

# Euskal Herria Declaration and complementary documents- VIIth International Conference

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*"We feed our peoples and build the movement to change the world"*

Euskal Herria - Basque Country, 16 to 24 July, 2017

Delegates of La Via Campesina, representing our organizations and movements, are gathered in the Basque Country to celebrate our 7<sup>th</sup> International Conference from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> of July of 2017. Euskal Herria is a beautiful land of solidarity, struggle, and resistance, with its own language, where the tradition of good food produced by peasants and local fisherfolk remains strong. We, the peasants, rural workers, landless, indigenous peoples, pastoralists, artisanal fisherfolk, rural women and other peoples who work in the countryside around the world, declare that we feed our people and build the movement to change the world.

With the rise of financial capital, we are facing the unbridled monopolization of our water, seeds, land and territory. Dangerous technologies are being promoted, sometimes with irreversible impacts, such as GMOs, large-scale confined animal production, and synthetic biology. Driven by speculative capital, there is an accelerated replacement of real productive economies by the financial economy. Mega-mergers are concentrating corporate domination of the food system more than ever before. There is a new formula of neoliberalism combined with the discourses of hatred, in which the problems caused by this concentration of wealth are used to divide our peoples and create ethnic and religious conflict, and drive migration. We are facing a wave of human rights violations around the world, with comrades being assassinated, jailed, tortured and threatened.

Those who are grabbing resources make war on us, often through the WTO, the World Bank, the IMF, imperialism, free trade agreements and laws that privatize our commons, and increasingly also through bombing, military occupations and genocidal economic measures. We stand in solidarity with Palestine and other peoples who continue to suffer and resist against these impositions. Millions of migrants and refugees are being forcibly displaced by war and lack of access to the most basic needs. A cold wind of xenophobia, racism, religious fundamentalism and class hatred is being

felt in many countries.

The criminalization of migration and social protest is linked to the power of the hegemonic corporate media that demonizes organized sectors of the population. The corporate media defends the interests of capital and lately they have pushed for the overthrow of some governments and the placing in power of others. They manipulate large portions of the population, creating the conditions for violations of human rights.

The capitalist and patriarchal system is not capable of reversing the crisis in which humanity finds itself, destroying our peoples and heating up Mother Earth. The Earth is alive, but capitalism is a disease that can kill her.

Confronted with this crisis of civilisation...

## **1. We feed our peoples:**

For more than half a century they have sold us the “green revolution,” which has been neither green nor revolutionary. Under the pretext of short-term productivity, this agribusiness model has poisoned the soil, monopolised and polluted water, cut down the forests, dried up the rivers and replaced our seeds with commercial varieties and GMOs. Instead of ending hunger, agribusiness has created more food problems, and displaced people from the countryside. It is a highly exclusionary model of agriculture without peasants. While agribusiness gets the subsidies and the favourable policies, in our peasant and indigenous agriculture we continue to do what we have done for millennia: produce healthy food for our families, communities and peoples.

While governments impose seed laws that ensure privatization and guarantee profits for the transnationals, we care for our peasant seeds, created, selected and improved by our ancestors. Our seeds are adapted to our lands, where we use agroecological management to produce without the need to buy agro-toxics or other external inputs. Our peasant agroecology feeds the soil with organic matter, is based on biodiversity, and conserves and recovers peasant varieties of seeds and animal breeds, using the knowledge of our peoples and our Mother Earth to feed us. Its main source is the indigenous, ancestral and popular peasant knowledge that we have accumulated for generations, day by day, through observation and constant experimentation on our lands, shared later in our exchanges from peasant to peasant and between our organizations. Our agroecology has a peasant and popular character; it does not lend itself to false solutions like “green” capitalism, carbon markets and “climate-smart” agriculture. We reject any attempt by agribusiness to co-opt agroecology.

Peasant agroecology is the basis of our proposal and vision for the food sovereignty of the peoples of the world. In order to do so, we need to fight for genuine, integral and popular agrarian reform, the defense of indigenous and peasant territories, and the recovery of local food systems.

In addition to strengthening and developing our farmers’ markets, we need to build new relationships between the working people of the countryside and the city, new channels of distribution and marketing; and a new model of human, economic, and social relations based on respect, solidarity and ethics. We cool the planet and build just and more human societies with agrarian reform, peasant agroecology and food sovereignty.

## **2. We are building the movement:**

Humanity in crisis seeks solutions. Increasingly, our movement is seen as an example for peoples in struggle. La Via Campesina continues to grow and our proposal is strengthened. Though our enemies also grow stronger, and we face challenges to the continued advance of our movement

building.

Mass struggle is the heart of La Via Campesina. The work of our organizations with their social bases must be strengthened, to include more rural workers, more peasants, more indigenous communities, more migrants, more African diaspora peoples, and more peoples affected by the capitalist, agro-hydro-extractive model. We need to strengthen alliances at the local, national and international levels, especially between the working classes of the countryside and the city.

Patriarchy is an enemy of our movement. The feminist character of La Via Campesina strengthens our unity and commitment to the struggle, with equality and gender equity. Key to strengthening our own organisations and achieving broader alliances is the construction of a peasant feminist movement within La Via Campesina. We will strengthen the political participation of women in all spaces and levels of our movement. We are fighting to end all forms of violence against women: physical, sexual, psychological, and economic. We are committed to increasing our capacities to understand and create positive environments around gender, within our organizations and in our alliances. The lack of tolerance for diversity is part of the process of dispossession of rural youth. A diverse, non-violent and inclusive countryside is fundamental for La Via Campesina.

Throughout the world, youth have been increasingly expelled from the countryside by the various forms of capital, and patriarchy and age discrimination restrict their visibility and full participation in our organizations. We are committed to the new generations in the countryside and in our movement, striving for the full incorporation of youth in spaces of leadership and decision making within our organizations, in training, and in the production of agroecological food.

Millions of us migrate as a form of resistance, so as not to disappear as peoples, as peasants, as women or as young people. We defy borders, tear down walls, and confront racism and xenophobia. We have built a movement joining peasants, rural workers and migrants, not as victims deserving of assistance, but as holders of rights, including our right to free movement.

Our work with our allies to achieve a United Nations Declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas is of fundamental importance to hundreds of millions of people around the world. We will strengthen our work in our countries to achieve its adoption. This crucial instrument would strengthen the rights of the people of the countryside to protect their livelihoods and continue to feed the world.

We must continue to accelerate political, ideological, organizational, and technical training based on our own concepts, since we know that conventional education suppresses our identity and our ideas. Such training is crucial for our movements to create new and committed actors to forge our own destiny. In our struggle we also need to continue to create our own autonomous communications media, and build our alliances with the alternative media, to build awareness of our culture, our dignity, and our capacity to transform society.

### **3. To change the world:**

The way is long. We are growing as a movement, but savage capitalism and war in a world system in crisis put all of us and our communities, organisations and societies at risk. Faced with barbarism we urgently need to build another future for humanity. In an extremely complex context, La Via Campesina is a driving force in the struggle for transformation and for peace in the world. Through our daily labour in the countryside, our production of food around the world, our alliances and our struggle for food sovereignty, we have won the trust of a large number of peoples and movements. We take on the responsibility to continue to sow peace on this planet, just as we have globalised the struggle and sowed hope in all corners of the world.

Very importantly our struggle has brought new recognition to the peasantry and changed the very terms of the global and national debates about food, agriculture and the countryside. No more will policies be formulated without peasant voices being heard loud and clear, or without peasant rights, agroecology, agrarian reform and above all, food sovereignty being on the table.

Growing and strengthening as a movement means paying attention to grassroots work, building alliances, fighting with conviction against patriarchy, imperialism and financial capital, with commitment and discipline. This struggle is critical to humanity and to the survival of Mother Earth. From Euskal Herria, we call on the peoples of the world to struggle together with us. It is time to build a more fraternal world based on solidarity among peoples.

***“We feed our peoples and build the movement to change the world”***

Globalise the struggle! Globalise hope!

**La Via Campesina**

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## **Press Release | 24 July 2017, Derio, Basque Country**

**Step up the fight against agribusiness, Unite for Food Sovereignty: says La Via Campesina**

*“We feed our peoples and build the movement to change the world”*

On Saturday, July 22<sup>nd</sup> at Derio in the Basque Country, La Via Campesina, the international peasant movement representing over 170 organizations and movements in 72 countries, closed its VIIth International Conference, with a powerful declaration to step up resistance against transnational agribusiness, large scale land-grabbing, criminalisation of people’s struggles, rising xenophobia, racism, and patriarchy.

After four days of collective discussions and reflections on Food Sovereignty, peasant agroecology, autonomous training networks, migrant rights, trade, climate justice and criminalisation of social movements and alliance building, the Euskal Herria Declaration “We feed our peoples and build the movement to change the world” noted with concern the rise of finance capital combined with unbridled monopolisation of natural resources and the unprecedented promotion of dangerous technologies pushed by mega-mergers to dominate the food system with the blunt violation of human rights and nature for profit.

The Declaration, which sets broad strategic direction on how to build a movement to change the world through feminism and food sovereignty, also emphasised the urgent need to build wider alliances at the local, regional, and international levels and the need to unify against the new blend of capitalism and right-wing populism.

Peasant agroecology, popular agrarian reform, including strengthening and developing local markets, coupled with building and forging stronger relationships between the urban and countryside, were put forward to build food sovereignty for the peoples of the world. To do this, the VIIth International Conference highlighted the importance of continuing and scaling up the political, ideological, organizational, and technical training based on the movement’s own concepts, to shape

its identity and ideas to transform society.

Solidarity among people is part of the foundation to changing the world. On the closing day of the conference, La Via Campesina delegates collectively defined the internal functioning (regulations, processes etc) to guide solidarity. According to Unai Aranguren, International Coordination Committee Member from Europe of La Via Campesina, two words define La Via Campesina: “solidarity and hope”.

In a show of solidarity, close to 1,600 people marched through the streets of Bilbao on Sunday as part of a public action – organised by EHNE Bizkaia – that reached the city’s Plaza Nueva where La Via Campesina delegates delivered speeches, issued statements of support, and celebrated with local music and dance. “After fruitful debates, we’re here closing the VIIth Conference of La Via Campesina and have come to the city to ask civil for society’s cooperation and commitment to fight with us for the rights to food, land, water, and seeds.” said Unai Aranguren.

Two key reports were presented in Derio: (i) Peasants fighting for justice: cases of violations of peasants’ human rights, which focuses on the continuing instances of attack and assault on the peasant movement and (ii) the Agrarian reform and the defense of life, Land and territories, which brings out how the struggles for agrarian reform have transformed itself with new strategies to face the changing face of corporate agribusiness in the countryside.

**Globalise the struggle! Globalise Hope!**

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### **Youth Assembly Declaration**

We, youth of La Via Campesina, united in our IV International Youth Assembly, have gathered in Euskal Herria, Basque Country to strengthen our movement for Food Sovereignty. We are peasants, fisher folk and indigenous peoples from Africa, the Americas, Europe, Asia and the Middle East, representing organizations from 47 countries. We came together to exchange ideas, develop strategies and raise the voice of youth.

The struggles of the youth are a reflection of the global political context in which we are particularly affected. The global crisis has economic, social, political and cultural dimensions. We are facing an accelerating attack on democracy by capitalism. We experience structural violence and the criminalisation of our social movements and struggles. Increasing numbers of environmental and peasant activists are being targeted and murdered. We suffer forced migrations due to war, climate change and oppressive economic and social conditions. Our resources (land and territories, seeds, marine and water resources, etc.) are grabbed by extractive industries, including agribusiness, mining activities and the renewable energy sector (hydroelectric plants, solar farms, etc.). The labour of youth and migrants is undervalued and brutally exploited.

Patriarchy and age discrimination restrict our visibility and participation in decision-making processes. Mainstream capitalist media continue to propagate the false notion that there is no future in the agrarian sector, and that prosperity is only found in formal, urban employment.

Land and territories are now seen as commodities, exploited by speculative investment and land grabbing, which results in high costs and limited availability. This restricts the ability of youth to

access land, especially young women. At the same time, the harsh realities and low returns in agriculture make it difficult for youth to prosper on the land. Land grabbing by transnational capital for industrial investments, energy production, extractivism and development is commonplace. The situation is further aggravated by the severe and differentiated impacts of climate change.

Combined, these processes are pushing young peasants to migrate and leave rural areas. Young people are robbed of their opportunity and responsibility to play a meaningful role in nourishing people and Mother Earth. The countryside has an ageing population and this has direct and urgent consequences to the present and future of Humanity.

We struggle for the democratization of our societies and full participation of youth in political and decision-making processes. We must ensure that within our own organizations and movement that youth are able to develop leadership skills. We need to promote strong public policies including Integral and Popular Agrarian Reform to ensure that the youth has the right to stay on the land.

We urge the UN to adopt the Declaration of Peasant Rights, affirming our universal right as youth to land, seeds, self-determination and food sovereignty.

We condemn the assassinations, injustices and massacres of patriarchal capitalism. We declare that we are in solidarity with all oppressed peoples struggling for peace and dignity.

Based on our experience, we reject claims that free trade increases the welfare of our society. We demand that agriculture be excluded from trade agreements and that the voice of young peasants is recognised in all related decision-making processes.

Peasant agroecology is the road to food sovereignty and the solution to the global multi-layered crisis. Our agroecology is a political vision, a way of life and a source of knowledge coming from our ancestors, and we reject any co-optation of the term by agribusiness. We have created in our movement agroecological processes and schools that are growing throughout the world with a wide range of successful experiences. We reaffirm that agroecology training should be integral, comprehensive and bring together technical, political and ideological visions including critical communication skills and methodological tools. The campesino-to-campesino methodology used in our agroecology schools is a successful and important instrument to share information and strengthen communication and training processes in our movement. We recognise this methodology respects the traditional knowledges of our territories and peoples, such that we can transfer our knowledge between generations. We propose to expand and defend our agroecological training methodology and make it accessible throughout our movement and around the world.

We are working to bridge the divide between urban and rural youth. The struggles we face, although they may appear different, result from the same oppressive forces of global capital and power. We must include in our movement all youth who are practicing urban agriculture, trying to return to the land, building community food sovereignty or working for social justice in any capacity.

There is no food sovereignty or justice without feminism and equality of all peoples. We must recognize and respect diversity of all forms, including race, gender, sexuality and class. We will root out patriarchy and discrimination wherever it exists. We commit to the difficult work of evaluating ourselves and the ways in which we may perpetuate patriarchy and racism.

The struggle of Global Youth is not ours alone. We need to continue building solidarity and convergence amongst our struggles through the sharing of information and collective creation of knowledge.

We, the youth of La Via Campesina, will harness our rich diversity in culture, geography, identity

and language to continue to strengthen our movement through constant struggle and active mobilization.

We reaffirm our struggle for land, territories and our collective right to the resources required to practice peasant agroecology as a way of life. We reaffirm our capacity, commitment and right to fulfil our essential role in building Food Sovereignty. The seeds we sow in the present will feed us in the future. The land is fertile and ready.

**We invest in the peasant youth, sowing present to harvest future!**

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## **African peasants highlight their struggles at La Via Campesina global conference**

Derio, Basque Country: “It is amazing to see how linked our struggles are”. With a countenance showing enthusiasm and eagerness, Nicolette Cupido could not conceal her emotions. There are two main reasons for her excitement. It is the first time she had attended a global conference of peasant’s movements like the one she is taking part since July 16 in Derio, in the outskirts of Bilbao, Basque Country and her movement, the Agrarian Reform for Food Sovereignty Campaign (FSC), South Africa, was among the new organisations accepted into membership of Via Campesina.

A community organiser and a member of the FSC Nicolette engages in food production at home and community gardens in Moorreesburg, a village in Western Cape, 120 Km away from Cape Town.

She grows a variety of vegetables -, that is the way she contributes in building food sovereignty. “I plant tomato, onions, beetroot, cabbage, and carrots. The struggle for food sovereignty has to be in practical too”, she said.

Like Nicolette, about 20 other African peasants representing movements from Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Niger, Mali, Senegal and Ghana are attending the conference.

This conference happens at a time when Africa is undergoing a harsh moment, as indicated by Ibrahima Coulibaly from the National Coordination of Peasant Organizations (CNOP) in Mali. Almost everywhere in Africa the elite and corporations are undertaking efforts to capture and control people’s basic means of production, such as land, mineral resources, seeds and water. Those resources are increasingly being privatized due to the myriad of investment agreements and policies driven by new institutional approaches, imposed on the continent by western powers and Bretton Woods institutions, namely IMF and the World Bank.

“Democracy is under attack. Repression to protest and murder of political leaders is escalating, but we have to continue to build alternatives”, said Coulibaly.

Elizabeth Mpofu, from the Zimbabwe Smallholder Farmer’s Forum (ZIMSOFF) is a small-scale farmer who had access to land after she took part in the radical land occupation that resulted in the fast track land reform in the early 2000s in Zimbabwe. According to her, building alternatives is to take direct action. “I was a landless woman. Through our courage and determination we stood up and took action. Now I have land and I do agroecology farming”, she said.

The relations between the state, corporate power and the peasantry have always been exploitative. This characterizes the agrarian question in Africa. As some academics have argued, these relations have been coercive.

The perception that Africa is a vast “underutilised” area and therefore available for large-scale agricultural investment, continues even today particularly among some western governments and foreign investors.

The African peasantry has, however, always resisted capital penetration in the countryside. “Africa has taught us many centuries of struggle and resistance”, remarked Eberto Diaz, peasant leader from Colombia during the opening session of the 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of La Via Campesina. Elizabeth Mpofu shares the same belief: “I think that our historical and present struggle experiences in Africa could inspire comrades from other countries”.

Domingos Buramo, from the Mozambique Peasants Union (UNAC) brings to the conference the experience of the Mozambican peasants and other civil society organizations against land grabbing and large-scale investment projects in Mozambique. He mentioned that the resistance to ProSavana, a large-scale agricultural project proposed for Mozambique, is an example of how transformative articulated struggles could be. “Now the government is changing its vision as a result of our work. We can change our societies”, he said.

In South Africa, landless black people are engaging in various forms of protest to access to land, water and natural resources. “We do various social actions such as protest marches, pickets, sit-ins and even land occupations”, said Tieho Mofokeng, from the Landless Peoples Movement (MLP), in Free State, South Africa.

Africa - including the Maghreb region - was the last continent to be part of La Via Campesina. Since 2004 the number of African peasant movements joining La Via Campesina has been increasing. African movements consider their membership to the peasant movement as a strategic process of amplifying their struggles and reinforce internationalism.

La Campesina International Conference is the highest and most significant decision-making space of the movement.

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## **Solidarity with the Honduran People and Family of Berta Cáceres**

The VIIth International Conference of La Vía Campesina, gathered in Basque Country from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> of July of 2017, stands in solidarity against the grave situation of the violation of peasants, indigenous people, and Garifunas, where currently there are more than 6,000 peasants charged in court that include 1,700 women, more than 100 assassinations (8 peasant women assassinated), 17 political prisoners in struggle for land and agrarian reform. Due to the tenacious repression and constant assassinations, we are also in solidarity with the struggle of the Honduran indigenous people, women, youth, and students, and we also extend our solidarity to the family of Berta Cáceres, which from our conference we demand justice.

We place ourselves in solidarity with the Honduran people in their struggle for the democratization of the country, defense of natural goods, territories, public education and access to justice,



resources which should not be privatized nor conceded.

All of the organizations of La Via Campesina International of 12 regions of the world are on permanent alert to denounce and stand in solidarity with the Honduran people and especially with the Honduran peasantry, indigenous peoples, and Garifunas.

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## **Political context and struggles in Latin America and the Caribbean**

The first afternoon of the VIIth International Conference of La Via Campesina was devoted to the international political context which is characterised by the unsolvable capitalist crisis and ever stronger pressures on populations, states and the environment together with the dangerous commercialisation of natural resources. The future is the struggles and resistances that have been outlined. La Via Campesina's members, throughout the world, consider that the only alternative to the proposed model is food sovereignty, and agroecology is the only way to achieve this and to feed the people. In these two spaces the regional specificities were analysed.

### **Political Context**

Latin America is the stage for right wing governance, with the exception of certain countries that have a socialist government, which have experienced agrarian reform and are the homes of resistance. Many countries have recently seen coups d'états. The struggle for democracy and against the oligarchy is increasingly more violent with those who take action for their rights brutally criminalised. The murders of those who promote peace transforms in the logic of repression, in Paraguay, Honduras, Brazil, Guatemala, and the militarisation process is bolstered. The Venezuelan case has showcased the problem of information, the majority of the media is in the hands of those who are already in power. Everywhere from the Caribbean to the Tierra del Fuego, capitalist aggression makes the battle to preserve all natural resources, beyond the historic struggle for the land, all the more urgent.

### **Struggles and resistance**

Thanks to countries such as El Salvador, Bolivia, Cuba and Nicaragua, examples of victories at the political level exist. Nevertheless a movement of everyday resistance based on socialism is also taking place across the continent.

Within the peasant movement, education is essential for the advent of a fair and united society. Across the continent, political training is the keystone of the resistance. Peasants benefit from ideological training as well as technical training through peasant schools and universities, peasant to peasant exchanges and camps for young people or women. Only food sovereignty can feed the Americas, and this is also a way of fighting. For example, in Venezuela non-market production initiatives, counter the food siege applied by distribution businesses who no longer provide certain basic foodstuffs to the population. In addition to the message of peace that La Via Campesina promotes, it is also involved peace actions throughout the world. For example, in Colombia, it actively participated in the peace process and is now responsible for ensuring it is applied.

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## **Political context and struggles in Africa**

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### **Political Context**

In Africa, young and fragile democracy is suffering a serious setback which in turn means that so too are freedom of expression and of organisation. Political systems are paralysed and citizens' rights are flouted. Since liberalization in the 80s, African markets have become more open to the world. However, currently the political right is not respected. First land was grabbed; then the seeds, with the support of the Bill Gates foundation, and others; and then the water, to the point that now all of the continent's riches are in the hands of a few, with the blessing of the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the World Bank. In the sphere of agriculture, huge swathes of land, supposedly under-used, are sacrificed for large scale investment projects, mechanisation and the use of chemicals. This situation forces the young people who are without prospects and who make up the majority of the population, to leave the country on the perilous path of migration or being exploited by fundamentalists for extremists means.

### **Struggles and resistance**

Justice, whether climatic, civilian or access to common goods, encompasses all of the African struggles. The peasant movement is present on all fronts. It fights against the inextricable power of the corporate-state, notably through popular tribunals; pressure on the governments; a procession for the seeds, water and land which traversed West Africa this Spring; and the campaign for the dismantling of the multinationals' power and impunity. Climate related actions enable peasants to build alliances and to strengthen the movement. Regional consultations on peasant rights have involved other members of civil society. The aim of La Via Campesina's organisations is to reach the critical mass of young people who believe that a dignified life and another world are possible. Consequently, numerous political and ideological training sessions have been set up to promote a peasant agroecology based on autonomy and knowledge sharing.

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## **Political context and struggles in Middle East and North Africa**

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outlined. La Via Campesina's members, throughout the world, consider that the only alternative to the proposed model is food sovereignty, and that agroecology is the only way to achieve this and to feed the people. In these two spaces the regional specificities were analysed.

## **Political Context**

In the Middle East and North Africa, capitalism and imperialism are arming terrorist groups and are supported by reactionary states. This hegemony suffocates the people of nearly all the countries in the region. With a few exceptions, for example Tunisia (home of the Arab revolutions in 2011 which still provides a glimmer of hope), civil war is everywhere. The Yemeni people are isolated, impoverished and forgotten. The people of Syria who were self-sufficient in terms of food now have their millennia-old culture destroyed and decimated. Palestine is still under military occupation by Israel, colonized, its resources destroyed and its harvests burnt. In the Maghreb, the desert is a cemetery for migrants and the fertile lands are cheap market gardens for Europe. Libya has been destroyed, crushed by capitalism. The land in Morocco has been offered on a silver platter to the European multinationals. Those who once cultivated on these lands are now in despair and migrating from the south to the north and getting caught up in forced slavery in Europe.

## **Struggles and resistance**

Despite constant repression, the people of the Middle East and North Africa are not giving up and are still fighting for their rights against desertification provoked by capitalism, both literally and figuratively. Popular revolts are expanding, both politically and organically, and La Via Campesina's members in the region are making progress, enhancing their links of solidarity and working to bring the peasant struggles to the heart of the debate. A million trees have been planted in Palestine. Small-scale farmers have had some successes: local seeds have been preserved and exchanged, and food sovereignty can feed the local population even in dry regions such as the south of Tunisia. In the Moroccan Rif, a popular protest is intensifying, diversifying and organising itself, by the day, against the brutal police repression.

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## **Political context and struggles in Asia**

The first afternoon of the VIIth International Conference of La Via Campesina was dedicated to the international political context which is characterised by the unsolvable capitalist crisis and ever stronger pressures on populations, states and the environment, together with the dangerous commercialisation of natural resources. The following day, the struggles and resistances were evoked. La Via Campesina's members, throughout the world, consider that the only alternative to the imposed model is food sovereignty, and that agroecology is the only way to achieve this and to feed the people. In these two spaces the regional specificities were analysed.

## **Political context**

Asia reported in particular the overwhelming power of the World Trade Association (WTO) as well as the numerous free trade agreements which render populations increasingly dependent. In addition, populations there are especially affected by climate change, and peasants and smallholders are put under pressure by the "smart" agriculture promoted by multinationals. Fisherfolk are also afflicted. At the geopolitical level, the belligerent tension between the United States and an increasingly

powerful China is felt here more than anywhere else. This is particularly illustrated on the Korean Peninsula where the United States wants to set up an anti-ballistic missile shield, as a show of strength against Russia and China. In addition the US is attempting to militarize Eastern Europe, to have Asia in its line of sight. In India, men and women peasants continue to commit suicide on a daily basis.

## **Struggles and resistance**

The resistance against capitalism and endemic poverty is becoming increasingly organized and there are a few shining examples of successful struggles in Asia. Nepal has added food sovereignty to its constitution. In Indonesia, where the work began on a Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, the Indonesian peasant union SPI has convinced the government to implement several public policies in favour of peasant agroecology. The Asian members of La Via Campesina participate in international mobilizations: they will be present at COP23 and will travel to Buenos Aires in December, to protest against the WTO's Ministerial Conference. Agroecology also favours the convergence of struggles. It is linked to climate justice and helps strengthen the movement. Education on the topic is being organized, in peasant-to-peasant trainings and at the regional schools. In India, the Zero Budget Natural Farming movement is gaining momentum.

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## **Political context and struggles in Europe**

The first afternoon of the VIIth International Conference of La Via Campesina was dedicated to the international political context which is characterised by the unsolvable capitalist crisis and ever stronger pressures on populations, states and the environment, together with the dangerous commercialisation of natural resources. The following day, the struggles and resistances were evoked. La Via Campesina's members, throughout the world, consider that the only alternative to the imposed model is food sovereignty, and that agroecology is the only way to achieve this and to feed the people. In these two spaces the regional specificities were analysed.

### **Political context**

In Europe, neoliberalism is a hegemonic dogma which even so-called socialist parties subscribe to. No one speaks of the class struggle anymore, even though 15% of the population is food insecure. In Western Europe, following 70 years of modernisation, we witness the reappearance of the peasant and small-holder models, although it is difficult and expensive to access land or take over a farm. One crisis seems to follow upon another in the sector. Sales prices no longer cover the price of production. In France alone, one peasant commits suicide every three days. The accession to the European Union of former Eastern bloc countries has reopened the question of small-scale peasantry in Europe. However, there are few peasant and small-holding organizations in Eastern Europe so this part of the world is still poorly represented within La Via Campesina. The creeping up of conflict areas creates a climate of fear and withdrawal, with xenophobia clearly present.

### **Struggles and resistance**

European peasant and small-holding activists are aware of the hegemonic and imperialistic position of their continent and of the weight which decisions taken here can have on the rest of the world.

For this reason, their struggles cannot limit themselves to the regional level. They have the responsibility to put pressure on the international institutions headquartered in Europe and are also aware of the importance of preventing Fortress Europe. The success of the last Nyéléni forum, which brought together around 600 people in Romania in October 2016, showed the common will to bring about food sovereignty. On the front line, the volunteer reaping of GMO fields continues, as do the direct actions against the headquarters of agribusiness multinationals, and the lobbying work to defend the rights of peasants and other smallholders, and to ensure they retain control of their own seeds. The issue of the access to land is also crucial as the grabbing of natural resources is also felt in Europe and must be made more visible.

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## **Political context and struggles in 2017 in North America**

The first afternoon of the VIIth International Conference of La Via Campesina was dedicated to the international political context which is characterized by the unsolvable capitalist crisis and ever stronger pressures on populations, states and the environment, together with the dangerous commercialization of natural resources. The following day, the struggles and resistances were evoked. La Via Campesina's members, throughout the world, consider that the only alternative to the imposed model is food sovereignty, and that agroecology is the only way to achieve this and to feed the people. In these two spaces the regional specificities were analyzed.

### **Political context**

The peasants and smallholders of the three large North American countries are all impacted by the adverse effects of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which will be renegotiated in August. This agreement reactivates aggressions against the indigenous and African-American populations, as well as against migrants, the favorite target of the Trump administration that provides such cheap labor, in particular in the agricultural sector. Other dire contextual elements include: numerous pesticides have been reauthorized in the United States; the budget for the militarization of US law enforcement is increasing to the detriment of social programs; and Mexico's criminal economy (drugs, but also arms, prostitution and organ sales) now makes up 10% of the country's GDP.

### **Struggles and resistance**

The election of the 45<sup>th</sup> US president, in spite of or because of the dangers it poses, has contributed to the intensification of the mobilization of citizens - starting with women and young people - who have become aware that their rights are truly threatened. The battle at Standing Rock has not only highlighted other struggles connected to land and extractivism, but has also activated or reinforced solidarity links between indigenous people and various environmental and civil rights' defense movements. Civil society is starting to unite in favor of sovereignty and against capitalism. Grass-roots activism is organizing to demand that banks, pension funds and governments abandon planned investments in useless large-scale projects or land purchases on other continents. Peasants and small-holders are allying themselves with fisherfolk and indigenous people to create networks and working groups that promote agroecology, whilst consumers increasingly understand the links between GMOs and their impact on health and the economy.

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## **Step up the fight against agribusiness, Unite for Food Sovereignty: says La Via Campesina**

Press Release

**“We feed our peoples and build the movement to change the world”**

On Saturday, July 22<sup>nd</sup> at Derio in the Basque Country, La Via Campesina, the international peasant movement representing over 170 organizations and movements in 72 countries, closed its VIIth International Conference, with a powerful declaration to step up resistance against transnational agribusiness, large scale land-grabbing, criminalisation of people’s struggles, rising xenophobia, racism, and patriarchy.

After four days of collective discussions and reflections on Food Sovereignty, peasant agroecology, autonomous training networks, migrant rights, trade, climate justice and criminalisation of social movements and alliance building, the Euskal Herria Declaration “We feed our peoples and build the movement to change the world” noted with concern the rise of finance capital combined with unbridled monopolisation of natural resources and the unprecedented promotion of dangerous technologies pushed by mega-mergers to dominate the food system with the blunt violation of human rights and nature for profit.

The Declaration, which sets broad strategic direction on how to build a movement to change the world through feminism and food sovereignty, also emphasised the urgent need to build wider alliances at the local, regional, and international levels and the need to unify against the new blend of capitalism and right-wing populism.

Peasant agroecology, popular agrarian reform, including strengthening and developing local markets, coupled with building and forging stronger relationships between the urban and countryside, were put forward to build food sovereignty for the peoples of the world. To do this, the VIIth International Conference highlighted the importance of continuing and scaling up the political, ideological, organizational, and technical training based on the movement’s own concepts, to shape its identity and ideas to transform society.

Solidarity among people is part of the foundation to changing the world. On the closing day of the conference, La Via Campesina delegates collectively defined the internal functioning (regulations, processes etc) to guide solidarity. According to Unai Aranguren, International Coordination Committee Member from Europe of La Via Campesina, two words define La Via Campesina: “solidarity and hope”.

In a show of solidarity, close to 1,600 people marched through the streets of Bilbao on Sunday as part of a public action – organised by EHNE Bizkaia – that reached the city’s Plaza Nueva where La Via Campesina delegates delivered speeches, issued statements of support, and celebrated with local music and dance. “After fruitful debates, we’re here closing the VIIth Conference of La Via Campesina and have come to the city to ask civil for society’s cooperation and commitment to fight with us for the rights to food, land, water, and seeds. “ said Unai Aranguren.

Two key reports were presented in Derio: (i) Peasants fighting for justice: cases of violations of

peasants' human rights, which focuses on the continuing instances of attack and assault on the peasant movement and (ii) the Agrarian reform and the defense of life, Land and territories, which brings out how the struggles for agrarian reform have transformed itself with new strategies to face the changing face of corporate agribusiness in the countryside.

Globalise the struggle! Globalise Hope!

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**P.S.**

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<https://viacampesina.org/en/viith-international-conference-la-via-campesina-euskal-herria-declaration/>