

Assembly Declaration

1. On the occasion of the International Land Coalition's Third Global Assembly, we come together this week from more than 30 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas, from civil society organizations in the land and agrarian rights movements, and from international organizations concerned with the eradication of poverty. We share a concern for land, social justice and sustainable development, and a commitment to realize land and agrarian rights that can allow poor men and women to transform their lives and their institutions.
2. The theme for our global assembly has been "Land, Dignity and Development: Putting a Pro-Poor Land Agenda into Practice". Our goals in this meeting have been (a) to increase our understanding of global land issues, and particularly those in Africa, from international and regional perspectives, and (b) to strengthen the ILC as a membership-led institution through providing clear direction to its governance and membership structures, strategic framework, resource mobilization strategy and operational model.
3. In considering land through a pro-poor lens, we must begin by recognizing that poverty is not a natural state of being. Understanding the roles that land access can play in eliminating poverty requires close examination of the structures and processes which are contributing to poverty in the first place. Multiple meanings of land, and considering the relevance of land access through different lenses - economic, social, cultural, political, legal - are central to this examination.
4. Secure rights to land and natural resources are a common concern for poor men and women throughout the world, and threats to the security of land rights reflect not only national contexts and tenure frameworks, but also changes and pressures that are global in nature. It is therefore no coincidence that there are similar patterns of conflicts over land rights and calls for agrarian reform in many of the countries and regions in which we work.
5. The increasing pace of economic globalization and new patterns of colonization and social discrimination are generating pressures on land and natural resources, and threatening people's rights. There is a trend for land and natural resources to be treated primarily as economic commodities, and new forms of privatization accompany this trend. These are bringing about a re-concentration of lands in the hands of the few, and decreasing the security of tenure for resource-poor farmers and communities dependent on resources managed as common property, such as forests, rangelands and water. Growing popular demands for land and agrarian reform stem from these realities.
6. This loss of land and territory reinforces powerlessness in social and political arenas within countries; meanwhile, globalization is shifting centers of decision-making across national boundaries, increasing the distance between rural peoples and the institutions that shape laws and policies which affect their lives. Landlessness reinforces discrimination against indigenous peoples, Dalits, pastoralists, agricultural workers and other rural communities, as it is tantamount to an attack on their dignity and cultural identity. Without land access, poor men and women in both rural and urban areas may also be denied other basic rights and services - from access to water to exercise of voting rights - creating a ripple effect through which poverty is reinforced.
7. In many parts of Africa, the pressure on land has increased sharply in recent years, spurred by growing commercial interests in resource-based sectors and accelerated efforts to treat land as a commodity. Popular demands for secure rights to land in response to the threats posed by this trend are also growing in number and in volume.
8. The increased attention by African institutions to the importance of land tenure, such as the African Union's land policy framework process, can be a positive development if they can encourage opportunity for these popular concerns to influence national land tenure frameworks. These processes should provide means for poor families and communities to secure their land rights, including for non-agricultural uses of land and natural resources

- such as by hunter-gatherers and pastoralist communities.
9. Local tenure systems remain an important source of rights in rural areas, but secure access to and control over land through these systems is at risk where state frameworks do not recognize local tenure systems. Recognizing flexible and pluralistic tenure systems must therefore be a core value of our work. At the same time, reform initiatives should identify basic principles, such as guaranteeing land rights for women and women-headed households who depend on land for their living, which can guide the evolution of customary systems to address new realities.
 10. Given these concerns, we declare the points below as commitments to be undertaken jointly, in the context of ILC's plan of action and strategic framework for 2007-2011.
 11. Challenges to inequitable land tenure arrangements require strong, evidence-based arguments of how secure rights over land as an asset can contribute to eradicating poverty. But beyond this, we must find ways to address power imbalances, both within and between countries. We need to develop consistent analyses of how power dynamics work, how landlessness reinforces powerlessness, and how rights to land can increase influence in other arenas. This can form the basis for both intergovernmental and civil society organizations to take active steps to confront these power imbalances that reinforce poverty.
 12. In many countries, there are not yet legal or policy frameworks for marginalized groups, such as indigenous peoples, to claim resource rights. In these cases, establishing mechanisms for state recognition of rights is a necessary first step. But greater attention must also be given to the capacity of land-rights institutions to conduct their work and implement laws that guarantee people's rights.
 13. Implementation depends not only on the capacity of state institutions, but also on the ability of people to demand that those institutions act in the interest of all citizens. The focus of our efforts thus should be with groups who are most vulnerable to landlessness and which are most excluded from national and global decision-making, by taking rights-based approaches as a core principle of our work.
 14. Finally, as organizations that aspire to confront these challenges as a global coalition, we must find ways to act as a true network. This has potential to yield much greater results than if working independently or through a secretariat. Core principles of our work as a network include promoting mutual learning and accountability, including through the active exchange of knowledge and information, and responsiveness among members to ensure that actions at different levels may support each other.
 15. Acting on these principles may take different forms, from forging strategic coalitions and opening doors to other institutions with which we have relationships, to identifying not only common views but also where we have differing perspectives and analyses, and coming to an understanding of the roots of our differences. By acting in collaboration in these and other manners, and through the implementation of ILC's plan of action and strategic framework, we can improve both our own work and those of other organizations and networks in ways that genuinely increase the control of poor men and women over their own lives.
 16. The International Land Coalition and participants at its Global Assembly extend their appreciation to the Uganda Land Alliance (ULA) and the Government of Uganda for their hospitality and efforts in organizing the Global Assembly. ILC is proud that its network includes civil society and government institutions in Uganda which are working to improve poor men and women's access to land, and to resolve land-related disputes through applying good governance and the rule of law, such that all citizens of Uganda may benefit.

Entebbe, Uganda 27 April 2007

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 Third ILC Global Assembly took place in Entebbe, Uganda from 24-27 April 2007, and was co-hosted by the Uganda

Land Alliance (ULA), a consortium of civil society organizations that advocates for fair land laws and policies that address the land rights of poor, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and individuals in Uganda.