

## CBD NEGOTIATIONS IN GENEVE, IPC AGRICULTURAL BIODIVERSITY WORKING GROUP STATEMENT

From 14 to 29 March 2022, the third session of the SBI, the 24th SBSTTA and the third open-ended working group on the Global Biodiversity Framework were held in Geneva, Switzerland.

The IPC Working Group on Agricultural Biodiversity participated in person in the first week of the meeting, with a delegation from Latin America. Several problems related to the obligatory bureaucracy prevented several delegates from the African region, mainly from civil society, from arriving in Geneva for what was supposed to be the last round of negotiations before CoP15, and this unfortunately also hurt the IPC delegation.

The three weeks of meetings were intense and saw the Parties and also the observers - whenever possible - intervene strongly to defend their positions after two years of virtual consultations in which the Parties never wanted to expose themselves with definitive statements due to the limits imposed by the virtual meetings.

We expected a stronger outcome from these three meetings, with a more mature awareness of the urgency of addressing the real drivers of biodiversity erosion to reverse the devastating course that has been underway for decades.

We are concerned to note that even today the role of agro-industry in biodiversity loss is not fully recognised and that green-washing attempts hidden behind unclear terms such as "sustainable intensification" or "ecological intensification" are numerous and supported by many Parties. The IPC, as also recalled by the Parties, has been calling for years for a sharp global reduction in the areas devoted to monoculture and industrial production in agriculture and forestry and for all areas devoted to agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, pastoralism, livestock breeding and forestry to be managed sustainably through a comprehensive approach based on the principles of agroecology, as also recognised by the FAO.

Awareness is needed of the fundamental recognition of agroecology as the only approach that can reconstitute and strengthen lost biodiversity and ensure full respect for the human rights of Indigenous peoples, small-scale food producers and rural workers, with particular attention to women, young people, the elderly, the disabled and migrants - those who suffer from exclusionary and destructive policies that weaken biodiversity and impoverish ecosystems.

Agroecology must be recognised within the forthcoming biodiversity framework because it supports systems that use indigenous seeds, varieties and landraces, particularly those managed by smallholders, indigenous peoples and local communities, women and youth. Their rights must be protected, including safe access to land, water and sea and the resources they contain.

For these reasons, the IPC profoundly disagrees with the concept of "sustainable" or "ecological" intensification, yet another tool of capital that is based on the same industrial and extractive dynamics already implemented globally.

IPC also opposes the establishment of additional protected areas or the increase in their surface area, as this is a potentially devastating tool for millions of people: protected areas often become places managed by the State, which uses the pretext of environmental protection to expel Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities and small-scale food producers who have inhabited these areas for millennia and have protected and strengthened their biodiversity through their seed systems and traditional knowledge.

IPC has clearly recalled therefore that it is crucial to recognise and support the role of IPLCs as stewards of ecosystems by increasing the area under their management. It is necessary to expand the areas sustainably managed by IPLCs and local food-producing communities, ensuring that their human, cultural, social, economic and environmental rights are respected and protected. Protected areas often lead to land grabbing or exclusion from areas that are critical to the food supply of many, such as marine protected areas that exclude small-scale fishers.

We also look with great concern at Digital Sequence Information (DSI) and the willingness of many Parties to allow unfettered access to the genetic data of archived resources: this would have a devastating effect on Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities and people living and working in rural areas who are culturally, economically and socially dependent on the biodiversity of genetic resources. ISDs are genetic resources and therefore their access must be regulated as such. Allowing free access to ISDs would be the biggest biopiracy action in history, as well as the start of a massive patenting process that would lead to a further serious decline in biodiversity, with a particular focus on biodiversity for food and agriculture.

This year the Convention on Biodiversity celebrates its 30th anniversary and one would expect a real will to implement the Convention and its Protocols, yet we continue to witness the servility of the Parties to the private sector and transnational industries, thus perpetuating dangerous policies detrimental to global biodiversity. A further meeting to finalise the text of the Global Biodiversity Framework has become necessary: Parties and Observers will meet again next June, in Nairobi, Kenya, to finalise the text, which will then be negotiated and approved at the next CoP15, scheduled to take place in China in the second half of the year. IPC will be present at the meeting in Nairobi to continue the struggle with farmers' and Indigenous Peoples' organisations and movements together with political allies from civil society, whom we would like to thank in this statement for their support, collective work and sharing of visions, concerns and hopes.