



The Nairobi Declaration

May 31, 2012

Reclaiming Rights at Rio: CSO Consultation to the African Agenda in the Rio+20 Summit

We, representatives of organizations from more than 15 countries in Africa comprised of small farmers, youth groups, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples, women, labour, environmentalists, faith-based organizations, local authorities and NGOs from African Civil Society met from May 30 to 31, 2012 for a CSO Consultation to the African Agenda in the Rio+20 Summit in Nairobi, Kenya.

This year marks two decades since the Earth Summit declaration which recognized the need to change the unequal and unsustainable character of dominant development patterns and set down commonly accepted principles of sustainable development grounded on human rights, and a long-term action plan (Agenda 21) that was to be implemented by multilateral bodies, states and non-state entities at the global, national, and local levels.

We are aware that 20 years hence, the world is nowhere near its acclaimed goals of achieving sustainable development. The multiple crises on finance, food, climate and energy and failure in governance have resulted in further misery and poverty to the world's peoples as a dominant few countries and people continue to control and own global resources to suit profit and corporate-driven interests.

Over half of total global income are owned by the 10% of the world's richest people, even as 2.5 billion people in the South live on less than \$2 a day. People in wealthy countries with unsustainable development consumption patterns consume as much as ten times more natural resources as those in poorer countries, while in the South, 1 billion are hungry, 1.6 billion have no access to electricity, and almost 800 millions have no access to clean water and 2.5 billion people remain without improved sanitation. Resource depletion and biodiversity loss continue at very rapid rates. Air and water pollution from agro-chemical and industrial processes, including mining and other extractive industries continue to cause serious economic, social, and health problems. Greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise, threatening dangerous climate change. Worst affected are the poor in the South, especially here in Africa, who did little in causing them.

Even as African economies struggled to recover from the 2008 financial crisis as commodity prices rose and export revenues returned to pre-crisis levels, the continent's growth in 2011 fell from 4.6 per cent in 2010 to 2.7 per cent. Africa lags behind on most of Millennium Development Goal Indicators. Unemployment, particularly among youth, remain high, while income inequalities have widened.

This is not the world Rio envisioned and this is certainly not the future we Africans want. While we are aware that an African Ministerial declaration on African consensus on Rio+20 has been submitted to supposedly represent our position as a people, we forward these concerns and recommendations from a grassroots and human rights-centered development perspective:

1. We assert that the Rio principles be upheld, most importantly, the principle of state sovereignty over natural resources in respect of human rights, the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, the polluters pay principle, the precautionary principle, and the principle on access to information, public participation and justice. In its 224 Resolution the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights reaffirmed that the 'State has the main responsibility for ensuring natural resources stewardship with, and for the interest of, the population and must fulfill its mission in conformity with international human rights law and standard'. The Commission confirms 'that all necessary measures must be taken by the State to ensure participation, including the free, prior and informed consent of communities, in decision/making related to natural resources governance'. We decry attempts by powerful States, especially the North, to whittle down human rights obligations and equity principles in the Rio+20 outcome document in order to avoid concrete commitments to meaningful reforms in social, economic and environmental policies. Thus, the structure of the institutional framework that will be developed at Rio+20 should integrate the three pillars of sustainable development, with premium on social equity and include a fourth pillar on governance.

2. We believe that the Green Economy agenda is likely to be hijacked by multinational corporate greed economy agenda. We believe that if human rights, social justice, equity, good governance issues are not taken into account, the Green Economy agenda will serve the interests of the rich and powerful instead of alleviating poverty and addressing sustainable challenges as is claimed. The true beneficiaries will be the corporate world and the rich countries of the north. In its current form and content, GE follows the profit-oriented logic of corporate which lies at the root of our current poverty and environmental problems. So-called solutions to unsustainable development are in the hands of corporations – the main agents of unsustainable development – through their "green" investments, innovations and technologies. These corporate solutions do not solve environmental problems but worsen them. They also threaten people's rights through further privatization, commodification and financialization of nature and ecosystem functions. These in turn lead to the further concentration of control over nature, land-grabs, bio-piracy, and the displacement and marginalization of communities most dependent on access to these resources, as well as greater financial speculation.

3. We believe that the financial crises has not triggered the political momentum for the much needed reform of the international financial architecture largely due to the reluctance of the major developed countries to make this a priority at the UN and the international financial

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institutions (IFIs) or to put in place a rigorous regulatory framework on the private financial sector. Africans are highly impacted by the ill regulation of the failed economic model. We therefore opt Rio+20 to provide political commitment for the needed reforms as the road to Rio continues to be paved with increasing quandary.

4. The Rio+20 draft outcome document and the push for a green economy have put undue importance on science to identify problems and technology to solve them the role of technologies in addressing the challenges to sustainable development. This top-down "techno-fix" approach needs to be corrected and priority must be given to more holistic, participatory and bottom-up solutions. Rio+20 must reaffirm the precautionary principle, ban extremely dangerous technologies such as geo-engineering, and establish participatory mechanisms at the national, regional and global levels to evaluate new technologies such as nanotechnology and synthetic biology for their environmental, health and socio-economic impacts.

5. Poverty is the result of the unequal distribution of power, assets and opportunities within and between countries. Thus poverty eradication should be about the empowerment of the poor to claim their rights. They must take ownership and control of their natural resources and productive assets and use them to gear their economies to fulfill their needs and development aspirations. They must also take control of institutions of governance in order for their voices to be represented in policy-making. We recognize the inherent responsibility of governments to establish social protection floor with minimum set of social guarantee to realize human rights and support decent living standards worldwide, including allocating resources to establish an adequate level of social protection in the least developed countries.

6. Sustainable agriculture development cannot be achieved if global and national policies continue to focus on industrial agriculture instead of prioritizing small – scale local production agriculture. The failures of industrial agriculture in the past decade are too many and too severe and should serve as a lesson to all of us. Industrial agriculture is the cause of most of our problems including pollution, land grabbing, poor working conditions, food insecurity and poverty. There must be a major shift under a food sovereignty framework towards adequate, safe, nutritious food for all, including policies and investments to support small-scale farmers, women producers, workers and secure access to (and protection of) the water, land, soils, biodiversity, and other resources upon which our food security depends. Agrarian reform must be carried out in order to secure worker's, farmer's and rural people's democratic access to land, water resources and seeds, as well as to finance infrastructure. Food production and trade policies must prioritize domestic food self-sufficiency and the livelihoods of small farmers, fishers, workers, women and indigenous people.

7. There must be reforms in the system of global governance to ensure strong institutions with real power and means to enforce international rules and commitments on environment and

development, and launch talks on a global treaty to realize rights of public access to information, greater participation, and access to justice, in order to strengthen accountability and citizen monitoring of environmental and development performance at the national, regional, and global levels. Upgrading of the UNEP, for instance, is a step in this direction.

8. Climate change threatens life, human rights, pushes people into poverty and locks millions deeper into it. The world has to transit away from the fossil-fuel based profit driven economy and abandon unsustainable patterns of manufacture, energy, agriculture and transportation that are behind ever-rising greenhouse gas emissions. The Global North has historical and moral obligation and has to take the lead by making rapid and drastic emissions cuts and assist poorer countries pay for the costs of their own transition through new and additional finance and technology transfer.

9. Hazardous substances and chemical waste have continued to affect the lives of workers, small scale farmers, women, children and the general public in Africa. The problem is further compounded by the deliberate dumping and illegal trading of toxic waste from developed countries into Africa. As a result, critical resources such as water and land that are needed for sustainable development have been polluted or degraded thus denying African people the right to access such resources. Rio+20 should emphasize the need for states to put into place policies and programs that will promote the sound management of chemicals and wastes in line with the UNEP Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) program and the provisions stipulated in the Basel Convention.

Rio+20 is a critical moment for us to plot the way forward and clearly state the Future We Do not Want. Rio+20 should learn from the failure of capitalist system. This system encourages the abuse of economic and natural resources by the few privileged people to accumulate wealth rather than serve the common good of society. It is a system based on the unrestricted exploitation of the environment, the poor, youth, small scale farmers, women and workers for multinational corporation's profits.

We CSOs and local authorities representatives urge governments to ensure that the outcomes of Rio+20 serve the interests of all global citizens and that these outcomes uphold basic principles of Agenda 21 and human rights principle as stipulated in the UN Human Rights Charter and other International Human Rights Instruments.

We remind our African governments that, the people of Africa look up to them as defenders of their rights and expect them to ensure Rio+20 outcome promotes Sustainable Development rather than marginalize and drive them further into poverty. We hereby would like to strongly

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remind them of the weight of their responsibility and obligations to defend the needs and interests of the people of Africa

Agreed in Nairobi, Kenya, 31st May 2012

**RECLAIMING
RIGHTS
at
Rio**

**Transformative Agenda
at Rio+20 and Beyond**

**A CSO Consultation
on the African Agenda
to the Rio+20 Summit**

MAY 30-31, 2012 Masai Lodge
Nairobi, Kenya

RIGHTS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

IBON International
Capacity Development for the People

People's Coalition on Food Sovereignty

REALITY OF AID
africa network