areas, the Coalition supports the publication and dissemination of ‘enabling knowledge’: knowledge that allows others to adopt practices or adapt existing methodologies based upon the lessons they learn from achievements in other countries and communities.

Tomorrow’s workshop will illustrate the breadth and depth of the knowledge within the network, where we will learn:

- What actions or strategies brought about the change?
- Why were these actions or strategies effective?
- How were these actions or strategies carried out? What would the organization do differently if it were to repeat the action or strategy?
- Under what conditions are these actions or strategies most likely to succeed?
- What are the key strengths, weaknesses and constraints to be anticipated?
- Which actors and stakeholders need to be involved? What should their roles be?
- Whom can CSOs contact for further information or to build strategic alliances?

The Network Support Programme, previously a component of ARnet, helps to establish and strengthen civil-society networks at the country level so that they are able to identify a common agenda, set appropriate working methods and implement plans of action. The purpose of the networking programme is to assist and link otherwise disparate civil-society and community-based organizations so that they can pursue the fulfillment of their needs from a position of collective strength based on a united strategy. Among other goals, it is expected that organized networks will be more effective in the creation of fora

for dialogue, a voice in policy formulation and a path for communities to become educated in order to influence local decision making from an informed point of view.

Each request for co-financing from the Network Support Programme is evaluated on its individual merits. In broad terms, the activities supported by the Network Support Programme focus on one of two areas:

1. Improving information exchanges, knowledge management and network sustainability; and
2. Upscaling network activities in order that the experience of civil society can be demonstrated to have wider relevance than the tendency to see the experience as only having local value and application.

The overall goal of this activity is to expand the results and strengthen the impact of rural people's networks. Networks perform a wide variety of functions, such as linking organizations around common goals, providing a framework for sharing experiences and strategies, fostering collective will and strengthening the political voice of marginalized and vulnerable groups. Networks can also help poor communities acquire new technical skills and capacities.

Strengthening the capacity of communities to become the agents of their own development is central to the Coalition and in particular to the Community Empowerment Facility. The CEF, as it is commonly known, is a catalytic co-financing grant fund that assists in the capacity building and institutional strengthening of CSOs and promotes and supports innovative approaches and initiatives. The CEF also seeks to lay the groundwork for the replication and up-scaling of successful civil-society and community-based projects.

CEF activities usually fall under one of the following areas:

- Efforts to gain access to land and protect existing rights. This includes the settlement of the tenancy rights of landless workers or peasants to land they are cultivating, facilitating land registration and the legal certification of land titles, and the promotion of tenancy or ownership options through resettlement, restitution, leasing, land sales, sharecropping and other initiatives.
- The provision and protection of access to water rights.
- The promotion of the participatory management of common property resources. This includes extension and training, efforts to gain access to services in order to achieve the productivity and income benefits accruing from secure access to land, inputs, credit, marketing and other support that may be necessary for both the sustainable management of resources and the enhancement of the skills of community organizations.
- Support in conflict resolution. This includes support for relevant efforts within and among communities, and between communities and powerful private interests with respect to land, water and other natural resources.
- The enhancement of participation. This includes efforts to strengthen the role of women, indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups.

I believe that the CEF has allowed us to explore some very interesting issues. Indeed, the list is long:

- the direct participation of communities in obtaining access to state forest land as provided for under the recent Land Law in Albania. You can learn more about this from our partner that is here with us from Albania;
- the development of a plan to improve the livelihoods of indigenous peoples through the sustainable management of land and forests in Bolivia;

- the regularization of communal land and efforts to ensure equitable access to water and the development of a rational plan for water use among indigenous peoples in Ecuador;
- support for land conflict resolution among indigenous peoples within the framework of the peace agreement in Guatemala. CONGCOOP is with us and would, I am sure, welcome the chance to explain this work to you;
- technical support to help fishermen retain control over the fishing areas gained after a long and difficult encounter with the state in Uttar Pradesh, India. Again the Coalition partner, SDF, is here with us;
- an information campaign on resource rights and community development strategies for the sustainable management of local resources (water, land, technologies and markets) in Madagascar;
- the strengthening of women's opportunities through access to land and markets in Malawi;
- the establishment of a revolving fund for land titling and legalization in Nicaragua;
- a national campaign among citizen's organizations to influence the future of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Programme in The Philippines;
- community participation in decision making at the municipal level concerning people's property rights in The Philippines. Partners from the Philippines can discuss this with you over the next few days;
- support for start-up activities by the Southern African Natural Products Trade Association (SANProTA), which seeks to empower poor rural communities in Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe by creating opportunities for them to derive income from local natural products through national, regional and international markets;
- support for land literacy to raise the awareness of farmer leaders concerning the Uganda Land Act of 1998. Tomorrow, the Uganda Land Alliance will share their experience with us; and
- support for pilot projects to address key issues affecting the agricultural productivity and environmental performance of resettlement schemes in Zimbabwe.

From 2000 until the present, 14 projects have been approved, including four in Asia, five in Africa, one in East Europe and four in Latin America. The total amount committed to these projects is USD 855 000. The currently available resources of approximately USD 3 million from the IFAD and the World Bank provide the funding for the period through to the end of 2004.

While the programmes I have described support communities in a holistic manner, the Coalition recognizes the need for further efforts to support the resource needs of women -- the majority of the rural poor. We know, all too well, that women and woman-headed households are also the most vulnerable to poverty and food insecurity. Yet, the voices of women are rarely heard. Indeed, they are a 'silent majority'. Women hold title to only a small fraction of the land they cultivate and have little access to credit and educational opportunities. Their power to make decisions to improve the well-being of their families is extremely limited. This 'feminization of poverty' is deeply worrying. It directly affects the well-being of current and future generations.

The Women's Resource Access Programme (WRAP) was developed in 2001 to raise international understanding of the need to improve women's resource rights. Through small, village-based discussions and workshops, WRAP directly captures and shares the knowledge, experience and views of poor rural women about the importance of land and the obstacles and social practices that prevent women from gaining access to land, thereby adding to their impoverishment in the event their family status changes.

WRAP provides a tool for listening to and documenting the views and opinions of poor rural women about the value of and the direct link between secure access to land and other natural resources, family food security and the opportunity for a better future. WRAP helps to raise national and international understanding of the need to improve women's access to these resources. WRAP also provides development practitioners with a rapid, effective and low-cost participatory tool for incorporating poor women's voices during project identification, design, implementation and evaluation.

The WRAP approach is built around a series of small community workshops that offer a forum for listening to the views and perceptions of poor community women on a range of selected resource access issues. To create a suitable forum, external participation is kept to a minimum, and the workshops are held in the fields and forests in which the women work, rather than in the formal meeting venues that can inhibit participants from speaking openly and candidly.

The WRAP process is led by a local NGO partner of the Coalition on the basis of its legitimacy and credibility with community-level women's groups.

Since its creation, WRAP has held 15 community workshops with women in Cambodia, India, Indonesia and Nepal. These were made possible through supplementary funds provided by the Government of Japan to IFAD. The findings of the WRAP community workshops that took place in India in 2001 and, in particular, the words of the women who participated have been reported on several occasions in the national press and have been carried by a current affairs magazine distributed in 14 countries in Asia. The voices of these women have also been quoted at a number of international meetings.

The first series of WRAP workshops has demonstrated the value of the approach and has given us the opportunity to develop and refine the methodology with our partners. We are hopeful that we will be able to expand the programme in terms of geographic coverage, and also in terms of scope.

In this respect, we are very pleased by the recent approval to use DFID funds to work with IFAD in the context of four selected countries to see how this approach can best be incorporated into their project cycle. As a result, we are in the early stages of organizing further WRAP workshops in East and West Africa. We are, however, seeking further funding to expand this programme elsewhere in Africa and into Latin America and the Caribbean.

As these activities affirm, sustainable development means working together. The need to forge new ways of working together is a lesson learnt from past development efforts. It can be said that the history of sustainable development policies and programmes has shown that government-led development without the active support of civil society, and civil-society movements without the institutional and enabling support of government, have both failed. The record of official development assistance confirms that the active participation by communities in the planning and implementation of development policies and programmes is an essential prerequisite to sustainable human development.

Revitalized alliances between governments and CSOs are clearly central to sustainable development, especially if they are coupled with the moral and financial persuasion of the international community. Where it is possible to merge the interests of civil society, intergovernmental organizations and governments into a common platform or agenda for action, the synergistic effect can create innovative ways to address the resource rights and needs of the rural poor.

This was the aim of a two-year-long consultative process of stakeholders at local, national, regional and global levels. The consultative process resulted in the programme and document "Towards a Common Platform on Access to Land", which was widely endorsed when it was launched at the WSSD in 2002. Towards a Common Platform on Access to Land is a dynamic tool for strengthening global consensus on land issues. It is a living document and will be re-issued on a regular basis in order to reflect the evolving experience, lessons, progress and expanding collaborative work being undertaken to foster improved property rights for the rural poor.

Towards a Common Platform on Access to Land provides a range of practical ways and means to facilitate alliances among sectors, assist governments in establishing land policies and services, strengthen rural people's organizations and work in partnership with civil-society and international organizations. The process of consultation among stakeholders was a major contributor to the high regard that the Coalition now enjoys as a convenor of diverse partners on land issues.

The interest in and support for the Common Platform to serve as an iterative and therefore ongoing vehicle for building alliances led to the call for other tools that could help merge the efforts of stakeholders into joint efforts.

In response to this call, the Coalition developed its LAND Partnership programme, which was timely to launch at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in August 2002 by many of our partners – a number which were on the Coalition delegation to Johannesburg and can share their perspectives with you during this Assembly.

Land Alliances for National Development, or ‘LAND Partnerships’, were launched by the Coalition at the WSSD. More than 70 representatives of governments and national and international CSOs and NGOs took part. On this occasion, the Governments of the Philippines and Indonesia declared their intention to launch LAND Partnerships. Since then, discussions have been opened with other governments which have approached the Coalition. And the Government of the Netherlands has become the first northern and donor partner. We are happy to have representatives from the Netherlands in this meeting. LAND Partnerships constitute a worldwide initiative led by the Coalition to further country-level collaboration among state, civil-society, bilateral and international actors. This collaboration is needed to achieve participatory dialogue, improve policy formulation, establish joint action to achieve secure resource tenure for households with user rights, and increase the access to land by the landless and near-landless.

The first step in this collaborative process will involve the establishment of a neutral forum in each participating country. In guiding this process, the Coalition is hoping to use its experience in convening stakeholders across institutional borders to address a range of complex and often difficult land-management issues. LAND Partnerships will not be prescriptive, but will nurture arenas, fora, events, committees, land alliances or other structures that can provide a framework and mechanism for those with diverse, vested interests in land to find a common basis for progress. Through the establishment of LAND Partnerships within countries, the Coalition believes it is possible to find common ground, build alliances and resolve conflicts. LAND Partnerships can then move to the next stage in the development of country and community-specific solutions to the historic, social, economic and political challenges involved in the improvement in land access by the poor. Specifically LAND Partnerships will:

- develop country-level, multi-stakeholder alliances, coalitions, commissions, or other convening mechanisms suited to country requirements in order to improve the security of the access to land and related factors of production by poor rural households and communities; and
- assist country LAND Partnerships to identify either locally, or through knowledge exchanged with other countries, the policy, programming and service-delivery systems that have created enabling conditions for the successful improvement in the access to land by the rural poor.

While I have now reported on most of our key programme activities it may be said, and I believe accurately so, that the Coalition is more than the sum of its programmes. It is the solidarity and synergy that our diverse partners comprise. It is our shared sense that the Coalition is a vehicle for change – for ways of work that are proving to be possible.

It is about the marshalling of common commitments, shared beliefs and different skills

It is our empathy for Fundacion Tierra and Manuel Urioste, who spoke to me yesterday to say he could not come, to tell the Assembly about needing the Coalition more than ever in the struggle for democracy. It is about fostering opportunities for the views of partners to be heard, as when Bheki Maboyi from CREATE in Zimbabwe presented their experience to the World Bank’s Africa workshop on land policy issues held in Uganda. It is about VB Rawat, with us today from India, working with our partners from Nepal and KPA and RMI in Indonesia in the WRAP programme. It is when my colleague Richard shares this enthusiasm about the work that the Uganda Land Alliance has done to provide a focus for NGOs working on the land issue and for engagement in government policy making

And likewise, the Coalition is about what Annalisa told me is the real potential for the Coalition to work with its local partners to help bring people together in Guatemala as it recovers from years of bitter conflict. Or the work that FEPP, our local partner in Ecuador, has been doing to help local communities negotiate fair and manageable prices for the land that they wish to acquire.

And speaking from first-hand experience, my mind moves from governments inserting ideas from the Coalition into their statements at the Commission on Sustainable Development, to the headline in Johannesburg, "Where Will the Landless People Land - In Jail". This is where some of our partners from the National Land Committee and the Landless People's Movement were when I got off the plane in Johannesburg for the WSSD - all resulting from being wrongly accused of abusing their permit to meet and present their views. I can recall many other experiences -- but the key to me is that the Coalition is a voice that can cross all levels -- as above, from the landless to the corridors of international negotiations on sustainable development.

This progress makes this Assembly important in many ways. One is to bring greater form and function to our own governance. When the Secretariat of the Coalition was opened in the summer of 1998, it was agreed with the Interim Steering Committee that we should use the limited resources to respond to the interests from partners -- to test whether the concept of the Coalition could be realized in practice. Only then would it be warranted to return to the question and acknowledged need for a stronger governance structure. This stage has arrived and will be an outcome of this Assembly.

Yes, the Coalition is much more than its programmes, it is much more than its activities. It is about a new understanding, a new way of working. It is about the strength and vitality of its membership.

The aspirations and expectations of the partners in the Coalition will continue to be challenging. Your organization, like the Coalition, is all too aware of the funding environment. This is where we will have to work together.

The need to highlight the financial challenges does not diminish the potential and opportunity before the International Land Coalition. The achievements and the expanding ownership by you, the partners, provides not only an invaluable resource, it also provides the commitment upon which we can now develop a participatory strategy for the future. I hope that you will agree that activities I have reported demonstrate our collective strength. The strategy, which we will continue to build through this afternoon's discussion, will lead to a Strategic Plan for 2004-2006.

As I have said, the Coalition has reached a critical and decisive moment in its history. A growing number of CSOs, governments, intergovernmental partners and individuals have come to see the real value of the Coalition. Our programmes are expanding, our influence and involvement are growing, our capacity to make a difference is beginning to flower.

This, I think, is why the outlook is positive.

In the coming months we will see many activities -- some new, some continuations of the past and some in new regions. In fact, this Friday I will leave for Georgia, accompanied by Tony Quizon with us from the Philippines, Fernando Eguren from CEPES, Peru and Stavri Pllaha from Albania. The Coalition is assisting the three countries of the Caucuses in their examination of land policies and in strengthening the role of civil-society. While this is one small new effort, this report could continue in outlining the activities in the year ahead. However, I expect you now have a good flavor of the Coalition in real life.

In closing, the Coalition could not and would not be what it is today without the steadfast and generous support and role played by IFAD. While this could be said of others, I find it most appropriate that my report closes, on your behalf, with a word of thanks to IFAD.

I have attempted to review the past, assess the present and project a glimpse of the future.

How right the Conference on Hunger and Poverty was, how right was that belief, that commitment, that belief in the value of a new Coalition.

I began by reminding us all of the goals and beliefs that had shaped the formation of the Coalition at the 1995 Conference on Hunger and Poverty. I want to end by calling upon you to join me in thanking those people – some who are here today -- who brought about the creation of the Coalition, to thank them for their vision, their belief, their commitment and their dedication to the battle against poverty.

Thank you
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