

Bangkok Declaration on “WCARRD 40: Recognize, Defend, and Protect Access to Land, Resources and Tenure Security of the Rural Poor”

WE, the participants of the “Regional Workshop on Land Rights and Land Governance,” hailing from members of the Land Watch Asia campaign of people’s organizations, land rights social movements, and civil society advocates, together with partners from cooperating government agencies, national statistical offices, development and intergovernmental bodies, have gathered from 14-15 February 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand to mark the **40th year of the World Conference for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD)**.

WE RECALL that...

The WCARRD adopted “The Peasants’ Charter” in 1979 that brought global recognition and multi-stakeholder consensus on the imperative for agrarian reform to fight hunger and poverty and fulfill rural development. It previously emphasized the principle of “Growth with Equity through People’s Participation” through access to land, water, and other natural resources; people’s participation in designing, implementing, and evaluating rural development programs and policies; the integration of women in rural development; access to inputs, markets and services; extension and research activities.

WE RECOGNIZE that 40 years later...

- Land reforms brought about complete agrarian transformation in East Asian countries through an egalitarian land distribution and development of rural institutions. However, land reforms in other Asian countries contributed little or no transformation of agrarian structures as large landholdings remain untouched.
- The collective perseverance of peoples’ land rights movements across Asia successfully asserted the demand for tenure and asset reforms as a continuing agenda both at the national and global arena.
- Land rights and tenure security are now enshrined as critical issues in significant global conventions and programs of action, such as the Earth Summit, World Food Summit, World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Beijing Conference on Women, the Social Summit, among others.
- The customary rights and self-determination of indigenous peoples over their ancestral domains and territories are embedded in the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).
- With the escalating and conflicting demands of varied interests and land-related investments on the use of land, forests, waters and other resources, States and global bodies adopted the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Forests, and Fisheries, and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGP BHR).
- Land is back in the global agenda and not just a domestic concern with the passage of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 Agenda and the Magna Carta on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in the Rural Areas, which aims to better protect the rights of all rural populations, including peasants, fisherfolks, nomads, agricultural workers, and indigenous peoples.

WE REMAIN CONCERNED that...

- Ironically, 75 percent of the world’s farming households are found in Asia where more than half a billion people suffer from hunger and food insecurity and are still landless or near landless.
- The rural poor’s access to land and resources in Asia remain unresolved with agrarian and other land reform programs still unfinished or poorly implemented in countries.
- Indigenous peoples who contribute significantly to global conservation with their customary practices find their domains highly threatened by encroachment of private and public investments and programs.
- There is little or no formal recognition of women as farmers even when their contribution to agriculture has increased.
- Land reconsolidation and “land grabbing” by private investors is escalating in response to a market-driven land rush to lease large tracts of land for food or commercial crops. This insatiable demand for the world’s natural resources is causing more land use and resource conflicts, leading to violence and dispossession of the rural poor.
- Natural and human-made disasters have displaced the poor and vulnerable and kept them from regaining their land and resource rights in affected areas.

- Transparency and accessibility of land-related data by the rural poor are still limited.
- Human rights and democratic freedoms are diminished and suppressed with a global resurgence of State autocracy, which takes away the control of resources by the rural poor.

OUR CALLS, OUR COMMITMENTS

WE ASSERT that LAND to the rural poor is more than just an economic asset but defines their lives, identity, inclusion, and dignity. Therefore, their legal and customary claims, access and control over land, forests, water bodies, and common resources must be recognized, defended, and protected.

We, thus, encourage those accountable and responsible to pursue the equitable and continued distribution of land assets and resources to the rural poor, especially by upholding the commitments of the Sustainable Development Goals on land and resource rights, and the Magna Carta on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in the Rural Areas.

We join the global land rights community in advocating for the following:

- 1) Enactment and enforcement of national legislation and policies that promote access and tenure security to land, forests, waters, and pastures of smallholder farmers, fishers, indigenous peoples, rural women, pastoralists, youth, differently-abled persons, and other marginalized sectors; and prevent the unnecessary destruction and conversion of fertile land, forests, and water bodies in favor of urbanization and infrastructure development;
- 2) Implementation of agrarian reforms and provision of adequate support to smallholders to improve farm productivity and increase participation in the value chain;
- 3) Legal recognition and respect of land and territorial rights of indigenous peoples and promotion of locally-managed ecosystems by indigenous peoples, pastoralists, and traditional forest-users;
- 4) Implementation of integrated water resources management on joint use of transboundary river flows, and introduction of effective and transparent mechanisms for water distribution, through amendment of laws regulating the issues of water users on tariffs and subsidies for costs of on-farm irrigation systems, and development of policies to improve water management at the local level.
- 5) Upholding the spirit and compliance of international human rights instruments (e.g., CEDAW, ICCPR, ICESCR, ICERD, CBD, Paris Agreement, UNGP BHR, Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure, ILO 169, UNDRIP, UNDROP, etc.), specific to land rights for marginalized sectors, such as smallholder farmers, indigenous peoples, rural women, tenants, sharecroppers, leaseholders, agricultural laborers, fisherfolk, and pastoralists;
- 6) Ensuring the integrity of safeguard mechanisms that regulate public and private land investments and strengthening local mediation mechanisms for resolution of land and other resource conflicts;
- 7) Supporting the ratification of the UNGP BHR as a legally-binding instrument at country levels;
- 8) Effective implementation of social and environmental impact assessments, and adherence to Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC);
- 9) Continuous engagement among National Statistical Offices (NSOs), government land agencies and CSOs to include and improve national indicators on access to land and other resources, transparency and public access to land data; and,
- 10) Safeguarding the political and democratic space of civil society organizations and people's organizations by recognizing the vital role of people's organizations and NGOs/CSOs in inclusive development through regular consultations and dialogues between government and communities.

WE commit to uphold and pursue these recommendations and synergize efforts towards a more people-centered governance of our land and resources through multi-stakeholder partnership to realize the spirit of the Sustainable Development Goals that no one should be left behind.

15 February 2019; Bangkok, Thailand

SIGNED:

National Statistical Offices

Hem Raj Regmi, Central Bureau of Statistics, Nepal

Gulzeinep Mursabekova , National Statistics Committee, Kyrgyzstan

Kadarmanto, Central Bureau of Statistics, Indonesia

Lay Chhan, National Institute of Statistics, Cambodia

Faith Lea Cabrera, Philippine Statistics Authority, Philippines



Government land agencies

Marie Grace Pascua, National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, Philippines

Shankar Bahadur Thapa, Ministry of Land Management, Cooperative and Poverty Alleviation, Nepal

Sagynbayey Askarbek, Ministry of Agriculture, Kyrgyzstan



Intergovernmental Organization

Tevita G. Boseiwaqa Taginavulau, Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), Regional



Civil Society Organizations

Francis Lucas, Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform & Rural Development (ANGOC), Regional



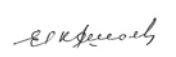
Chet Charya, STAR Kampuchea, Cambodia



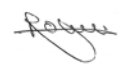
Ward Anseew, International Land Coalition (ILC), Global



Erkinbek Kozhoyev, National Union of the Water Users' Association of the Kyrgyz Republic (NUWUA), Kyrgyzstan



Rohini Reddy, South Asia Rural Reconstruction Association (SARRA), India



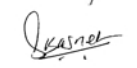
Shah I Mobin Jinnah, Community Development Association (CDA), Bangladesh



Nathaniel Don Marquez, Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform & Rural Development (ANGOC), Regional



Jagat Basnet, Community Self-Reliance Centre (CSRC), Nepal



Joy Demaluan, Center for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (CARRD), Philippines



Dave de Vera, Philippine Association for Intercultural Development (PAFID), Philippines



Saurin Siagian, International Land Coalition (ILC), Global



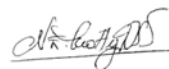
AKM Bulbul Ahmed, Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD), Bangladesh



Roni Septian Maulana, Consortium for Agrarian Reform (KPA), Indonesia



Nhek Sarin, STAR Kampuchea (SK), Cambodia



Jitram Lama, NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN), Nepal



Rowshan Jahan Moni, Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD), Bangladesh



Timothy Salomon, Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform & Rural Development (ANGOC), Regional



Tanveer Arif, Society for Conservation and Protection of Environment (SCOPE), Pakistan



Marianne Jane Naungayan, Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform & Rural Development (ANGOC), Regional



Sanatbek Iuldashev, Kyrgyz Association of Forest and Land Users (KAFLU), Kyrgyzstan



Vaing Samrith, NGO Forum on Cambodia (NGOF), Cambodia



Roel Ravanera, Xavier Science Foundation (XSF), Philippines



Gerard Jerome Dumlao, Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform & Rural Development (ANGOC), Regional



Denise Hyacinth Joy Musni, Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform & Rural Development (ANGOC), Regional



Maricel Tolentino, Peoples Campaign for Agrarian Reform Now! (AR NOW!), Philippines



Antonio Quizon, Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform & Rural Development (ANGOC), Regional



Surendra Kumar, Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development (AVARD), India



PV Rajagopal, Ekta Parishad (EP), India



Individual

Marianna Bicchieri, Italy

