

## **Introduction**

*Land is a means of livelihood for the bulk of Africa's population. It is also the basic source of food security. But it is more than a means, and a source of food and employment. It is also where the forests, the flora and fauna flourish, and where people have buried their ancestors. And so land has an enormous spiritual value too. Land was the reason for the liberation wars in Africa. And yet land everywhere in Africa is still not liberated. It is either directly owned by the former settlers who came to Africa during the colonial period, or effectively controlled by fertilizer and pesticide sellers who appropriate all the added value that emerges out of the toil of poor peasants and farm workers.*

*It is against this background that about a hundred representatives of farm workers, trade unions, peasant associations, women's associations, and NGOs working in the area of land, labour and food security within the Southern African region came to discuss matters of mutual concern and to share experiences. It was jointly sponsored by the International South Group Network (ISGN) based in Harare, and three NGOs based in South Africa, namely, Farmworkers Research and Resources Centre (FRRP), the National Land Committee (NLC), and the Environment and Development Agency (EDA). A list of the organisations that attended the Conference and those who came from other solidarity and funding organisations is given at the end of this document.*

*The Conference was divided into three sub-conferences, one on land, the second on labour, and the third on food security. Each came with its own set of resolutions and recommendations. These were then integrated into one, and the result was the landmark declaration that is now the "Southern African Charter on Land, Labour and Food Security. (Yash Tandon)*

# **Southern African Charter on Land, Labour and Food Security**

We, organisations, people's movements, trade unions and NGOs meeting at the Southern African Regional Conference on Land, Labour and Food Security, and

together with support from other regions of the world, have discussed and analysed with concern problems concerning land, the position of farm workers, and the general political, social and economic marginalisation of rural people in Southern Africa. This situation, caused by colonialism and apartheid, is being entrenched by structural adjustment programmes and other neo-liberal economic policies in the region. Patriarchal social relations within our countries have further marginalised rural women and youth.

We believe and demand that policies and principles related to land, rural labour, and food security should follow the principles of social justice, gender equality, environmental justice, and democracy. We put forward the following principles for the immediate attention of governments, people's movements, trade unions, NGOs and other organisations in the Southern African region.

## **Food Security**

1. Food Security is a basic human right.
2. The means for the production - land, water, seed and biological resources, technology and credit - and distribution of food as a social good should be under the control of the people of Southern Africa, and therefore guarantee access to food for everyone.
3. Gender equality is a precondition for food security.
4. Food production in Southern Africa should be based on sustainable approaches: indigenous technology strengthened by eco-friendly modern additions.
5. Traditional systems of food production should be revived and strengthened. People must empower themselves and disempower the multinational corporations. Resist the imposition of the modern food systems, their environmentally destructive technologies, dietary food habits and consumerist values.
6. When our governments negotiate with the World Trade Organisation and with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, they must ensure that they represent all of the people's interests, especially those of the poor, and resist the imposition of unjust conditions and policies on our countries, people, and environment.
7. Corruption in Government, the private sector, and civil society must be exposed and seriously addressed in our social movements.

8. We express regional, continental and international solidarity in working for food security for all!

## **Rural Labour**

1. The improvement in the general working conditions of farm workers across the region, to a level that is conducive to a free and healthy life.
2. The improvement in the general living conditions of farm workers, independent ownership of housing, access to basic resources such as clean potable water, nutritious food, electricity, adequate health systems and education.
3. Security of tenure and an end to the threat of evictions for farm workers and independent access to productive land and other resources enabling farm workers to exercise the option of a healthy and happy existence independent of commercial land owners.
4. The prioritisation of farm workers as recipients of land and related support services under existing and future land reform programmes.
5. The right of farm workers to organise, and engage in free collective bargaining; the extension to farm workers of all protective legislation enjoyed by workers in other sectors.
6. Equal political rights for farm workers as for all other citizens.
7. The establishment of minimum wage mechanisms which ensure that farm workers are able to live above the poverty datum line as established for individual countries in the region.
8. The advancement of women farm workers so that they are equal living and working conditions with their male counterparts, and incorporated into organisational and decision making structures of unions at all levels.
9. The monitoring and regulation of child labour, with the express intention of abolishing the conditions which give rise to it; equal pay for equal work and conditions of work where the practice has not yet been abolished.

## **Land**

1. Equal access to and ownership of land is a basic human right.

2. Land reform policy should break up the monopoly of land by landlords, commercial farmers and MNCs and give equal and secure ownership of land to those who live and work on it.
3. Land policy should be developed with the full participation and input of the landless and rural poor, with specific emphasis given to the interests of rural women and the youth.
4. Gender equality, defined as women's independent and equal access to land and resources, be advanced through land reform.
5. Land reform policy should not be solely driven by the interests of multinationals, World Bank, IMF and WTO.
6. Land reform policy must be driven by the principles of social justice and basic needs as opposed to market forces.
7. People who have been displaced from their land by conflict or unjust policies need to have the right to claim their rights to land.
8. Inter-territorial claims should be settled within the principles and agreements of the OAU.

## **RESOLUTIONS**

### **Multinationals**

#### ***Noting that:***

- MNCs and commercial farmers dominate agricultural and food production and distribution in the SADC region;
- MNCs are noted for unfair labour practices, continued profiteering and amassing millions of dollars of profits from the sweat of farm workers. They also transfer profits and dividends out of our countries, and the SADC region;
- the farm workers and people in general are not aware of the economic domination and practices of these MNCs;
- the lack of information and co ordination amongst farm workers employed by different subsidiaries of MNCs in the SADC countries and other countries as well;

- SADC governments are promoting the establishment of Export Processing Zones (EPZs), supposedly to provide jobs by attracting foreign investment. However, experience in other countries have shown that EPZs have only succeeded in providing cheap, docile labour for the MNCs and the workers have remained exploited and impoverished;
- MNCs are unaccountable to the people and governments of the region;
- the practices of MNCs are not socially responsible, nor are they contributing to democracy in the region.

***We therefore resolve:***

1. To advance research and information dissemination on the practices and operations of MNCs in agriculture and food;
2. To co-ordinate information dissemination and action of farm workers amongst subsidiaries of MNCs in SADC and other countries;
3. Advance lobbying and pressure tactics, and develop networks and joint action within SADC countries to curtail, regulate or stop practices of MNCs against workers and people;
4. EPZs must not be promoted, and where they exist the workers rights to organise, to associate freely, to collectively bargain, and to strike must be fully guaranteed.

## **Minimum Standards for Farm Workers**

***Noting that:***

- the vast majority of farm workers across the region receive wages that put them well below the poverty line;
- in almost all cases, farm workers are not protected by the basic labour legislation enjoyed by workers in other sectors of the economy;
- farm workers in the region have little or no access to productive land and other resources which might allow them to enhance their capacity to exist independently of the farm owners;

- housing bound to employment is used as a mechanism of social control by farm owners over farm workers;
- the casualisation of labour, with increasing burden especially on women's labour;
- the increasing precarious nature of farm work on account of Structural Adjustment Programmes.

***We therefore demand:***

1. Minimum wages set at or above the poverty datum lines of each of the countries in the region;
2. Minimum standards on living and working conditions for all farm workers in the region;
3. The extension to all farm workers of protective legislation applying to workers in other sectors;
4. The progressive establishment of tenure security for farm workers and the prioritisation of farm workers as recipients of land and support in current and future land reform programmes;
5. The right to independent ownership of housing for all farm workers.

## **Rural Women**

***Noting that:***

- women have traditionally been denied equality of opportunity;
- the value of reproductive labour has not been recognised by society;
- women domestic workers are often exploited, and abused in the workplace;
- women remain excluded from the operation and decision making processes of organisations and trade unions.

***We demand the following:***

1. **Affirmative action programmes in education, training, employment and land ownership.** Since women have traditionally been denied equality of opportunity, we demand preferential access to these areas in order to bridge the gender gap.
2. **Recognition of reproductive labour.** We demand that the ILO standards for reproductive labour be acknowledged as minimum standards to assure job security for women, i.e. three months paid maternity leave and provision for breast feeding as well as the establishment of well equipped and staffed creche facilities. We will seek to transform the household relations such that men and women take equal responsibilities for household production.
3. **The working conditions of domestic workers be regulated - including working hours, minimum wages, health, welfare and pension benefits.** We further demand that pension rights for dependent women should include sufficient funds and time for the potential relocation of the family in the case of divorce or death of the husband.
4. **That the role of women workers be addressed through gender sensitivity programmes in trade unions, NGOs and at the workplace - focusing on women's actual participation in production, and decision making.**
5. **The equal representation of women in trade unions, so that unions can represent the interests of women farm workers.**

## **Children**

We define "child labour" as the employment of minors which deprives them of their rights to education.

Noting that children are still being employed under exploitative conditions, we demand that the conditions giving rise to such child labour should be abolished.

## **Participation of Farm Workers in Local Government**

Recognising the right to participate in all levels of government as a basic right, we note with concern the legislated discrimination against farm workers where they are prohibited from participation in local government on the basis of property or any other discriminatory qualifications.

We therefore resolve that there be unconditional participation by farm workers in local government in all countries in the region. Local government structures and operation must be restructured to allow rural workers unconditional and full participation.

## **Land Reform**

Recognising that the historical processes of colonialism and apartheid deprived people of their basic human rights to land. We are concerned that the current policies which are being pursued by our national governments continue to marginalise the rural poor from access to land and the resources required for the development and use of land.

### ***Noting that:***

- exploitative labour conditions on farms, the “grabbing” of land, and the degradation of the environment by multinational corporations are occurring in our region;
- governments are under internal and external pressure to carry out land reforms according to the interests of the MNCs, World Bank, IMF, and WTO;
- governments are not making appropriate choices in relation to land reform;
- there is a lack of capacity and political will on the part of government to implement land reform;
- there is a lack of transparency on the part of governments in the formulation and implementation of land reform;
- women are excluded from government decision making levels and processes.

### ***We therefore demand the following actions from our governments:***

1. Acknowledge that equal access to and ownership of land is a basic human right.
2. Land reform policy should break up the monopoly of land by landlords, commercial farmers and MNCs and give equal and secure ownership of land to those who live and work on it.



3. Land policy should be developed with the full participation and input of the landless and rural poor, with specific emphasis given to the interests of rural women and the youth.
4. Gender equality, defined as women's independent and equal access to land and resources, be advanced through land reform.
5. Land reform policy should not be solely driven by the interests of multinationals, World Bank, IMF and WTO.
6. Land reform policy must be driven by the principles of social justice and basic needs as opposed to market forces.
7. People who have been displaced from their land by conflict or unjust policies need to have the right to claim their rights to land.
8. Inter-territorial claims should be settled within the principles and agreements of the OAU.

## **Food Security**

### ***Noting:***

- the marginalisation of small farmers by the unjust economic practices of the global corporate powers and their local and regional subsidiaries;
- the prevalence of landlessness and the displacement of small farmers;
- the serious degradation of the soil and the erosion of biodiversity resources due to chemical based mono-cultural systems and patents on seeds, plant varieties and life forms;
- unfair trade and domination of the region by South African and international corporations;
- the choices that the SADC governments have made under pressure from the Multinational Corporations, international Financial Institutions which increase our debt burden, and result in the undermining and marginalisation of food production capacities in the region;
- that food aid undermines local production, destroys local food systems and

undermines dignity of people, creates markets for multinationals, creates dependency, creates opportunities for corruption and can be used for short term political gain;

- the negative effects of patriarchy, the division of labour in the household and customary and common law systems on food security;
- the high levels of poverty in our societies and that many households have no access to the means of food production;
- the many negative consequences of chemical based monoculture-food production, including environmental, damage, marginalisation of people, food production, unhealthy and poisonous foods;
- that an African economic community should support the efforts of farmers to achieve food security for all Africa's people.

***We hereby:***

1. Aim to democratise production and distribution in agricultural systems. and also promote sustainable agriculture to achieve food security.
2. Call for a revolutionary, holistic land and agricultural reform based on the principle of "land to the tiller".
3. Resolve to promote sustainable agriculture and call for the removal of agriculture from Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) and when the World Trade Organisation undertakes its agricultural review in 1999.
4. Demand recognition of farmers' rights to indigenous seeds and their in situ conservation, and that developed countries meet their commitments to provide funds for such conservation.
5. Call for the establishment of just and equitable trade in the Southern African region.
6. Resolve to lobby, empower and strengthen progressive elements within and outside the policy making apparatuses.
7. Resolve that while we accept that under conditions of disaster, food aid is necessary for humanitarian reasons, it should always be accompanied by

strategies for rehabilitation which will lift the people out of the situation which caused the hunger.

8. Resolve that there must be gender equality, including access for women to the means of food production, and access to food: land, water, credit, extension services and a fair share of household income.
9. Resolve to work for unity of action with supportive organisations and institutions in Africa and the world to achieve food security for Africa's people.
10. Demand low food prices, no tax on food and nutritious food.
11. Declare traditional agricultural systems to be superior, and we resolve to promote sustainable, indigenous agriculture incorporating eco-friendly technology.

people have buried their ancestors. And so land has an enormous spiritual value too. Land was the reason for the liberation wars in Africa. And yet land everywhere in Africa is still not liberated. It is either directly owned by the former settlers who came to Africa during the colonial period, or effectively controlled by fertilizer and pesticide sellers who appropriate all the added value that emerges out of the toil of poor peasants and farm workers.

It is against this background that about a hundred representatives of farm workers, trade unions, peasant associations, women's associations, and NGOs working in the area of land, labour and food security within the Southern African region came to discuss matters of mutual concern and to share experiences. It was jointly sponsored by the International South Group Network (ISGN) based in Harare, and three NGOs based in South Africa, namely, Farmworkers Research

## **CO-SPONSORS OF THE CHARTER AND RESOLUTIONS**

- Action for Rural Development & Environment (ADRA), Angola
- Agenda for Environment & Responsible Development, Tanzania
- Associaciao Rural de Ajuda Mutua (ORAM), Mozambique
- Association for Rural Advancement (AFRA), South Africa
- Association for Northern Cape Rural Advancement (ANCRA), South Africa
- Botswana Meatworkers Union, Botswana
- Botswana Federation of Trade Union (BFTU), Botswana
- Botswana Meat & Industrial Workers' Union (BMIWU), Botswana

- Centre d'Etudes pour le Developpement en Afrique (CEDA), Burkina Faso
- Co-ordination Unit for the Rehabilitation of the Environment (CURE), Malawi
- Coordinating Assembly of NGOs (CANGO) of Swaziland
- Council of NGOs in Malawi, Malawi
- Council of Swaziland Churches, Swaziland
- Council for NGOs in Malawi (CONGOMA), Malawi
- Ditshwanelo, Botswana
- Ecumenical Service for Socio-Economic Transformation (ESSET), South Africa
- Environment and Development Agency (ENDA), Zimbabwe
- Environmental Development Agency Trust (EDA Trust), South Africa
- Farmworkers Research & Resource Project (FRRP), South Africa
- FONSAG, Botswana
- Food and Allied Workers' Union (FAWU), South Africa
- Forum for Sustainable Agriculture, South Africa
- Forum of Angolan NGOs (FONGA), Angola
- Forum on Sustainable Agriculture, Botswana
- General Agricultural & Plantation Workers' Union (GAPWUZ), Zimbabwe
- Group for Environmental Monitoring (GEM), South Africa
- Highlands Church Action Group, Lesotho
- Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Zimbabwe
- International South Group Network (ISGN), Third World
- International Union of Food, Agriculture, Hotel, Catering, Restaurant and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF), African Region
- Journalist for the Environment & Development (JOPAD), Angola
- Legal Assistance Centre (LAC), Namibia
- Lesotho Federation of Democratic Unions (LFDU), Lesotho
- Lesotho Council of NGOs, Lesotho
- Namibia Rural Development Project (NRDP), Namibia
- Namibia Farmworkers Union (NUF), Namibia
- Namibia Non-Governmental Organisation Forum (NANGOF), Namibia
- Namibian Farmworkers' Union (NAFWU), Namibia
- National Land Committee (NLC), South Africa
- National Union of Farmworkers (NUF), South Africa
- National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW), Namibia
- Nucleo de Estudos da Terra, Mozambique
- Organisaio de Trabalhadores de Mozambique (OTM), Mozambique
- Organisation of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU), Africa
- Rural Selfhelp Development Association (RSDA), Lesotho
- Rural Development Services Network (RDSN), South Africa

- Sindicato Nacional dos Trabalhadores Agro-Pecuario e Florestais (SINTAF), Mozambique
- South African Agricultural, Plantation & Allied Workers' Union (SAAPAWU), South Africa
- Southern Cape Land Committee (SCLC), South Africa
- Southern African Trade Union Co-ordinating Council (SATUCC), SADC Region
- Swaziland Council of Churches, Swaziland
- Swaziland Environmental Justice Agenda (SEJA), Swaziland
- Tanzanian Plantation & Agricultural Workers' Union (TPAWU), Tanzania
- Transkei Land Service Organisation (TRALSO), South Africa
- Transvaal Rural Action Committee (TRAC), South Africa
- Uniao Nacional de Cooperativas (UNAC/UGC), Mozambique
- WFD, Southern Africa Office
- Yonge Nawe Environmental Organisation, Swaziland
- Zambia Civic Education Association, Zambia
- ZERO (Regional Environment Organisation), Zimbabwe
- Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), Zimbabwe

## **OUTSIDE SOLIDARITY GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS**

- Africa Groups of Sweden, Sweden
- Centre for Trade Union Services (CTUS), Egypt
- Centro de Estudios Internacionales (CEI), Nicaragua
- Consejo de Instituciones de Desarrollo (COINDE), Guatemala
- Databank and Research Center, IBON, Philippines
- Fonds voor Ondwikkelings Samenwerking (FOS), Belgium
- Forum for Environment and Development (FORUM), Norway
- ICCO
- Integrated Rural Development Foundation (IDRF), Philippines
- Karnataka Rajya Ryota Sangha (KRRS), India
- Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), Philippines
- Netherlands Organisation for International Development Co-operation (NOVIB), Netherlands
- Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation (NORAD), Norway
- Oxfam, Zambia/UK & Eire
- United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, Zimbabwe

**The Charter is open for signature and support from individuals (workers and farmers, members of Parliament, members of Government, academics, journalists and other social activists) as well as organisations. A revised lists of co-sponsors will be issued after sufficient signatures are received.**

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