

Hyderabad Declaration 15th October 2012

On People's Biodiversity and Food sovereignty

We, the delegates from India and Asia representing peasants, farmers, dalits, nomadic tribes, indigenous peoples, artisans, coastal and inland fisher communities, women, displaced people from their lands and communities working on sustainable alternatives gathered in Hyderabad on October 14th and 15th to deliberate on biodiversity issues from people's perspectives, experiences, knowledge, and practice, while the COP CBD 11 was being held in Hyderabad, India.

The two-day deliberations have recognized and identified the rapid loss of biological resources and destructive character of modern technology which leads to an ever increasing control of people's land and natural resources by agribusiness and seed companies. These biological resources are the source of life for the toiling masses and small peasantry whose life depends on land-based livelihood support systems which are most vulnerable today due to the biodiversity loss and corporate control over biodiversity resources.

Though there are several Conventions and Protocols on biodiversity taking place in different parts of the world sponsored by International institutions like the U.N but ironically many of the affected communities are excluded from these processes and not in the know of the nature of the various deliberations and their policy implications for the everyday life of the affected people. In order to overcome this gap we propose that there should be established mechanisms for people to participate as well as information sharing about the outcome of these conventions.

The Indian state's approach to biodiversity is double faced on the one hand it proposes to preserve and protect the biodiversity for the interests of the toiling masses and farmers but in reality, the policies implemented by the state are more in the nature of safeguarding the interests of corporate lobbies and the MNCs over against the interests of farmers and poor people. State policies are often proactive to protect the interests of the corporate house by providing several incentives like the takeover of the land belonging to the farming communities by the State for industrial use. Thus the State becoming the largest encroacher of people's land.

The peasant communities and the toiling people are totally depending on Biodiversity resources; Land, forest, and water are vital resources that the majority of people depend on for their livelihood and survivals are under threat today. This shameful pillage of humanity's collective natural resources is being plundered under the spell of the neo-liberal economic model, even those areas of life-forms once considered sacred, like genetic codes, flora, fauna, seeds, and even natural resources like water once considered common heritage of humanity are now converted into commodities and tradable item to be exploited for profit. The exploitation and expropriation of natural resources, bolstered by an anthropocentric world view and the ignorance of the laws and balance of nature have resulted in the large scale destruction of the ecosystem. This has put a severe strain on the subsistence, sustenance and survival of commons.

Irresponsible tampering with the world's independent web of life coupled with the environmental damage inflicted by deforestation, species loss, and climate change are triggering widespread adverse effects, including unpredictable collapses of critical biological system whose interactions and dynamics we only imperfectly understand. Uncertainties over the extent of these effects cannot excuse complacency or delay in facing the threats. This process has the following consequences: Global warming, Impending water shortage, Declining area and declining yields of productive land, Pollution of land, fresh water, sea water and air, Biodiversity loss.

We the participant of the People's Biodiversity Convention representing the collective will of the members resolve to protect the biological wealth and thus state the following;

1. We commit and affirm our resolve to preserve and protect the biodiversity of our traditional wealth, including the land, water, biodiversity.
2. We also affirm our responsibility to protect the land, forest, water, biological resources from which majority of the people derive their livelihood and call upon the responsibility State to protect preserve and promote our common biological heritage.
3. We demand the guarantee of the sovereign right of the people to decide and protect biodiversity, develop policies on biodiversity based on people's knowledge, experiences and practices also recover and validate bio regional agricultural practices;

4. Guarantee the sovereign rights of people to develop agricultural practices related to bio regional food security;
5. Place priority on food production for domestic and local markets first, also ensure and recognize women's role in production and thus ensuring gender equitable access and control over the same;
6. Recognize and guarantee the rights of Mobile Indigenous Peoples to the restitution of their lands, territories and resources, conserved and traditionally occupied and used sustainably by them, that have been incorporated within protected areas without their free, prior and informed consent; mobility should be restored where appropriate.
7. Ban use of genetically modified seeds and organisms. Urgent action is needed to prevent the genetic contamination of the vast biodiversity of the region;
8. Support and promote sustainable ecological agriculture without the use of harmful pesticides;
9. Ensure genuine peasant participation in the decision making process affecting farming communities and especially in food and agriculture policies and programmes;
10. Promote local resource based, regenerative, sustainable models in agriculture;
11. Revival and restoration of livelihood of artisan communities which are closely linked with agriculture economy, traditional practices and the protection of biodiversity.
12. Ban the use of substances and materials which are banned in other countries are brought and used in India.
13. Research, document, and share experiences in sustainable ecological agriculture across the Region.
14. Creation of alternative funding mechanism to replace the present subsidy system with direct Cash transport as subsidy to the poor farmers.