Peoples' Food Sovereignty Statement

Food and agriculture are fundamental to all peoples, in terms of both production and availability of sufficient quantities of safe and healthy food, and as foundations of healthy communities, cultures and environments. All of these are being undermined by the increasing emphasis on neo-liberal economic policies promoted by leading political and economic powers, such as the United States (US) and the European Union (EU), and realised through global institutions, such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). Instead of securing food for the peoples of the world, these institutions have presided over a system that has prioritised export-oriented production, increased global hunger and malnutrition, and alienated millions from productive assets and resources such as land, water, fish, seeds, technology and know-how. Fundamental change to this global regime is urgently required.

Peoples' Food Sovereignty is a Right

In order to guarantee the independence and food sovereignty of all of the world's peoples, it is essential that food is produced though diversified, community based production systems. Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture; to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives; to determine the extent to which they want to be self reliant; to restrict the dumping of products in their markets, and; to provide local fisheries-based communities the priority in managing the use of and the rights to aquatic resources. Food sovereignty does not negate trade, but rather, it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to safe, healthy and ecologically sustainable production.

Governments must uphold the rights of all peoples to food sovereignty and security, and adopt and implement policies that promote sustainable, family-based production rather

than industry-led, high-input and export oriented production. This in turn demands that they put in place the following measures:

I. Market Policies

- Ensure adequate remunerative prices for all farmers and fishers;
- Exercise the rights to protect domestic markets from imports at low prices;
- Regulate production on the internal market in order to avoid the creation of surpluses;
- Abolish all direct and indirect export supports; and,
- Phase out domestic production subsidies that promote unsustainable agriculture, inequitable land tenure patterns and destructive fishing practices; and support integrated agrarian reform programmes, including sustainable farming and fishing practices.

II. Food Safety, Quality and the Environment

- Adequately control the spread of diseases and pests while at the same time ensuring food safety;
- Protect fish resources from both land-based and sea-based threats, such as pollution from dumping, coastal and off-shore mining, degradation of river mouths and estuaries and harmful industrial aquaculture practices that use antibiotics and hormones;
- Ban the use of dangerous technologies, such as food irradiation, which lower the nutritional value of food and create toxins in food;
- Establish food quality criteria appropriate to the preferences and needs of the people;
- Establish national mechanisms for quality control of all food products so that they comply with high environmental, social and health quality standards; and,
- Ensure that all food inspection functions are performed by appropriate and independent government bodies, and not by private corporations or contractors;

III. Access to Productive Resources

- Recognise and enforce communities' legal and customary rights to make decisions concerning their local, traditional resources, even where no legal rights have previously been allocated;
- Ensure equitable access to land, seeds, water, credit and other productive resources;
- Grant the communities that depend on aquatic resources common property rights, and reject systems that attempt to privatise these public resources;

- Prohibit all forms of patenting of life or any of its components, and the appropriation of knowledge associated with food and agriculture through intellectual property rights regimes and
- Protect farmers', indigenous peoples' and local community rights over plant genetic resources and associated knowledge – including farmers' rights to exchange and reproduce seeds.

IV. Production-Consumption

- Develop local food economies based on local production and processing, and the development of local food outlets.

V. Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)

- Ban the production of, and trade in genetically modified (GM) seeds, foods, animal feeds and related products;
- Ban genetically modified foods to be used as food aid;
- Expose and actively oppose the various methods (direct and indirect) by which agribusiness corporations such as Monsanto, Syngenta, Aventis/Bayer and DuPont are bringing GM crop varieties into agricultural systems and environments; and,
- Encourage and promote alternative agriculture and organic farming, based on indigenous knowledge and sustainable agriculture practices.

VI. Transparency of Information and Corporate Accountability

- Provide clear and accurate labelling of food and feed-stuff products based on consumers' and farmers' rights to access to information about content and origins;
- Establish binding regulations on all companies to ensure transparency, accountability and respect for human rights and environmental standards;
- Establish anti-trust laws to prevent the development of industrial monopolies in the food, fisheries and agricultural sectors; and,
- Hold corporate entities and their directors legally liable for corporate breaches of environmental and social laws, and of national and international laws and agreements.

VII. Specific Protection Of Coastal Communities Dependent On Marine And Inland Fish

- Prevent the expansion of shrimp aquaculture and the destruction of mangroves;
- Ensure local fishing communities have the rights to the aquatic resources;

- Negotiate a legally binding international convention to prevent illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing;
- Effectively implement international marine agreements and conventions, such as the UN Fish Stocks Agreement; and,
- Eradicate poverty and ensure food security for coastal communities through equitable and sustainable community based natural resource use and management, founded on indigenous and local knowledge, culture and experience.

Trade Rules Must Guarantee Food Sovereignty

Global trade must not be afforded primacy over local and national developmental, social, environmental and cultural goals. Priority should be given to affordable, safe, healthy and good quality food, and to culturally appropriate subsistence production for domestic, sub-regional and regional markets. Current modes of trade liberalisation, which allows market forces and powerful transnational corporations (TNCs) to determine what and how food is produced, and how food is traded and marketed, cannot fulfil these crucial goals.

'No' to Neo-liberal Policies in Food and Agriculture

The undersigned denounce the liberalisation' of farm product exchanges as promoted through bilateral and regional free trade agreements, and multilateral institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO. We condemn the dumping of food products in all markets, and especially in Third World countries where it has severely undermined domestic production. We condemn the attempts by the WTO and other multilateral institutions to sell all rights of aquatic resources to transnational consortiums. Neo-liberal policies coerce countries into specialising in agricultural production in which they have a so-called 'comparative advantage' and then trading along the same lines. However, export orientated production is being pushed at the expense of domestic food production, and production means and resources are increasingly controlled by large transnational corporations. The same is occurring in the fishing sector. Fishing communities are losing their rights of access to fisheries, because access has been transferred to industrial corporations, such as PESCANOVA. Those TNCs have consolidated a great part of the production and of the global fishing commerce.

Rich governments continue to heavily subsidise export oriented agricultural and fisheries production in their countries, with the bulk of support going to large producers. The majority of taxpayers' funds are handed out to big business – large producers, traders and retailers – who engage in unsustainable agricultural, fisheries and trading practices, and not to small-scale family producers who produce much of the food for the internal market, often in more sustainable ways.

These export-oriented policies have resulted in market prices for commodities that are far lower than their real costs of production. This has encouraged and perpetuated dumping, and provided TNCs with opportunities to buy cheap products, which are then sold at significantly higher prices to consumers in both the North and the South. The larger parts of important agricultural and fisheries subsidies in rich countries are in fact subsidies for corporate agri-industry, traders, retailers and a minority of the largest producers.

The adverse effects of these policies and practices are becoming clearer every day. They lead to the disappearance of small-scale, family farms and fishing communities in both the North and South; poverty has increased, especially in the rural areas; soils and water have been polluted and degraded; biological diversity has been lost, and; natural habitats destroyed.

Dumping

Dumping occurs when goods are sold at less than their cost of production. This can be the result of subsidies and structural distortions, such as monopoly control over markets and distribution. The inability of current economic policy to factor in externalities, such as the depletion of water and soil nutrients and pollution resulting from industrial agricultural methods, also contribute to dumping. Dumping under the current neo-liberal policies is conducted in North-South, South-North, South-South and North-North trade. Whatever the form, dumping ruins small-scale local producers in both the countries of origin and sale.

For example:

- Imports by India of dairy surpluses subsidised by the European Union had negative impacts on local, family based dairy production.
- Exports of industrial pork from the USA to the Caribbean proved ruinous to Caribbean producers;
- Imports by Ivory Coast of European pork at subsidised prices are three times lower than the production costs in Ivory Coast;
- Chinese exports of silk threads to India at prices far lower than the costs of production in India has been seriously damaging for hundreds of thousands of farmer families in Southern India; and,
- On one hand the import of cheap maize from the US to Mexico- the centre of the origin of maize - ruins Mexican producers; on the other hand the export of vegetables at low prices from Mexico to Canada ruins producers in Canada.

Dumping practises must to be stopped. Countries must be able to protect their home markets against dumping and other trade practices that prove damaging to local

producers. Exporting countries must not be allowed to dump surpluses on the international market, and should respond to real demands for agricultural goods and products in ways that do not undermine domestic production, but rather support and strengthen local economies.

There is no 'World Market' of Agricultural Products

The so called 'market' of agricultural products does not exist. What exists is, above all, an international trade of surpluses of milk, cereals and meat dumped primarily by the EU, the US and other members of the CAIRNS group. Behind the faces of national trade negotiators are powerful TNCs, such as Monsanto and Cargill. They are the real beneficiaries of domestic subsidies and supports, international trade negotiations and the global manipulations of trade regimes. At present, international trade in agricultural products involves only ten percent of total worldwide agricultural production and is mainly an exchange between TNCs from the US, EU and a few other industrialised countries. The so called 'world market price' is extremely unstable and has no relation to the costs of production. It is far too low because of dumping, and therefore, it is not an appropriate or desirable reference for agricultural production.

The Older Siblings of the WTO: The World Bank and The IMF

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are the older siblings of the WTO and serve as domestic arms of the WTO regime in developing countries. They have played significant roles in weakening agricultural autonomy, dismantling domestic self-sufficiency, creating famines and undermining food sovereignty. Their structural adjustment programmes – now called poverty reduction programmes – have created and entrenched policy induced poverty across the developing world. Hardest hit by these policies are those who rely on agriculture and the natural environment for their livelihood and survival.

Despite mounting evidence to the contrary, the Bank and Fund are unchanged in their belief that global integration' of domestic agriculture systems and 'market access' are the best avenues to reduce poverty. Developing countries are exhorted to undertake reforms in their respective agriculture sectors, which include dismantling of agriculture subsidies, deregulation of pricing and distribution, privatisation of agriculture support and extension services, provision of greater market access to foreign producers and removing all barriers to international agriculture trade. However, the Bank and Fund are unable to force the rich countries of the OECD to the same. As a result, Bank-Fund policies entrench inequalities among the developed and developing world and reproduce colonial structures of production and distribution.

Privatisation, liberalisation and deregulation are the hallmarks of the World Bank-IMF approach to development and are necessary conditions in all Bank-Fund lending programmes. Despite fierce criticism from numerous farmers' organisations, academics and independent researchers, the Bank continues to support 'market-assisted land

reform' and the creation of 'functioning land markets' as a key rural development strategy. Bank-Fund policies mandate the transformation of subsistence based, community oriented and self-sufficient agriculture systems to commercial and market dependent production and distribution systems. Food crops are replaced by cash crops for export, and communities and societies are compelled to rely on external markets that they have no control over for food security. Furthermore, the emphasis on export crops has led to increased dependence on harmful and costly chemical inputs that threaten soil, water and air quality, biodiversity, and human and animal health, while providing greater profits for large agribusiness and chemical corporations.

The commercialisation of agriculture has resulted in the consolidation of agriculture land and assets in the hands of agribusiness and other large commercial entities, displacing small-scale and family farmers off their lands to seek employment in off-farm activities, or as seasonal labour in the commercial agriculture sector. Most farmers in developing countries are steeped in debt as a result of increasing input costs and falling farm-gate prices for their products. Many have mortgaged their land and assets to repay old debts, and in several cases have lost their lands altogether. An equally large number have moved to contract farming for large agribusiness in order to hold on to whatever assets they have left. This has resulted in widespread migration of farming families, the creation of new pockets of poverty and inequality in rural and urban areas, and the fragmentation of entire rural communities.

The World Bank and the IMF threaten the wealth, diversity and potential of our agriculture. Agriculture is not simply an economic sector, it is a complex of ecosystems and processes that include forests, rivers, plains, coastal areas, biodiversity, human and animal habitats, production, distribution, consumption, conservation, etc. Bank-Fund policies are creeping into every one of these areas. In order to protect our agriculture, the World Bank and the IMF must be removed from food and agriculture altogether.

The World Trade Organisation Dismisses Calls for Reform

The WTO is undemocratic and unaccountable, has increased global inequality and insecurity, promotes unsustainable production and consumption patterns, erodes diversity and undermines social and environmental priorities. It has proven impervious to criticisms regarding its work and has dismissed all calls for reform. Despite promises to improve the system made at the Seattle Ministerial Meeting in 1999, governance in the WTO has actually become worse. Rather than addressing existing inequities and power imbalances between rich and poor countries, the lobby of the rich and powerful in the WTO is attempting to expand the WTO's mandate to new areas such as environment, labour, investment, competition and government procurement.

The WTO is an entirely inappropriate institution to address issues of food and agriculture. The undersigned do not believe that the WTO will engage in profound reform in order to make itself responsive to the rights and needs of ordinary people. The WTO is attempting

to establish rules to protect foreign investments of fleets that operate in national waters, and is pressuring the governments to yield exclusive fishing rights to the international consortiums. Therefore, the undersigned are calling for all food and agricultural concerns to be taken out of WTO jurisdiction through the dismantling of the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) and removing or amending the relevant clauses on other WTO agreements so as to ensure the full exclusion of food and agriculture from the WTO regime. These include: the Agreement on Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs), Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures (SPS), Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), Quantitative Restrictions (QRs), Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (SCM) and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).

A Role for Trade Rules in Agricultural and Food Policies?

Trade in food can play a positive role, for example, in times of regional food insecurity, or in the case of products that can only be grown in certain parts of the world, or for the exchange of quality products. However, trade rules must respect the precautionary principle to policies at all levels, recognise democratic and participatory decision making, and place peoples' food sovereignty before the imperatives of international trade.

An Alternative Framework

To compliment the role of local and national governments, there is clear need for a new and alternative international framework for multilateral regulation on the sustainable production and trade of food, fish and other agricultural goods. Within this framework, the following principles must be respected:

- Peoples' food sovereignty;
- The rights of all countries to protect their domestic markets by regulating all imports that undermine their food sovereignty;
- Trade rules that support and guarantee food sovereignty;
- Upholding gender equity and equality in all policies and practices concerning food production;
- The precautionary principle;
- The right to information about the origin and content of food items;
- Genuine international democratic participation mechanisms;
- Priority to domestic food production, sustainable farming and fishing practices and equitable access to all resources;

- Support for small farmers and producers to own, and have sufficient control over means of food production;
- Support for open access of traditional fishing communities to aquatic resources;
- Effective bans on all forms of dumping, in order to protect domestic food production. This would include supply management by exporting countries to avoid surpluses and the rights of importing countries to protect internal markets against imports at low prices;
- Prohibition of biopiracy and patents on living matter - animals, plants, the human body and other life forms - and any of its components, including the development of sterile varieties through genetic engineering; and,
- Respect for all human rights conventions and related multilateral agreements under independent international jurisdiction.The undersigned affirm the demands made in other civil society statements, such as Our World is Not for Sale: WTO-Shrink or Sink, and Stop the GATS Attack Now. We urge governments to immediately take the following steps: Cease negotiations to initiate a new round of trade liberalisation and halt discussions to bring 'new issues' into the WTO. This includes further discussions on such issues as investment, competition, government procurement, biotechnology, services, labour and environment.
- Cancel further trade liberalisation negotiations on the WTO's AoA through the WTO's built-in agenda.
- Cancel the obligation of accepting the minimum importation of 5% of internal consumption; all compulsory market access clauses must similarly be cancelled immediately.
- Undertake a thorough review of both the implementation, and the environmental and social impacts of existing trade rules and agreements (and the WTO's role in this system) in relation to food, fisheries and agriculture.
- Initiate measures to remove food and agriculture from under the control of the WTO through the dismantling of the AoA and through the removal or amendment of relevant clauses in the TRIPS, GATS, SPS, TBT and SCM agreements. Replace these with a new Convention on Food Sovereignty and Trade in Food, Agriculture and Fisheries.
- Revise intellectual property policies to prohibit the patenting of living matter and any of their components and limit patent protections in order to protect public health and public safety;
- Halt all negotiations on GATS, and dismantle the principle of 'progressive liberalisation' in order to protect social services and the public interest;
- Implement genuine agrarian reform and ensure the rights of peasants to crucial assets such as land, seed, water and other resources;

- Promote the primary role of fish harvesters' and fish workers' organisations in managing the use of aquatic resources and oceans, nationally and internationally.
- Initiate discussions on an alternative international framework on the sustainable production and trade of food, agricultural goods and fisheries products.

This framework should include:

- A reformed and strengthened United Nations (UN), active and committed to protecting the fundamental rights of all peoples, as being the appropriate forum to develop and negotiate rules for sustainable production and fair trade;
- An independent dispute settlement mechanism integrated within an international Court of Justice, especially to prevent dumping and GM food aid;
- A World Commission on Sustainable Agriculture and Food Sovereignty established to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the impacts of trade liberalisation on food sovereignty and security, and develop proposals for change. This would include agreements and rules within the WTO and other regional and international trade regimes, and the economic policies promoted by International Financial Institutions and Multilateral Development Banks. Such a commission could be constituted of and directed by representatives from various social and cultural groups, peoples' movements, professional fields, democratically elected representatives and appropriate multilateral institutions;
- An international, legally binding Treaty that defines the rights of peasants and small producers to the assets, resources and legal protections they need to be able to exercise their right to produce. Such a treaty could be framed within the UN Human Rights framework, and linked to already existing relevant UN conventions;
- An International Convention that replaces the current Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) and relevant clauses from other WTO agreements and implements within the international policy framework the concept of food sovereignty and the basic human rights of all peoples to safe and healthy food, decent and full rural employment, labour rights and protection, and a healthy, rich and diverse natural environment and incorporate trading rules on food and agriculture commodities.

Creating Crisis

The governments of both developed and developing countries face the choice of sacrificing the rights of the majority of their populations to food sovereignty and decent employment in return for increased corporate access to international markets. As agriculture negotiations in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) continue, government negotiators are being pressured to cede the ability of local and national governments to

democratically establish their own policies to feed their people and support their farmers in return for increased access to international markets for their main exporters.

The WTO must get out of agriculture to ensure people's food sovereignty throughout the world, as the WTO is the antithesis of the idea of sovereign peoples making their own decisions about food.

Despite skirmishes among the major trading countries and various developing country groupings on specific targets and numbers, WTO members seem unwilling to accept the fact that the fundamental problem lies in the very structure of the World Trade Organisation and the framework of the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA). Through disciplines for its three "pillars" (market access, domestic supports and export subsidies), the AoA furthers and entrenches monopoly production in the hands of the world's largest agriculture producers and exporters, while the rest of the world suffers. And as negotiations over the past ten years have shown time and again, the WTO is not a space for cooperation, but rather for competition.

Since the collapse of the WTO Ministerial Meeting in Cancun, the United States (US) and European Union (EU) have attempted to revive stalled trade talks by invoking the so-called Doha Development Agenda. However, they have not come up with any new proposals that seriously address the concerns raised by developing countries in Cancun regarding agriculture trade, such as the EU-US formula for tariff reduction, their unwillingness to actually cut export subsidies (rather than simply say they will) and their repeated attempts to hide subsidies by moving them between the Green and Blue boxes. Nor have the trade majors made any attempt to address the concerns of the thousands of farmers who gathered in Cancun to demand their rights to food sovereignty and livelihoods, thus showing complete indifference to the reasons that led Mr. Lee[1], a Korean farmer, to sacrifice his life in protest.

What the Cancun Ministerial collapse revealed was the need and right of developing countries to protect their farmers, their agriculture and food sovereignty. Yet this is precisely what is being ignored by all WTO members in the follow-up since Cancun.

The WTO has no business in either food or agriculture. WTO rules militate against the very concept of food sovereignty. In order to protect and ensure the rights of millions of rural and urban poor in the world to food, employment and livelihoods, the WTO must be removed from food and agriculture.

1 Mr. Lee Kyung Hae was a peasant farm leader from South Korea and a member of the Via Campesina delegation in Cancun, Mexico. On 10 September 2003, Lee Kyung Hae climbed up on the barricades and took his own life with a knife plunged into his heart, during the farmer and peasant protests against the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Cancun. He was aged 56 years old when he courageously gave his life in the struggle against the neo-liberal logic in food and farming, and in favour of that better world which is possible.