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Press release

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Press release - La Via Campesina

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Cochabamba People's Agreement is the peoples' solution to the Climate Crisis

(Cancún, 7 December 2010) La Via Campesina, the world's largest movement of peasant and smallholder farmers, joined with Pablo Solon, Bolivia's Ambassador to the United Nations, Tom Goldtooth of the Indigenous Environmental Network, Ricardo Navarro of Friends of the Earth International and a number of social movement representatives and government officials from the ALBA countries at COP 16 in Cancún today to condemn the false solutions and backroom deals being pushed in the negotiations, and to call for mobilizations and actions worldwide for climate solutions based in traditional indigenous knowledge, community-based practices, human rights and the rights of nature.

The group held a press conference in the Moon Palace, the opulent resort where the tense and difficult climate convention have moved into the high level phase of negotiations this week. The press conference ended with Luis Henrique Moura of MST, the landless workers' movement of Brazil, leading the group in the chant "Globalize the struggle, globalize hope!" The group then all walked out of the building with youth from the U.S.-based Grassroots Global Justice Alliance leading chants of "No REDD, no REDD!"

"We have called for 1,000 Cancuns around the world today," said Josie Riffaud of La Via Campesina, referring to the need for grassroots communities to take the lead in proposing solutions to the ecological crisis. "The first of these took place this morning inside the Moon Palace."

Anne Petermann of Global Justice Ecology Project opened the event by evoking the name of Lee Kyung Hae, the South Korean farmer and La Via Campesina member who took his life during mobilizations against the World Trade Organization here in 2003 wearing a sign saying "The WTO Kills Farmers."

"Then we were fighting against the World Trade Organization," Petermann said. "Today we have to fight the World Carbon Trade Organization," said Petermann.

"We see that the Mexican government is attempting to get an agreement out of Cancun, but with the spirit of Copenhagen, both in the process and in the content," said Ricardo Navarro of Friends of the Earth International. "We are bearing witness to parallel meetings and secret negotiations."

Mari Rose Taruc of the Asia Pacific Environmental Network spoke about the 1,000 Cancuns happening in the United States. "We have actions and events in over 30 states in the U.S. organized by people suffering impacts of pollution and climate change."

Representatives of ALBA countries also expressed their solidarity with the people and condemned the moves of developed countries to avoid their historical responsibility and climate debt. "There is a lot of talk here in Cancun about money, about chainsaws and about plantations but there is little talk about forests or about the real work of the people who confront climate change everyday." said Miguel Lovera, Chief Adviser of Paraguay. Paul Oquin, Head of the Nicaraguan delegation publicly expressed the support of Nicaragua and the ALBA countries to La Via Campesina and all the social movements in their struggle.

On the steps of the Moon Palace, together with the social movement representatives, Bolivian Ambassador Pablo Solon stated that what is most important is the struggle of the people and their demands for real solutions to climate change. "If the temperature increases to 4 degrees Celsius as we are seeing it now in the negotiations, we are going to see hundreds of thousands of people die. Every year, 300,000 people die because of natural disasters caused by climate change. This will grow to millions if we do not have, here, a real agreement, instead of a Cancun-hagen".

The press conference and action that followed was coordinated with a march of 5000 people in the streets outside led by La Via Campesina. Social movement and civil society representatives together with Bolivian Ambassador Pablo Solon and Chief Paraguayan Adviser Miguel Lovera then went outside to join the small farmers, indigenous people, women, environmentally affected peoples, environmental organizations and other social movements and activists who marched for hours in the Mexican sun, culminating in a People's Assembly in the street.

"Today, there were 1,000 Cancuns all over the world and with this we are sending the message to the governments inside the negotiations that the people have 1,000 solutions to the climate crisis that uphold the rights of the people and Mother Earth," stated Carlos Marentes of La Via Campesina.

Media advisory

People Gathering with Evo Morales

(Cancun, December 9, 2010) Bolivian President Evo Morales, will participate on Thursday November 9 in a People Gathering in the framework of the Forum for the Life, Climate and Social Justice organized by La Via Campesina and other organizations Cancun, Mexico. The president's visit confirms his support and solidarity with the alternative spaces that have been convened in the framework of the COP 16 that started last November 29 and will close on 10 December.

The arrival of Morales is scheduled at 3pm in the Unidad Deportiva Jacinto Canek where the Via Campesina camp is located.

The Vía Campesina Camp gathers about two thousand people from various countries of the world including women and men, youth and children, people affected by the destruction of the environment, farmers, landless peasants, indigenous people and activists from all social sectors.

According to official statements Evo Morales will address issues such as the integrated management of native forests, the respect for countries' food sovereignty, the full realization of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, funding from developed countries to developing countries and the recognition of Mother Earth. More over, he will talk about the possibility of building a popular project and the

challenges of social movements in the struggle for climate justice.

“... We know that Mother Earth can be without any human life, but there will be no humans without Mother Earth. Don’t commodify life,” said the president of Bolivia.

Via Campesina Communication Team
