

THE DECLARATION OF SANTO DOMINGO TOMALTEPEC
SEPTEMBER 30TH, 2012
“LA LUCHA SIGUE, EL MAIZ VIVE” (THE STUGGLE
CONTIUNES, THE CORN LIVES)

Indigenous Corn Peoples from 48 Indigenous Nations, Peoples and communities from North, Central, South America, the Pacific and Caribbean gathered at the **“Indigenous Peoples International Conference on Corn”** in the territory of the Zapoteca Nation, Santo Domingo Tomaltepec Oaxaca Mexico, from September 28th – 30th as well as at two preparatory gatherings in Vicam, Sonora and San Francisco Magu, Mexico.

We affirm our unity as Corn Peoples and Nations. Since time immemorial corn in all its rich diversity has nurtured and fed us as the basis of our cultures, spirituality, health, traditional economies and food sovereignty. It is the sacred source of life and creation for Indigenous Peoples in many regions of the world.

The health and survival of our corn mother/father in all its natural varieties, colors and original strength and resilience cannot be separated from the health and survival of our Peoples. Our struggles to protect corn as a source of our lives cannot be separated from our struggles to defend our rights to land, water, traditional knowledge and self-determination.

We affirm the Declaration of Atitlan of 2002, *“IN AGREEMENT* that the content of the Right to Food of Indigenous Peoples is a collective right based on our special spiritual relationship with Mother Earth, our lands and territories, environment, and natural resources that provide our traditional nutrition; *underscoring* that the means of subsistence of Indigenous Peoples nourishes our cultures, languages, social life, worldview, and especially our relationship with Mother Earth; *emphasizing* that the denial of the Right to Food for Indigenous Peoples not only denies us our physical survival, but also denies us our social organization, our

cultures, traditions, languages, spirituality, sovereignty, and total identity; it is a denial of our collective indigenous existence.

We also affirm other Declarations by Indigenous Peoples for the protection of our Food sovereignty including Declaración de Vicente Guerrero, paragraphs 13 and 14 of the Anchorage Declaration, the Declaration of Atitlán, the Declarations from 1st and 2nd International Indigenous Women's' Symposiums on Environmental and Reproductive Health, and the "Declaration of Seed Sovereignty A Living Document for New Mexico".

This struggle is not an easy one. The institutions of colonization, as well as the mining, biotechnology and chemical corporations, are well financed. Their activities are organized with sole objective of profiting from our lands and resources without consideration for the impact on our health or survival, or the wellbeing of Mother Earth and future generations. We reject this worldview which has caused so much suffering and destruction. We also reject the commodification and genetic modification of corn as an offense against our spiritual and cultural identity. We call instead for a focus on the sustainable and respectful use of corn as a basis for our traditional and collective economic, social and cultural development.

The increasing concentration of land, water, seeds, financing and genetic resources in the hands of a few multi-national corporations, and the proliferation of extractive industries, mega-projects and industrial agriculture, together with the causes, effects and false solutions to climate change including agro-fuel production using corn, are direct threats to our corn and all aspects of our traditional food production.

In exercise of our self-determination **we affirm** the right to define and continue our own forms of development, including our food and seed sovereignty. We also affirm the urgent need to revitalize our Indigenous trading relationships in order to once again share and exchange seeds, knowledge and traditional food products. The methods and seeds passed down to us from our ancestors hold the key to our resistance and survival in the face of climate change and a number of other threats. Corn will continue to be the source of our survival.

We also affirm that the solutions to the threats we face are within our Indigenous Peoples. We will continue to be engaged with the United Nations, institutions such as schools and universities and all levels of government to demand the implementation of laws and policies that protect rather than violate our rights and the integrity of corn and other life-giving traditional plants and animals. But we will not depend on them, or wait for them to change in order to take steps to protect our ways of life. We commit to immediate and urgent actions within our own communities and Nations, calling on support from our Traditional Indigenous governments, to ensure that the use of our traditional seeds and knowledge is revitalized and passed on to our future generations.

Accepting collective commitments and coordinated actions as Corn Peoples from many regions will give us strength and mutual support, and provide a basis for continued seed and knowledge exchange. This is our right, and our sacred responsibility.

Therefore we resolve with one voice to carry out the following actions.

- 1) Restore and strengthen our traditional local economies, governing structures, laws and authorities for the protection of corn and food sovereignty;
- 2) Restore and transmit to future generations the traditional methods for revitalizing the earth and growing food with approaches using Indigenous science proven by our peoples since time immemorial, with respect to relationships of the moon-sun, nature-earth, water-rain, female-male, and the life giving properties of seeds and mother corn;
- 3) Re-establish Indigenous seed banks/seed archives and trade relationships for traditional corn seeds, especially those with resistance and adaptability to changing climate conditions and promote the development and implementation of community based plans for adaptation to climate change;
- 4) Form cooperative relations to support the creation of Indigenous marketing and “value added” production opportunities based on sustainable, community and collective values for Indigenous farmers and

food producers on the local, regional, national and international levels, focusing on corn and other local products produced using original seeds, traditional and organic farming;

- 5) Organize our communities and Peoples to take action to defend our mother earth, lands and water, forests, corn and other traditional foods and medicines, and ensure that Indigenous Peoples struggling for such rights are protected as human rights defenders;
- 6) Continue to oppose the use and modification of corn and other basic and traditional food products for bio-fuels on the local, national and international levels;
- 7) Call for the immediate halt to all genetic modification of corn, and adopt community resolutions, with the support of our tribal leaders and traditional authorities as well as organizations, prohibiting the use of genetically modified seeds in our lands and territories; Support Indigenous communities such as those in Tlaxcala Mexico and Pueblos in New Mexico USA that have implemented GMO-free zones, and encourage similar actions by other Indigenous Peoples in all regions; and resist and oppose the patenting of corn and other traditional foods and medicines;
- 8) Stand firm to halt to the use of toxic pesticides in or near our territories including the production, export and import of pesticides by the US and other countries which are banned for use in the exporting country, a form of “trafficking,” which constitutes environmental violence and racism and causes untold amounts of death, illness and loss. We challenge national and International laws, including the UN Rotterdam Convention which permits this practice, and call upon the government of Mexico and other States to implement their human rights obligations by halting the import of banned pesticides. We support the continued implementation of the declaration by the Yaqui Traditional Authorities prohibiting aerial spraying of pesticides in the Yaqui Territories (Sonora), the total rejection of pesticides use by the community of San Pedro Jocotipac (Oaxaca) and encourage other Indigenous communities to take similar actions;
- 9) Promote the recommendation of UN CERD addressing the US and Canada that countries are responsible for human rights violations by corporations

they license. We call on the IITC to prepare, in collaboration with affected communities, a shadow report to the CERD for the next review of the US in 2013 regarding the export of banned and restricted pesticides and GMO seeds, as well as the attempt by US corporations to control the traditional seeds of Indigenous Peoples;

- 10) Pressure States and UN Bodies to fully implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including its recognition of our rights to lands, resources and territories, means of subsistence, environmental protection, Free Prior and Informed Consent, Treaties and Agreements, traditional knowledge including seeds, spiritual relationship to land and water, and all other rights relevant to the protection of our corn and our seed and food sovereignty;
- 11) Promote the implementation of the UN Declaration within all UN and other International and Regional agencies, institutions and processes, as well as the national level, including the current processes such as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, implementation of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines of Land Tenure, Forests and Fisheries, the Stockholm Convention and the new globally binding international instrument on Mercury;
- 12) Educate and provide opportunities for sharing experiences in and among our communities, including women and youth, through assemblies, trainings, workshops and development of materials, including in indigenous languages and using various forms of media about the dangers of genetically modified seeds, chemical pesticides and fertilizers to human and environmental health, as well as relevant human rights and ways to defend our corn and food sovereignty;
- 13) Implement in tribal or state run schools which our children and youth attend, and in our own communities, opportunities for them to learn from traditional knowledge holders and practitioners, their traditional language and also food production knowledge and practices;
- 14) Initiate and organize an Indigenous Peoples Food Sovereignty Network on the National and International levels, co-coordinated by the IITC and others who are interested, to continue exchanging knowledge, information and seeds, and coordinating mutual support, gatherings, educational activities,

and joint campaigns to address threats and defend our food sovereignty, land, water and natural environment; and make alliances for participation and information exchange with other Food Sovereignty Networks on the national, regional and International levels;

- 15) Develop and promote alliances with Indigenous Peoples as well as non-indigenous organizations, campesinos and other food producers, local, state and national governmental bodies, legislators, parliamentarians and academic institutions to build understanding and support and advance policies that respect and defend Indigenous Peoples' perspectives about corn and other traditional foods;
- 16) Disseminate this Declaration in our own communities and Nations, and call on the International Indian Treaty Council to take this Declaration, its recommendations and the issues it addresses to International and regional bodies relevant to the defense of human rights, health, environment, sustainable development, Food Sovereignty, Culture and Indigenous Peoples. These include UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

We will keep our hearts and our commitments strong, knowing that we share the threats, but also the spiritual connections and the solutions. We know that the change we need begins with us and our Peoples.

We thank the community of Santo Domingo Tomaltepec for their warm hospitality, and the International Indian Treaty Council and the Unidad de la Fuerza Indigena y Campesina for their coordination of this historic gathering.

We make these commitments for the survival of our future generations with gratitude for the profound knowledge and wisdom of our ancestors and the sacred spirit of corn which has sustained and will continue to sustain us. We will move forward and continue to defend our lives and survival. Standing together will make us stronger. Life is the only choice and the only option.

***Adopted by Consensus September 30th, 2012, Santo Domingo Tomaltepec,
Oaxaca Mexico***

