

DECLARATION OF THE LEADERS OF CLIMATE COMMUNITIES FROM ASIA, AFRICA AND SOUTH AMERICA

**At the Climate Change Summit, Copenhagen
December 16, 2009**

Right at the outset let us declare that we are not here to demand anything from the global political leaders who have gathered here in Copenhagen to negotiate their solutions for the Climate Crisis. **We, the grassroots communities in the forests, small farmers, pastoralists and fishers are resource rich in on our own. We know how to wise use these resources since we are centers of knowledge. Therefore there is nothing that you can give us to combat climate crisis. On the other hand, if you want to reclaim life on this planet, it is you who have to demand this strength from us.**

However we would like to register our strongest protest against the shutting out of our voices from the Climate Convention you are holding here in Copenhagen. This is unprecedented in the annals of UN's international conventions. This already creates deep doubts in our minds that this convention has been fixed. Your negotiations are a farce and will arrive at a solution that has already been pre determined by all of you.

But in this process you have openly shown how undemocratic this process has been. Without bringing in the voices of the climate communities like us, any decisions that you might take will never achieve legitimacy. We also want to make it clear to you that the decisions taken without our involvement will not be binding on us, the climate communities, who constitute the huge majority of the global populations and we are the ones who live with nature on a day to day basis with our lives depending on climate and its changes.

In this context, we would like to offer our own text for your climate change convention. You can use this as the basis of your negotiation drafts if you want to retain life on earth. Our brothers and sisters from India have already prepared a Community Charter on Climate Crisis have through a painstaking participatory process that is transparent, democratic and vivid in things it states.

We the people of this planet from the mountains, coasts, forests, deserts, plains and plateaus of this vast and rich earth, who have lived with nature for millennia, whose farming, fishing, forestry and pastoralism have been seen nourished Mother Earth have today decided to articulate our issues, concerns and solutions to the climate crisis. We are of the firm view that our bonding with nature, our respect for it and the way we have learnt from our forefathers to live in harmony with it, show us many ways of dealing with the projected problems of climate change such as higher temperature, scanty and erratic rainfall, ill health and malnutrition. In our discussions with each other in Copenhagen, outside the confines of the intergovernmental negotiations. we have rediscovered our strengths which spur us to assert that the world needs to recognise these as the foundation of our capacity to combat the climate crisis.

Our Strengths

1. The great plant and animal biodiversity in the Global South, including edible, medicinal, domesticated and wild varieties which we have inherited and protected for millennia on our farms, in our forests and our seas, and with whom we have a relationship of mutual care and respect are our greatest resource. As a community, we have been able to bond together to face the threats posed to the environment by the current climate change. We have the understanding that we the 'Children of the Soil' cannot survive without our land and our seas, our good mother-earth, because she is an integral part of our life, livelihood and dignity. Our forests, coral reefs, sand dunes protect us from natural calamities, give us food, fodder and other livelihood options, and offer shelter to a large number of species with whom we share the earth. We have been living with the problems of cyclones, water-logging and salinisation for years, and we have the knowledge to anticipate and adapt to their adverse impact. Our Community cohesiveness and social bonding are still alive with us and can help us to take collective actions to confront the climate crisis.
2. It is our profound belief that the rich ancestral knowledge that we have been bequeathed, can guide us to combat the current climate crisis This centuries-old community knowledge has enabled us to nurture our flora and fauna in the forests. . As fishers, we are unswerving in our obedience and respect towards the heritage given by our forefathers through the practice of complete ecological harvesting, which does not muddle the balance of coastal flora and fauna. As fishers, we are unswerving in our obedience and respect towards the heritage given by our forefathers through the practice of complete ecological harvesting, which does not muddle the balance of coastal flora and fauna.
3. Our heritage of seed saving and exchange, and the knowledge associated with it is an invaluable asset in our engagement with climatic factors. Our traditional seeds can withstand the climate crisis, and our cultural practices for preservation of seeds and flowers, forever adaptive to the needs of the hour, can nourish them even in adverse circumstances. We are the proud conservers of valuable genetic and ecological varieties of aquatic flora and fauna, which provide us food and means of survival and dignity as fisher-folk.
4. Our agriculture is nonpolluting, self-regenerating, least energy demanding, and is based on ecological principles. Our cropping system, in its pristine diversity, not only feeds us with diverse foods but also comforts us with its capacity to retain the richness and fertility of our soils. The organic system which has been the hallmark of our farming for millennia provides us with safe and nutritionally rich food.
5. Our forests protect us from natural calamities, give us food-fodder and other livelihood options, and offer shelter to a large number of species with whom we share the earth.

Our Demands

We demand that the global communities recognize these great community assets of ours and initiate actions. The actions we demand from all concerned, particularly the developmental agencies, locally, nationally and globally are the following:

1. Recognize the diversity and integrity on our farms, livestock, forests and seas as civilisational assets and do not do anything to disturb them. Declare officially that these are fundamental in our fight against the Climate Crisis.
2. Endorse the multifunctional, ecological and diverse agriculture we practice as the greatest defense against climate change. Considering the rich practices and knowledge that we bring to agriculture, we urge that our communities be declared as ecological communities and by law, prohibit chemical fertilizers and pesticides from our region. In order to further promote this form of agriculture, calculate and provide carbon credit to our form of agriculture and let our communities benefit from them. We demand that the ecological and diversified agriculture we practice be declared as the most viable and suitable strategy to adapt to and mitigate climate crises. Initiate policy measures to prevent mono-culturalisation, and protect and promote these multi-level diversities in our crop, livelihood, food and culture.
3. Respect pastoralism and mobility as distinctive sources of cultural identity, integrity and rights. Empower Pastoralists in the management of existing protected areas and recognise their customary territories as community conserved areas (CCAs) when so demanded by the Pastoral peoples. Recognise the crucial role of indigenous knowledge and the capacity of pastoralists and all other indigenous communities to conserve biodiversity in full compatibility with pastoral livelihoods.
4. Recognise that the traditional fishers, are the stewards of the coast and waters. Our communities have historically lived on the edge of the water and land; governing its resources, using methods handed down to us by our forefathers. To carry out our work, we daily risk our lives, against vagaries of wind and currents. The climate crisis has aggravated our risks. For us, this crisis is not in our future scenario, but in the reality we are already living. It has made our livelihood more insecure. Current government policies and economic paradigms that have promoted unplanned and rampant development, and the greedy extraction of resources from our eco-systems, have not been viable and sustainable.
5. Honour each one of our community members and Frontline Warriors against Climate Change and enact policy measures to provide them with incentives to practice and promote this diversity.