

Rights to water and land, a common struggle

Dakar declaration against water and land grabbing

We, civil society organizations engaged in the defense of the rights to land and water, we gathered in Dakar in the framework of the Africa Social Forum fighting and protesting against natural resources grabbing, namely water and land grabbing, and against the systematic violations of the human rights that accompany them. By sharing our ideas, we acknowledged the essential linkage between our struggles, given the inextricable nature of land and water grabbing.

Today, more than 200 million hectares of land have been supposedly grabbed globally. Thus the huge profits of an elite are built on the systematic violation of the rights of the majority of peasants, farmers, informal settlements' dwellers, fishermen, herders and nomads, who are dispossessed of their land and livelihoods by resort to violence, intimidation and torture. Land grabbing is always accompanied by water grabbing. Indeed, water grabbing occurs in all instances of unsustainable water-consuming farming, through the privatization of water utilities and management, the contamination of water brought about by uncontrolled mining, the eviction of communities for dams building, the militarization of access to water points, the dispossession of fishermen and shepherds of their livelihoods, and the penalization of water poverty. The criminalization of activists fighting for the protection of the commons has become widespread, albeit hidden by the authorities. Land and water resources are increasingly scarce, and therefore critical to the security of societies and the sovereignty of states. However, the scarcity underpinning the water crisis and the land crisis is not naturally given; instead, it is politically, geo-strategically and financially constructed.

Our solidarity is built upon the following principles and convictions that unify our struggles:

1. That, the human rights to water and land are fundamental, and crucial for life. Everyone, men and women, adults and children, rich and poor, is entitled to them.
2. That, water and land are not only vital natural resources, but are also part of our common heritage, whose security and governance must be preserved by each community for the common good of our societies and the environment, now and for future generations.
3. Water and Land are commons, and not commodities.
4. We recognize that the states are legally and constitutionally mandated to represent peoples' interest. States are therefore duty-bound to oppose every national policy and international treaty that contrast the human rights to water and land.
5. Management policies of land and water should promote the achievement of social justice, gender equality, public health and environmental justice.

That is why, together as civil societies in Africa and elsewhere,

we pledge ourselves to:

- ✦ sensitize, educate and organize citizens and communities in order to build a strong and united movement struggling for the recognition and enforcement of our rights to land and water;
- ✦ always defend before institutions the right of citizens and communities to free, prior and informed consent in the governance of natural resources;
- ✦ build synergies among civil society actors struggling against land and water grabbing in order to implement national platforms for the governance of natural resources.

We call on the states:

- ⤴ to immediately implement the FAO voluntary guidelines on land tenure and the management of natural resources, and grant the effective justiciability of the rights therein enshrined;
- ⤴ to fulfill the human right to water and sanitation that was recognized and made explicit by the UN General Assembly resolution 69/2010; the adoption of constitutional and legislative regulatory frameworks which guarantee to everyone the availability and accessibility of water and sanitation, as well as the effective justiciability of the right to water;
- ⤴ to recognize, respect and protect the collective customary rights regulating the access, security and governance of land tenure and water.
- ⤴ to recognize, respect and protect the rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups, especially women and the youth, about their access, security and governance of land tenure and water.
- ⤴ to reject national policies and international treaties promoting the privatization and commodification of natural resources, as well as water grabbing, including prepaid meters, automatic tariff adjustments and the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between the EU and ACP countries, for both goods and services;
- ⤴ to denounce the World Bank's "doing business" rankings, that are drafted uniquely to support speculation purposes and foster land and water grabbing, while completely neglecting social and environmental standards.

We call on states and international governmental organizations:

- ⤴ to explicitly endorse the promotion of human rights, including the human right to water and access to land, as part of the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN Agenda post-2015;
- ⤴ to refocus cooperation and partnership relationships on the right to development's imperatives, benefiting communities' empowerment rather than economic and geopolitical interests;
- ⤴ to adopt an Additional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) of the United Nations that specifies the obligations of States with regard to the right to water and sanitation.

We call on civil society, social movements, NGOs and trade unions from the Africa Social Forum to endorse this declaration and support its claims by all available means. We need to foster the solidarity of our struggles, including the struggle for our rights to access the essential resources required for life, we need to make civil society's voice heard in the negotiations towards the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN Agenda post-2015, in the application of international and regional guidelines on land tenure and natural resources, and the COP 2015 for the protection of the environment.

Next meeting in Tunis should enhance the convergence of our struggles, assess progress and identify the way forward

Water and land, same plight same fight!

List of organizations subscribing:

CMAT (UACDDD, CNOP, OPP, CAD, LJDH), COSPE, CICMA, ISODEC Ghana, ActionAid Senegal, ActionAid Gambia, MARICAM, Jokoni Maayia, ASAPSU Cote d'Ivoire, SOS Sahel International Burkina Faso, International Food Security Network, ENDA Pronat, ENDA Ruf, Collectif de Ndiael, CNCR, RADDHO, LSDH, ASRADEC, Eau Vive, COCIDEAS, Panos Institute, USE, PAEDD, Jeunesse Panafricaine, IPAR, Alternatives Niger, International Initiatives, Forum des Organisations de la Société Civile Malienne, COCIDIRAIL, FORAM, Forum pour un autre Mali, COPAGEN, ANDDH Niger, Alternatives de Développement pour la Vie sur Terre – Mali, USOFORAL.