



La Via Campesina's Position on the Conference of the Parties (COP 16) of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

BAGNOLET, 14 OCTOBER 2024: La Via Campesina (LVC), an international movement of 200 million people from 180 organizations in 81 countries, our main political vision is to defend the rights of peasants, rural workers, Indigenous Peoples, ancestral communities, women and youth. We fight for food sovereignty, for agroecological peasant agriculture to have healthy food, so we also stand against industrial and synthetic agriculture, agribusiness and the corporate financial system that monopolizes food transforming it into merchandise.

In the context of the climate crisis, it is important to recognize the fundamental role of peasants, Indigenous Peoples, traditional, and ancestral communities in the conservation of biodiversity and the protection of the commons. We have always maintained a critical stance towards the lack of social and climate justice, advocating for the need for integral and popular agrarian reform, as well as the inclusion of peasant, Indigenous Peoples, and traditional cosmovisions in political decisions.

Biodiversity, understood as the variety of life on the planet, is facing an unprecedented crisis known as the sixth mass extinction. This phenomenon is driven by habitat destruction and fragmentation, pollution, and overexploitation of our commons on planet Earth and its ocean. The intensification of the greenhouse effect due to industrial pollution, agribusiness, fossil fuel burning and deforestation are at the heart of the global climate crisis. This phenomenon has triggered extreme weather events and ocean acidification, putting at risk not only the environment and important species that depend on balanced ecosystems, but also traditional rural and coastal communities.

Extractivist models and the industrial agri-food system are primarily responsible for the loss of biodiversity and the climate crisis. They generate serious problems such as desertification, massive plastic contamination, mining, and marine oil exploitation. Monocultures and aerial spraying of agrochemicals, along with the consequent damage to pollinators, combined with land and water grabbing for extractivist projects, empty the countryside of people and lead to disorderly and impoverished urban growth. These systems, centered on corporate interests, not only degrade the environment but also threaten the culture and existence of Indigenous Peoples, traditional, and peasant communities, who are on the front lines of defending the commons.

We face serious threats linked to land and ocean grabbing, especially in the context of initiatives such as "30 by 30," which seeks to allocate 30% of each country's conservation area by 2030. These policies have been exploited by corporate interests to deepen dispossession in the name of "science and climate." The creation of "offsets" or "biodiversity credits" as "solutions" is a mechanism promoted by billionaires and transnational financial corporations to circumvent regulations without addressing the

underlying causes of biodiversity loss, shirking responsibility, and paying others to reclaim the planet they destroy. Instead of these schemes, we propose addressing the causes of the crisis through effective regulations, such as those promoted by defenders of the commons in their territories.

We are concerned about the loss of marine-coastal biodiversity. Geoengineering megaprojects, such as genetically modified algae monocultures, ocean fertilization, biomass sinking, and brightening marine clouds, which seek to capture carbon without having identified their real impacts or effectiveness, pose an unimaginable threat to marine ecosystems. This is why La Via Campesina DEMANDS that these projects be halted and, by applying the precautionary approach, protect marine ecosystems and avoid the displacement of traditional communities that live in and care for them.

For these reasons, WE QUESTION the approach of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which tends to ignore the role of peasants and fisherfolk in the sustainable management of the natural commons. It adopts a utilitarian, transactional, and anthropocentric perspective that does not comprehensively address biodiversity loss in the context of the climate crisis and the erosion of cultural, ancestral, and natural rights in the territories.

We also strongly OPPOSE the modification of living organisms through the development of genetic engineering and synthetic biology technologies, as well as the instrumentalization of digital information on genetic sequences (DSI) to patent nature and control agriculture and food sovereignty. These practices imply a privatization where corporations seek to obtain lucrative profits, leading to manipulations that can cause serious and unpredictable distortions in natural genomes, bringing unknown consequences that harm traditional and peasant food production and erode biodiversity.

The most industrialized countries are primarily responsible for greenhouse gas emissions, the main cause of global warming. The transnational companies of the Global North, particularly the United States and the European Union, is responsible for at least 50% of global emissions. Unfortunately, it is the low and middle income countries that are facing the most severe loss of biodiversity and the consequences associated with the climate crisis, such as climate migration due to the loss of habitats, coasts, forests, and key marine ecosystems and communities.

We warn about FALSE SOLUTIONS and "greenwashing", a term that has been used to describe how governments, politicians, and corporations promote processes that simulate a "genuine commitment" to the environment or sustainability, but which, in reality, are superficial, insufficient or directly counterproductive measures. This leads to a loss of public confidence in real climate restoration and remediation initiatives, as well as hindering the implementation of effective environmental and climate policies.

LA VIA CAMPESINA STRONGLY REJECTS these false "nature-based" solutions promoted by corporate interests. It advocates for the participation of Indigenous Peoples, small-scale food producers organizations, and peasants in implementing the Global Biodiversity Framework, based on the precautionary principle, the protection of ancestral knowledge, and the protection of seeds—essential for food sovereignty—and peasant and popular agroecology as pillars for the preservation of biodiversity.

WE DEMAND the active involvement of Indigenous Peoples, peasant and traditional communities in decision-making on biodiversity policies. These communities, individuals, and their organizations possess profound knowledge about the ethical management of the commons and have a crucial role to play in addressing the climate crisis, particularly in the preservation and protection of seeds.

A CLIMATE JUSTICE AND REDRESS pathway is urgently needed that addresses structural inequalities and holds corporate culprits accountable. Climate justice focuses on social justice, equity, and human rights, as well as reparations and compensation for communities affected by climate damages and biodiversity loss. It advocates for the defense of nature's defenders through public policies and the creation of funds to support and implement a just transition to agroecological production and low-carbon economies. This approach prioritizes the peasant, social, and solidarity economy as an effective response for affected populations, especially women, youth, and children in peasant, rural, ancestral, and coastal territories.

WE DEFEND peasants as subjects of political rights within the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Peasants, Indigenous Peoples, and ancestral communities must be respected as subjects of rights, guaranteeing access to and control over their resources, active participation in decisions that affect their lives and territories, and recognition of their key role in the protection of the commons and their right to live in dignity.

These communities, organizations and leaderships, through traditional and ecological practices, contribute significantly to the health of ecosystems and global food sovereignty. Therefore, we DEMAND at COP 16, the recognition of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP), as a parameter of interpretation and application of the Convention on Biological Biodiversity.

Finally, LA VIA CAMPESINA DEMANDS the creation of a Subsidiary Body that, on a permanent basis, works with Indigenous Peoples, peasants, and Afro-descendants to respect, preserve, and maintain the knowledge, innovations, and practices of these communities for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, in line with the implementation of Article 8(j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

We, the Peasants, are the Guardians of Biodiversity and the Guarantors of Food Sovereignty!