

Bolivia: La Via Campesina participates in the inauguration of the Peoples' climate conference

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La Via Campesina Press release

(Cochabamba, April 20, 2010) This morning Itelvina Masioli, a Brazilian leader of the international peasant movement La Via Campesina, spoke at the inauguration of the People's World Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth. Bolivian President Evo Morales was the keynote speaker to the crowd of several thousand.

The conference, organized by the Bolivian government after countries failed to agree on a plan to stop climate change in Copenhagen last December, is being held from April 19 thru 22. Its goal is to amplify the voices of those who were not heard in Copenhagen.

"We are here together with President Evo Morales to play an active role in this grand global mobilization in Defense of Mother Earth," said Masioli. "Our planet is in danger, and if our planet is in danger, then life is in danger."

"We are talking about two grand projects in dispute. On the one side is the project of capital and imperialism, which signifies looting, which signifies death, and which signifies all of the false solutions to climate change that we reject entirely."

"We assert that we need to change the system and not the climate," continued Masioli. "We assume the construction of another project: the project of life. A project based on principles that defend life, the Mother Earth, and that is based on another model of social, economic, political and cultural development. That is why we are here. "

The invitation to La Via Campesina from the Bolivian government to speak at the inauguration symbolizes the importance that the movement has gained since its founding in 1993 as a global voice

for peasants and small farmers. Masioli is one of 300 delegates from La Via Campesina who are attending the conference to send the message to the world that diversified, sustainable peasant agriculture can cool down the planet.

“As peasants of the world, we want to reaffirm our promise and commitment to defend Mother Earth,” said Masioli. “We believe that the real solutions to all of the crises in this historic moment in which we live are solutions that need to be based in integral agrarian reform and food sovereignty as a principle and as a right of the peoples.”

At the end of her speech, Masioli presented as a gift to Morales the flags of La Via Campesina and the Latin American Coordination of Peasant Organizations (CLOC). “We are going to give our flags of La Via Campesina and CLOC—our most powerful symbols—because President Morales was one of the founders of these two important peasant articulations in Latin America and the World, and because no one else has the credibility to convene this conference.”

Media contacts (interviews with representatives of La Via Campesina in Cochabamba)

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Bolivia: Peasants advancing agricultural solutions to climate change

La Via Campesina press conference

More info and videos on www.viacampesina.org

(Cochabamba, April 21 2010) The international peasant movement La Via Campesina held a press conference on April 21 at the Peoples’ World Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth. The Peoples’ Conference is being held from April 19 thru 22, and was organized by the Bolivian government in order to build an agenda to combat climate change.

La Via Campesina has a delegation of 300 peasants from 20 countries at the conference, who are there to present sustainable, peasant agriculture as a solution to halt climate change. According to Henry Saragih, General Coordinator of La Via Campesina who is a peasant from the Indonesian Peasant Union, La Via Campesina has been following the issue of climate change since December 2007 at the UN climate talks in Bali. “The governments are not implementing real solutions to this crisis,” said Saragih. “La Via Campesina rejects the false solutions to climate change being proposed by most governments, and demands a change in the economic system.”

As a comprehensive solution to climate change, La Via Campesina proposes a shift from the model of food production based on industrial agriculture to one based on sustainable, peasant agriculture. When agricultural production, land use changes, processing, packaging, transport, as well as the decomposition of organic waste are all accounted for, industrial agriculture contributes about one-half of greenhouse gas emissions, and is the single biggest cause of global warming.

Saragih cited La Via Campesina's document Ten agricultural policies to stop climate change which include: 1) support sustainable agriculture; 2) reduce the use of agrochemicals; 3) develop local agriculture systems; 4) protect biodiversity; 5) decentralize energy production; 6) stop plantations of monoculture crops; 7) implement genuine agrarian reform; 8) stop industrial livestock production; 9) support local, fresh, minimally-processed foods; and 10) stop deforestation.

Josie Riffaud, a peasant from the "Confederation Paysanne" in France and a member of La Via Campesina's international coordinating committee, reaffirmed that La Via Campesina rejects false solutions to climate change such as the carbon credit market, agrofuels and genetically-modified crops. "These are technical solutions, and they are false solutions. La Via Campesina proposes that the solution to climate change lies with sustainable, peasant agriculture," said Riffaud.

"We peasants are important to the world because small farmers feed 50 percent of humanity," said Alberto Gomez, a peasant from the National Union of Regional Autonomous Peasant Organizations in Mexico, who is also an international coordinator of La Via Campesina. "When you take into account small-scale urban food producers, fisherfolk, pastoralists and hunters and gatherers, peasants are responsible for 70 percent of global food production."

"La Via Campesina welcomes the effort by Bolivian President Evo Morales to organize this conference. We are very happy to be here because this is not a technocratic conference. There is strong participation by many diverse people," affirmed Riffaud. "The result of this conference will be a declaration that will be presented at the next UN climate talks. This will be the first time that people around the world will arrive at the UN talks with a well-elaborated, alternative proposal. In Copenhagen we said 'change the system, not the climate'; here in Cochabamba we are elaborating solutions and proposing concrete measures that will be presented in Cancun, Mexico in December."

Cochabamba: La Via Campesina celebrates the International Day of Peasant Struggle

LVC Press release April 17 2010

(Cochabamba, April 17 2010) Peasants women and men from farmers organisations throughout the world, members of La Via Campesina, celebrate the 17th of April as the International Day of Peasant Struggle, and reaffirm their vow to intensify the mobilization for the rights of peasants everywhere. To commemorate this date, delegates representing distinct countries, beginning at 11am, in the Plaza 14th of September, in Cochabamba, Bolivia, with the proposal that this date not be forgotten, and so that the struggle of peasants becomes stronger.

With delegates from throughout the world, the women and the men of La Via Campesina Bolivia commemorate the anniversary of the massacre of 19 peasants that fell struggling for access to land, in the state of Pará, Brazil in 1996. On April 17 1997, after three months of protest for the defense of Mother Earth and for the cultivation of the coca leaf in Bolivia, seven indigenous peasants, including a child and its mother, were massacred.

In Cochabamba, thousands of peasants from throughout the world are gathering at the beginning of the week to participate in the Peoples' Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, invited by President Evo Morales. More than 300 members of La Via Campesina from around

the world will be participating. According to the organizers of the conference, more than 7,500 people have already registered for the conference. Additionally, about 3,000 peasants from La Via Campesina Bolivia are leaving their communities in order to defend peasant agriculture and climate justice.
