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Environment

Declaration of climate caravan

- News from around the world -

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Declaration of the South Asian Caravan 2014 on Climate Justice, Gender and Food Sovereignty Submitted to the People's SAARC, Kathmandu, Nepal and UNFCCC meeting (COP 20), Lima, Peru.

We men and women, small farmers, Adivasis, agricultural labourers, workers, fishfolk, landless people, plantation workers, hawkers and youth organized a caravan across Bangladesh, India and Nepal to bring people together for climate justice and peoples solutions to the climate crisis. Our 13 day South Asian Climate Justice, Gender and Food Sovereignty Caravan, was organized by the Bangladesh Krishok Federation; Bangladesh Kishani Sabha, Friends of Bangladesh and All Nepal Peasant's Federation and included these movements as well as the Bangladesh Adivasi Samity, Bangladesh Agricultural Farm Labour Federation, EKOTTRO, National Hawkers' Federation, Progressive Plantation Workers' Union, All Nepal Women's Association, MONLAR, and La Via Campesina which are peoples movements struggling for dignity and the rights of rural and working people. We visited 12 towns and cities of Bangladesh, India and Nepal.

We were joined by many in the same struggle from our sister peasant organisations of India; Sri Lanka; Nepal, Indonesia and the Philippines; as well as friends of our struggles from the U.K.; U.S., Germany, Sweden and Australia. Our Caravan culminated in a three day 'People's SAARC' held in Kathmandu, Nepal where movements came together to discuss alternative solutions to the climate crisis and hold demonstrations demanding climate justice. Together we are part of the global people's resistance for climate justice.

In the towns and cities we held meetings, workshops and seminars on the key issues facing our communities. Through this caravan it became clear to us that our problems are shared by our brother and sister farmers in South Asia and across the world. These are dominated by the planetary emergency created by the climate crisis. Our very existence is becoming precarious through landlessness; land grabbing by elites; local government corruption; gender inequality and discrimination (especially women's dual labour in the household and in the fields), and the imposition of industrial market-based agricultural methods (including the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers) which have increased our production costs and debts and forced peasants from their lands and livelihoods.

Climate change is aggravating such problems and also making farming difficult due to flooding; salt water inundation; cyclone damage; desertification and drought; and unseasonal and unpredictable weather. These are being caused by excessive greenhouse gas emissions and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources particularly from the wealthy industrialized countries, but also from industrialized elites in countries such as China, India and Brazil. They bear the responsibility for climate change but the poor in the Global South are bearing the burden and suffering of climate change. Given these crises faced by us we totally reject the market-based interventions into Bangladeshi, Indian, Nepali and Sri Lankan agriculture that aim to further worsen our conditions. The false solutions to the climate crisis that world leaders are pushing at the ineffective UNFCCC process are an attempt by multinational corporations that have caused climate change in the first place to further take over what is left of our lands and livelihoods.

In farming they are pushing through false solutions like climate ready GMOs (such as Bt. Brinjal in Bangladesh after it was rejected by India following farmers' resistance); petrol based polluting fertilizers; biochar; agrofuels at the cost of food; increasing monocultures; and programmes such as the framework of Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) and the Clean Development Mechanisms (CDM). The polluters think that by throwing money at poor countries through loans tied to promoting these false solutions, they can continue to emit carbon and at the same time take over our agriculture. We reaffirm our rejection of, and struggle against, all transnational corporations that pursue profits before people's livelihoods. We demand that the efforts of the people be supported to enable real peoples' solutions to the climate crisis.

Declaration of climate caravan

WE DEMAND

- (i) comprehensive land reform including land and land titles for the landless; all land grabbing by elite interests and multi national corporations needs to be stopped.
- (ii) government support for small farmers that feed the world and cool the planet - small farmers need fair prices for their produce, interest free credit, subsidies, guaranteed markets, insurance against disasters, self reliant ecological agricultural methods such as traditional farming methods which need state sponsored research. Small farmer agriculture needs support for food sovereignty of our nations. We oppose dependence on food produced by polluting industrial agriculture and imports.
- (iii) recognition of peasant women's dual burden of farming and household labour and the end to all gender discrimination and inequality.
- (iv) constitutional recognition and rights for Adivasi peoples and support to indigenous farming.
- (v) reparation rather than loans paid to the governments of Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka and the rest of the Global South as part of the climate debt owed by industrialized countries of the Global North.
- (vi) all adaptation measures to climate change to include full participation and consultation with local communities.
- (vii) a legally binding agreement to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions signed by all governments responsible for those emissions.
- (viii) a full and just transition to community-controlled renewable energy.
- (ix) legal rights for all climate refugees.
- (x) a visa-free South Asia.
- (xi) protection of, and end to the privatization of, all biodiversity and genetic resources in South Asia.
- (xii) respect for the rights of Mother Earth.

Our demands form part of the wider movement for climate justice emerging across the world enshrined in the 2010 Cochabamba Declaration. We call for a further intensification of international solidarity between farmers' movements and networks (such as La Via Campesina; Asian Peasant Coalition; South Asian Peasant Coalition; People's Coalition on Food Sovereignty, Jubilee South Asia and the Pacific on Debt and Development) Climate Justice Networks such as Climate Justice Now! and Climate Justice Action; trade unions; and indigenous and Dalit peoples movements.

We demand system change, not climate change.

November, 24th, 2014, Kathmandu, Nepal