

HIGH LEVEL MEETING ON FOOD SECURITY, MADRID 26-27 JANUARY 2009

Final declaration of farmers and civil society organisations

SURPRISE ENDING IN MADRID!

NO CONSENSUS ON A G-8 DRIVEN PARTNERSHIP AGAINST HUNGER...FOR NOW

As representatives of peasant farmers and other small scale food producers, together with organisations that support them(*), we want to express the following:

1. We gathered in Madrid with low expectations. We were extremely unhappy with the process and the contents of this conference. Although WE are the ones who produce most of the world's food, we had not been offered a serious space to give our opinion on what should be done, either in the preparatory process or in the conference programme itself.
2. As a consequence, the meeting was not focussed on the crucial question of how to solve the dramatic food crisis that we are facing, but rather on a discussion by donors about how to spend their money. Without serious questioning the real structural causes behind the food crisis, any discussion about more or less aid money targets symptoms rather than addressing the real issues.
3. This explains the simplistic 'more of the same' recipes to solve the crisis presented in Madrid: more fertilizer, more hybrid seeds and more agrochemicals for small farmers. This approach has already been a total failure in the past, and has been the source of elimination and suffering of millions of small producers, environmental destruction and climate change.
4. It is also clear that none of the actors here were prepared to deal with the crucial and conflictual issue of how local food producers are being denied access to land and territories, which constitutes the single most important threat to local food production. Many of the communally held land territories are now under threat from privatisation and land grabbing by transnational corporations to plant agrofuels or other commodities for the international markets. We need fundamental agrarian and aquatic reforms to keep land in the hands of local communities to be able to produce food.
5. But several factors combined to squash the organizers' hope of ending the conference with the triumphal proclamation of an ethereal Global Partnership for Agricultural and Food Security crafted by the G8 with agribusiness corporations panting to take up residence. One factor was the fact that many developing country governments rejected a proposal on which no one had bothered to consult them. Another was the strong stand taken by FAO to keep global governance of food and agriculture centred in the Rome-based UN agencies. And our participation – both within the conference and in actions outside – helped to remind delegates that there can be no successful approach to the food crisis that does not build on the alternatives that millions of small food producers are developing day by day.
6. The solution to the food crisis exists, and is being fought for in many communities. It is called food sovereignty. An approach oriented towards peasant-based agriculture and artisanal fisheries, prioritizing local markets and sustainable production methods and based on the right to food and the right of peoples to define their own agricultural policies. To be able to achieve this, we need to:
 - a. Reinstate the right of governments to intervene and regulate in the food and agricultural sector. The right to food, as already accepted by the UN, should be the central cornerstone on the basis of which the solutions to the food crisis are to be constructed.
 - b. Dominate the disastrous volatility of food prices in domestic markets. National governments should take full control over the import and export of food in order to stabilize local markets.
 - c. Reject Green Revolution models. Industrialized agriculture and fisheries are no solution.
 - d. Set up policies to actively support peasant-based food production and artisanal fishing, local markets and the implementation of agrarian and aquatic reform.
 - e. Stop corporate land grabbing for industrial agrofuels and commodity production.

7. We need one single space in the UN system that acts in total independence of the international financial and trade institutions, with a clear mandate from governments, decisive participation by peasant, fisher-folk and other small scale food producers, and a transparent and democratic process of decision making. This has to be the unique space where food and agriculture issues are discussed, where policies and rules are set..
8. We see the proposed Global Partnership as just another move to give the big corporations and their foundations a formal place at the table, despite all the rhetoric about the 'inclusiveness' of this initiative. Furthermore it legitimates the participation of WTO, World Bank and IFM and other neoliberalism-promoting institutions in the solution of the very problems they have caused. This undermines any possibility for civil society or governments from the Global South to play any significant role. We do not need this Global Partnership or any other structure outside the UN system.

The battle was won in Madrid, but we have no illusions that the promoters of the Global Partnership have given up the fight, and we will continue to engage them.

() These include Via Campesina, COAG, and many NGOs. The organisations present at the Madrid meeting presented a detailed statement with our assessment and proposals “Accelerating into disaster – When banks manage the food crisis”. It can be downloaded from the website of the IPC, which has facilitated our participation in this conference:*

www.foodsovereignty.org (The statement is also available in English, French and Spanish on www.viacampesina.org)