

**A Call to The Republic of the Union of Myanmar  
to  
"Promote Land Ownership, Sustainable land Use and Family Farming"**

***Land in our hands, food for everyone***

**A call to the Government, the Parliament and the Judiciary of the Union of Myanmar Republic to promote, protect, respect and fulfill the land tenure rights of small-scale farmers, fishers, forest dwellers, rural women, rural youth, and ethnic communities**

**October 16, 2014**

**Introduction: Who we are and why we are making this statement**

- We, the Land In Our Hands network, an initiative of small-scale farmers, community-based organizations and other civil society organisations from across Myanmar, greet and celebrate the "World Food Day".
- We, the small-scale farmers, fishers, forest dwellers, rural women, rural youth, and ethnic communities who are the backbone of the country's food production, celebrate the marking of this day as the day when our crucial role in feeding families and communities throughout the Union is recognized, remembered and appreciated.

**The problematic**

- However, large-scale land deals, or land grabs by private or public corporate actors in the name of food security are on the rise in the Union of Myanmar Republic, in spite of under current process of democratic reform. Many of these deals are made under the pretext that lands are unused or underused but in most cases affected communities have shown otherwise. In fact, we small-scale farmers, fisherfolks, rural women and ethnic communities are being either displaced and physically dispossessed of, or losing our effective control over, our most important means of food production and subsistence: our land and water. This results in our inability to feed ourselves, our communities and our peoples, in addition to loss of jobs and negative environmental impacts and growing social unrest
- Lack of or counterproductive regulatory and institutional frameworks result in the lack of state support to protect, respect and fulfill our land tenure rights, and also lack of support for small scale food farming and fishing, inspite of its important role in feeding the country and its peoples.

**Our main call and concrete demands**

In striving for durable peace and genuinely equitable and sustainable development in the country, and within the spirit of current democratic reforms, "Land In Our Hands" calls on the Government, the Congress and the Judiciary of the Union of Myanmar Republic to promote, protect, respect and fulfill the land tenure rights of small-scale farmers and fisherfolks, and particularly of rural women and ethnic communities. Specifically, we call the Union State to:

1. Reform its national land policy and law so that they focus in promoting, protecting, respecting and fulfilling the tenure rights of small-scale farmers, fisherfolks, rural women and ethnic communities.
2. Create a space and support effective participation of all representatives of small-scale farmers, fisherfolks, rural women and ethnic communities, in reforming the land policy and law
3. Adopt the necessary and appropriate policy, legal, institutional and budgetary frameworks to recognize protect, respect and fulfill land tenure systems of indigenous ethnic peoples and other communities with customary tenure systems
4. Ensure the rights of women to land and food are protected and fulfilled within the reformed land regulatory framework.
5. Acknowledge in the land policy and law that land, fisheries, and forests have social, cultural, spiritual, economic, environmental and political meaning and value to indigenous ethnic peoples and other communities with customary land tenure systems and living on and off these farmlands, fisheries and forests.
6. Promote, protect, respect and fulfill in the land policy and law the right of small-scale farmers, fisherfolks, rural women and ethnic communities to exercise self-governance of the land, sub-soil, fisheries, water and forests in their communities.
7. Create a genuine legal land disputes solving mechanism and system that allows farmers, community members and all members of representatives of respective sectors to participate in solving natural resources and land-based disputes and conflicts in the whole country.
8. Guarantee the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and consultation standards to ensure that the rights of small scale food producers and local family farming communities are protected
9. Put a legal moratorium to all current mega development projects (including roads and hydro-power mega-dams) and land deals of any type (such as those related to mining, oil extraction, lodging and farming including contract farming arrangements) in ethnic areas until the land, water and forest tenure rights of small-scale farmers, fisherfolks, rural women and ethnic communities are appropriately promoted, protected, respected and fulfilled by the state in its land policy and law.
10. And, last but not least, open up to our aspirations and voices in working toward a genuine peace and political solutions.

**In sum,** Land In Our Hands believes that unless all of the above mentions are urgently and appropriately addressed, Myanmar will not be able to find a durable peace and sustainable development for all the people and peoples of Myanmar. World Food Day is a good moment to reflect not only how much small scale farmers, fishers, rural women, rural youth and ethnic communities already contribute to the food security of Myanmar. It is also a great moment to reflect on how much more we have to contribute so that together we can be part of ensuring a positive transition to a better, more just and peaceful society.

#### Contacts

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