

KATHMANDU DECLARATION

“Securing Rights to Land for Peace and Food Security”

1. We, over 180 members and partners of the International Land Coalition, representatives from civil society organizations, social and peasant movements, international agencies, and governments, from 43 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas, have gathered in Kathmandu this 21-23 April 2009 under the theme of “Securing Rights to Land for Peace and Food Security”. We share a collective commitment to working together to ensure secure land and resource rights for poor women and men to enable them to live with dignity, and to transform their own lives, institutions and communities. This Conference in Nepal, a country which is undergoing profound political changes in a post-conflict period, has provided us with the appropriate venue and platform to rethink old assumptions, and to chart out new paths.
2. We believe that providing secure access to land and natural resources for poor producers is a vital step to finding lasting peaceful solutions to addressing rural poverty, persistent hunger, and resource conflicts. It is unacceptable that nearly one billion people in the world today are undernourished. Gaining secure access to land and natural resources is central to their enjoyment of full citizenship and wider human rights, especially the right to food. Land issues shape social, economic and political relations, and are a concern for everyone. We welcome the increasing donor recognition of the centrality of land tenure security to poverty reduction.

3. Climate change is increasing unpredictability and risk to the livelihoods of land and natural resource-dependent people. At the same time, the ways in which land is accessed, used and owned are rapidly changing around the globe, creating new challenges to reducing hunger and poverty, particularly amongst women, the landless, agricultural tenants and workers, the 300 million indigenous peoples, and the 1.5 billion smallholders growing food on less than two hectares. Land is becoming an increasingly globalised commodity, fuelled by rising demand for food and agrofuels, for minerals, for tourism, and for ecosystem services including carbon sequestration. Resource-poor land users are facing increased competition for land with other land users, national elites and global investors. We call for urgent action to ensure transparency and disclosure in large-scale land transactions by governments and corporations. There should be full consultation of all stakeholders, particularly local land-users, in such transactions.
4. The need for land and agrarian reforms remain as relevant as ever. Huge inequalities in access to land breed conflict, political instability, social alienation and exclusion, and are a barrier to national economic development. Land and agrarian reforms must, therefore, address new challenges embedded in more complex global realities, including processes of concentration of land ownership, pressures on agriculture from urbanisation and industry, and liberalisation of global trade and markets. It must consider issues of equity, productivity and sustainable resource use.
5. State-led efforts in agrarian reform have also raised questions about the role and the capacity of the state to be a reformer and activist. While the state should continue to play a central role in all forms of reform processes, social movements, producer organizations and civil society organizations should take a complementary role in formulating and implementing policy and in ensuring accountability in its implementation.
6. Rural women play a key role as farmers and guarantors of household and national food security, therefore the multiple roles and responsibilities that they carry must be reflected in actual land rights. Land under the control of women also promotes the dignity of women in the family and society. We commit to working towards the full recognition and integration of women into all aspects of securing land rights, and in promoting the implementation of mechanisms that specifically grant tenure rights to women.
7. Indigenous communities and ethnic minorities are among the millions of the world's poor people dependent on forests, rangelands and other common-pool resources for their food and livelihoods. They also suffer most from discrimination, exclusion, intimidation and violence. The rights of poor forest dwellers and users, especially indigenous peoples, must be recognized. We are encouraged by the increasing trend towards strengthening common property, community forest rights, and recognition of indigenous territories as recognized

by ILO Convention 169 and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Strengthening local tenure rights and collective rights over common pool resources improves sustainable management of natural resources, improves local livelihoods, and reduces resource conflicts.

8. The Prime Minister of Nepal declared that a new Nepal cannot be built without land reform. There can be no lasting peace and prosperity without fair and equitable distribution of land and other productive natural resources in favour of marginalized people. We take specific note of efforts underway to set in place an enabling political and constitutional environment favouring people-led, bottom-up land reform program for social justice, inclusion, peace and food security. By placing land reform as an integral part of the state restructuring process, the government of Nepal has expressed its intention to securing access and ownership of land and other economic assets for large sections of landless, tenants, women and marginalized peasants as indispensable for social justice, democracy and lasting peace.
9. We appreciate the commitments of the government of Nepal, and extend our efforts to support their transformation into reality by continuing the processes of dialogue and partnership among government, international organizations, social movements and other civil society organizations in Nepal.
10. We, participants at this Conference, extend our appreciation and gratitude to the Government of Nepal, especially the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Land Reform and Management, and to the Community Self Reliance Centre (CSRC) for their hospitality and effort in organizing this Conference.

Kathmandu, Nepal
23 April 2009

The International Land Coalition (ILC) is a global alliance of civil society and intergovernmental organizations working together to promote secure and equitable access to and control over land for poor men and women through advocacy, dialogue and capacity-building.

The International Conference, "Securing Rights to Land for Peace and Food Security" was organized on the occasion of the Fourth ILC Global Assembly and took place in Kathmandu, Nepal from 21-23 April 2009. The Conference was jointly sponsored by ILC and the Government of Nepal, and hosted by the Community Self-Reliance Centre (CSRC). Co-hosting the Conference was a consortium of Nepal civil society organizations composed of the Federation of Community Forest Users Network (FECOFUN), MODE Nepal, the NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN), the National Land Rights Concerns Group (NLRCG) and the National Land Rights Forum (NLRF).