



**REGIONAL MEETING OF LA VIA CAMPESINA AFRICA
MADAGASCAR, 14th to 17th May 2008**

FINAL DECLARATION

"GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS"

From the 14th to the 17th of May, 40 delegates of peasants' organizations¹ from different African countries gathered in Antananarivo to hold a regional meeting and discuss various issues related to the life of small farmers and their organizations in the region. These organizations share the vision of the international peasant movement, La Via Campesina. During the meeting we discussed the social and economic situation of the Region, building alliances with other movements and institutions in Africa, strategies to fight against the neo-liberal policies being imposed on the continent and the growth of peasants' organizations that are members of Via Campesina in Africa. We also welcomed new members to the movement in Africa, as well as working on our preparation for the 5th International Conference of Via Campesina, due to take place in October this year in Mozambique.

The question of the current food crisis was of special concern to us. Prices on the world market for food crops are rising. Poor families, especially in urban slums, see their food bills go up and can no longer afford to buy the minimum needed. Hunger in Africa is not a new problem. Although small farmers and pastoralists in the rural areas of Africa have been developing different ways of coping with the problem, especially since the introduction of destructive policies by the World Bank and IMF. These policies are undermining domestic food production. Liberalization of trade has resulted in a virtual war against small producers. Farmers are being forced to produce cash crops for transnational corporations (TNCs) and to buy their own food on the world market. Peasant and small farmers reap no benefits from higher prices. We grow food but the benefits of the harvest often get taken

¹ CPM – Madagascar, PPN – Niger, COPACO-PRP – RDCongo, MVIWATA – Tanzania, UNAC – Mozambique, CNOP – Mali, CNCR – Senegal, CNOP – Congo, LPM – South Africa, CORDAF – RDC, CORDAP – Camaroun.

out of our hands: all too often it has already promised to the money lender, to the agricultural inputs' companies, or directly to the trader or the processing unit.

Over the last 20-30 years the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have forced countries to decrease their investment in food production and to reduce support for peasants and small farmers. More recently the World Trade Organisation has been pushing for the liberalization of international trade, opening the path for transnational corporations (TNCs) who steal their markets from the small farmers. On top of this, the corporate expansion of agri-fuels has added to the projected reduction in agricultural land used to grow food-crops, and many countries in Africa are converting hundreds of thousands of hectares from agricultural use to the so-called economic development zones, urbanizations and infrastructure.

The ongoing land-grabbing by TNCs and other speculators will expel millions more peasants from rural areas. They will end up in the mega cities where they will join the growing ranks of the hungry and the poor in the slums. The continent is also facing more severe droughts and floods caused by global climate change. These are severe threats to both the rural and the urban areas.

These are highly worrying evolutions that require active and urgent change! We, the representatives of small farmers in Africa, demand a fundamental change in the approach to food production and agricultural markets.

Our Governments need to make long-term political commitments in order to rebuild national food economies. An absolute priority has to be given to domestic food production in order to decrease dependency on the international market. Peasant and small farmers should be encouraged through better prices for their farm products and stable markets to produce food for themselves and their communities. Landless families from rural areas and urban areas have to gain access to land, seeds and water in order to be able to produce their food. This means increased investment in peasant and farmer-based production for domestic markets.

At the international level, stabilization measures also have to be undertaken. International buffer stocks need to be built up, and an intervention mechanism put in place to stabilize prices at a reasonable level on the international markets. In order to stop dumping, exporting countries need to accept international rules that control the quantities they may put on the market. The right to implement import controls, set up programs to support the poorest consumers, implement agrarian reform and invest in domestic, farmer- and peasant-based food

production has to be fully respected and supported at international level.

The answer to the Global Food Crisis lies in the hands of peasant and small farmers. Peasant Organizations of la Via Campesina Africa are convinced that peasants and small farmers can feed Africa. We have to be the key part of the solution. With sufficient political determination and the implementation of adequate policies, more peasants and small farmers, men and women, can easily produce sufficient food to feed the growing population. The current situation shows that changes are needed.

The time for Food Sovereignty has come!

Globalize the Struggle! Globalize our Hope!