

JOINT STATEMENT ON DONORS' FUNDING FOR LAND TENURE RIGHTS

A COLLECTIVE CALL TO PLACE LAND AND TENURE SECURITY AT THE CENTRE

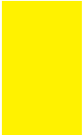
OF CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY, PEACE, LIVELIHOODS, AND DEVELOPMENT FUNDING

We, a group of global civil society and people's organisations working on individual, collective, and community-based land and territorial tenure rights, come together to express our shared concern about the *persistently inadequate and increasingly constrained public and private funding for rights-based land tenure initiatives*, and persistent inequalities in access to resources needed to secure land, livelihoods, and territories.

Secure land tenure is increasingly recognised as foundational to priorities shared by donors and countries: **CLIMATE ACTION, SOCIAL EQUITY, FOOD SECURITY AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY, BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION, DECENT JOBS AND LIVELIHOODS, PEACEBUILDING, REDUCED FORCED MIGRATION.**

ENDORSED BY





Without secure tenure, investments in climate action, ecosystem restoration, food systems, or rural development risk reinforcing exclusion, dispossession, and inequality rather than addressing their root causes.

Across regions, **grassroots organisations, rural women and youth, Indigenous Peoples, smallholder farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, forest communities, and landless people** continue to face persistent barriers to accessing sustained and long-term funding needed to protect their rights and ways of life. This statement calls for donor funding systems to **place land** and tenure security **at the centre** of climate, biodiversity, peace, and development agendas.

At the same time, we acknowledge that important progress has been made. Several donors have begun supporting direct funding mechanisms, territorial funds, and community-led initiatives, demonstrating that more inclusive and rights-based approaches are possible and effective. Building on these advances, donor funding systems should scale and institutionalise approaches grounded in **human rights, gender justice, and community leadership**, treating land and tenure security not as peripheral concerns but as strategic investments for lasting climate, biodiversity, food systems, and development outcomes.

PROGRESS, GAPS, AND EMERGING RISKS



Growing recognition of tenure rights has not yet translated into equitable and accountable funding systems.

71 countries have undertaken land tenure-related reforms since the VGGTs



Land and tenure rights have gained recognition in global policy frameworks and COP processes. Following the approval of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGTs), 71 countries — about 36 percent globally — have undertaken land tenure reforms, 27 of which explicitly referenced the VGGTs (FAO Status of Land Tenure and Governance (STLG) Report). Progress is visible under the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Global Biodiversity Framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and emerging climate and biodiversity finance discussions. Despite this progress, secure land tenure remains inconsistently supported in practice.

Exclusion



Many funding pledges still exclude or inadequately reach smallholder farmers, peasants, pastoralists, landless people, Indigenous Peoples, and small-scale family farming systems. Grassroots organisations, particularly those led by women and youth, continue to face barriers to direct funding.

Funding bias



Collective and customary tenure systems underpin livelihoods and ecosystem stewardship in many regions, yet funding priorities often favour standardised or large-scale interventions that may overlook local tenure realities and reinforce existing inequalities across rural and coastal communities. Funding remains fragmented, short-term, and heavily intermediated, limiting direct access to resources for local actors and often leaving gender equality and social justice under-integrated or treated as secondary objectives.

Data and accountability

Land policy implementation remains underfunded, while transparency in land investments remains limited. According to the FAO STLG report, most countries report on only 5 to 20 percent of the variables used to monitor VGGT principles in land investments (FAO STLG Report). Opaque reporting systems and insufficient open data continue to constrain monitoring and implementation on the ground.

These gaps hinder accountability, shared learning, and assessment of whether commitments translate into tangible community support.

Donor financing is increasingly intertwined with private-sector-led development, blended finance, and market-based mechanisms, including carbon markets and biodiversity offsets. While these approaches may mobilise additional resources, **land rights must be treated as non-negotiable foundations to avoid exacerbating dispossession, conflict, and marginalisation**. Communities impacted by carbon projects are collectively advocating for recognition of tenure rights as a precondition for high-integrity carbon markets.

PRIORITIES FOR RIGHTS-BASED DONOR FUNDING REFORM

Three priority actions to strengthen rights-based donor funding systems for land and tenure rights.

In response to these dynamics, we call on multilateral, bilateral, philanthropic, and private sector actors shaping climate, biodiversity, food systems, development, and job creation agendas to commit to the following actions in support of land and tenure rights.

1

RECOGNISE LAND TENURE AS FOUNDATIONAL TO CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY, FOODSYSTEMS, LIVELIHOODS, AND INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT:

Donor investments that overlook tenure risk reinforce inequality, conflict, displacement, and environmental degradation rather than delivering durable outcomes. Land and tenure security must be treated as a core enabling condition across climate action, biodiversity conservation, food systems transformation, decent job creation, migration governance, and peacebuilding agendas. This includes integrating tenure considerations into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), national reporting under the Rio Conventions, development strategies, and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). Bilateral and multilateral donors should make full use of available policy and financing instruments to unlock new, additional, adequate and predictable finance for rights-based land tenure, including, where appropriate, through the repurposing of environmentally harmful subsidies.

Market-based and blended finance, including carbon and biodiversity markets, may only be used where secure land rights, including collective, customary, and other legitimate tenure systems, are recognised as a precondition, with particular attention to collective tenure, given that in some contexts the conversion of land rights into individually titled and tradeable assets can increase risks of dispossession, land concentration, and the erosion of collectively managed territories; and where communities can give or withhold free, prior and informed consent. Voluntary guidelines are an important step, but practice shows they are often not sufficient on their own; safeguards should therefore be binding and independently verifiable, with clear accountability mechanisms.

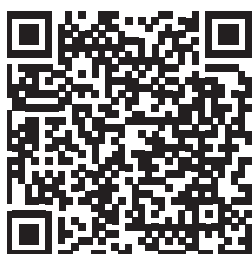
2 ENABLE DIRECT, FLEXIBLE, AND LONG-TERM FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY-LED LAND INITIATIVES:

Donors should expand direct access to funding for grassroots organisations, rural women and youth, Indigenous Peoples, pastoralists, fisherfolk, forest communities, and other rights-holders, reducing unnecessary layers of intermediation while ensuring intermediaries add value where needed. Long-term, flexible financing is essential to sustain land governance, defend rights, and strengthen local institutions over time. Existing community land funds, territorial funds, and Indigenous Peoples' financing mechanisms should be scaled and replicated.

Funding approaches should recognise both individual and collective tenure systems, support democratic participation, and treat communities as political actors.

3 STRENGTHEN TRANSPARENCY, MONITORING, AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR LAND TENURE FUNDING:

All donor commitments should include transparent reporting, open data, and meaningful civil society organisation (CSO) participation. This should include public reporting on funding allocations, timelines, and recipients, and indicators tracking impacts on tenure security, gender equality, conflict prevention, and community participation. Accountability must assess not only funding flow, but impacts on land rights, gender equality, conflict prevention, and long-term sustainability. Effective monitoring is essential to rebuild trust, enable learning, and ensure that global pledges translate into tangible community support.



IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN ENDORSING THIS STATEMENT, PLEASE WRITE TO:

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