

# REACHING OUT

Exploring Partnership Opportunities  
in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan

A Presentation to the  
SOUTH CAUCASUS REGIONAL LAND POLICY  
CONFERENCE

Tbilisi, Georgia  
24-26 February 2003

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## **Reaching Out to the South Caucasus Region**

The International Land Coalition is very pleased to join with you for this very important Land Policy Conference of the South Caucasus Region. For many gathered here in Tbilisi, you will be meeting the International Land Coalition for the first time.

The International Land Coalition has come to this meeting with partners from the Philippines, Peru and Albania and from the Coalition Secretariat from Rome. Our hope is to share our experiences, learn from you and explore potential partnerships and alliances with you for the future.

From as far away as Asia and South America or more closely from the Balkans, we believe we have come here to join with those of you from Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan through a shared vision - to improve land policies as a pre-condition for sustainable rural development and to realise the multiplier effect that a stronger rural sector can contribute to both poverty reduction and the expansion of your national economies.

The International Land Coalition holds the view that the economic, social and environmental functions of land provides a platform for a holistic approach to strengthening the ability of the rural poor to become agents of their own well-being and in so doing, to contribute to greater economic and political stability. We would go so far as to suggest that political stability is an embedded benefit in legislative, regulatory and judicial systems of transparent and accountable property rights.

The International Land Coalition is a global alliance of intergovernmental, governmental and civil-society organisations including NGOs, small scale farmers, agricultural workers and rural women's groups. The Coalition works together with the rural poor to increase their secure access to natural resources, especially land, and to enable them to participate directly in policy and decision-making processes that affect their livelihoods at local, national, regional and international levels.

The Coalition is the outcome of the 1995 international Conference on Hunger and Poverty convened by the United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development – IFAD. The Coalition was founded on a comprehensive analysis of issues needing urgent action and a range of policies requiring attention. These include:

- the inequitable distribution of wealth;
- the lack of secure access to productive resources;
- the insufficient participation by poor people in decisions affecting their daily lives; and,
- the need for reforms in macro-economic policies that favour powerful vested interests and adversely affect the poor.

Furthermore, the Coalition was founded on an assessment of the history of development which has shown, time and time again, that government-led

development without the active participation by civil-society and civil-society led development without the enabling policy and public services of government have both failed. Further to which, the International Land Coalition aims to foster more coherent and coordinated resource flows and advice from the bilateral and multilateral community. Towards this goal, the founders of the International Land Coalition aimed to forge an alliance that could merge their common but independent actions of stakeholders into a more common platform for action.

In this respect, you may be interested to know that the Coalition is governed by IFAD (the host organisation of the Coalition), the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, the World Food Programme, the World Bank, the European Commission and eight civil-society organisations representing smallholders, peasants, community-based organisations and NGOs from all major regions of the world. This is a unique organisation – a partnership with significant opportunity to combine very diverse resources and spheres of influence into actions to improve the resource rights of the poor.

The Coalition has six action programmes that may be of interest to you and in which you may like to become active partners.

First is a Knowledge Programme that collects and shares practical lessons learned and best practises from the Coalition's network of farmer and rural peoples organisations in over 25 countries.

Second, is a Network Support Programme which helps to strengthen the collective capacity of rural peoples' organisations to work together from the community to the national level to strengthen their capacity, develop common requirements and services and to contribute to the formulation of policies affecting their resource needs.

Third, is the Community Empowerment Facility which supports innovations, training and community development activities on land policy and land use issues, including informing people of their legal rights. It was through this programme that we came to form an alliance with our partner, here today, from Albania.

Fourth, is the Women's Resource Access Programme involving community based workshops to strengthen the capacity of women in terms of their resource needs.

Fifth, is the Common Platform on Access to Land. This is an forum for debate within and between countries in order to further common understandings and seek consensus on land issues, policy and programme requirements and the to promote the roles and responsibilities of civil-society, government and donor organisations in facilitating the resource rights and opportunities for poor and marginalised peoples.

And sixth, is the Coalition's country-level LAND Partnerships. Standing for Land Alliances for National Development, a play in the english language on

the word LAND, these partnerships create a country-level arena in which those affecting and those affected by land policies are part of the national dialogue and advisory work in setting land policies, including ways and means to improve the capacity of governments and the poor themselves.

The Coalition is pleased to be supporting this conference with USAID with whom we are working together in a number of other regions of the world. We look forward to being with you, learning from you, sharing our experiences with you and discovering how we can join with you in the challenging work ahead.

We all know that the challenges to be confronted are not land policies per se, but the real challenge is reduce the unacceptable level of poverty that remains persistent in this region. It would appear to me that, here as in most other regions of the world, the goal of alleviating poverty should under-pin the form and function of land policies, regulations and implementation practises.

The International Land Coalition recognises that land issues are context specific. They are framed by the complex interactions of socio, economic, cultural, historic and political realities. Bearing this in mind, we have found that the members of the International Land Coalition have gained useful knowledge from one another. It is in this spirit that I join with the other members of the Land Coalition delegation to this meeting. We hope our experience is a useful addition to the debate over the next three days. We know that we will go home to the Philippines, Peru, Albania and the Coalition with new ideas that we will learn from you.

Thank You

Bruce H. Moore  
Coordinator  
The International Land Coalition