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DECLARATION OF COCHABAMBA ON “FOOD SECURITY
WITH SOVEREIGNTY IN THE AMERICAS”

(Adopted at the fourth plenary session, held on June 5, 2012)

WE, THE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND HEADS OF DELEGATION OF THE MEMBER STATES OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS), gathered in Cochabamba, Plurinational State of Bolivia, on the occasion of the forty-second regular session of the OAS General Assembly,

CONSIDERING that in order to live well it is required that food and nutrition security be promoted in harmony with nature, generating conditions for individuals and society to develop their full potential;

BEARING IN MIND that a healthy and nutritious diet is a fundamental prerequisite for human development, well-being, and therefore in order to live well it is necessary to strengthen food access, availability, stability of supply, and utilization, taking into account the diverse dietary knowledge, customs, and practices of our peoples;

RECOGNIZING that Mother Earth is a common expression for the planet earth in a number of countries and regions, which reflects the interdependence that exists among human beings, other living species and the planet we all inhabit;

RECOGNIZING FURTHER that the constitutional legislative principles and jurisprudence of the member states reflect the view of each country on the relationship between human beings and nature;^{1/}

RECOGNIZING ALSO the importance of boosting and improving the production, access and utilization of food, which is a gift from nature that allows the commencement of life, its regeneration, and the perpetuation of humankind;

RECOGNIZING, TOO, the pivotal importance of increasing and improving investment in food research and production in order to achieve food and nutrition security for all;

1. Declaration of Santo Domingo for the Sustainable Development of the Americas of November 19, 2010.

BEARING IN MIND that some 925 million people in the world are suffering from malnutrition or chronic hunger, approximately 53 million of them in Latin America and the Caribbean, nine percent of that region's population;^{2/}

BEARING IN MIND ALSO that a healthy and nutritious diet helps to prevent malnutrition and non communicable chronic diseases and medical conditions that can cause premature death, such as obesity, undernourishment, diabetes, and high blood pressure, which are increasingly affecting the countries of the Americas;

RECOGNIZING that there are major disparities among the countries of the region with respect to nutrition, given that while some countries have made significant progress toward eliminating hunger and malnutrition, there are also those where such problems remain manifestations of the poverty of their populations, affecting the most vulnerable segments;

RECOGNIZING ALSO that the countries of the Americas are affected or could be affected by crises of diverse nature—energy, financial, and climatic, among others—that may occur simultaneously and undermine food and nutrition security;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that recent years have seen excessive volatility of commodity prices, associated with multiple factors, which poses challenges for food security and sustainable development in the Americas;

RECOGNIZING, that demand for food is growing and that the Americas region has great potential for producing large quantities of food, which could benefit food exporting countries and those that need to import it, within a framework of a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system that will promote agriculture and rural development in developing countries and contribute to world food security; and urging national, regional, and international strategies to promote the participation of farmers, especially smallholders and women, in community, domestic, regional, and international markets;

BEARING IN MIND that in developing countries in the Hemisphere there are numerous small farmers, cooperatives, and communities devoted to producing food in a sustainable manner, it is of vital importance to increase government and private investment in the farming sector and to implement policies that encourage their modernization and technological innovation, improving market access for small farmers and taking into account their needs and visions of development;

AFFIRMING that family farming and small farmers are an important basis for sustainable food production aimed at achieving food and nutrition security, and recognizing the important contribution that family farming can play in eradicating poverty in the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals;^{3/}

2. FAO, "Hunger by the Numbers", Policy brief, 2010, www.fao.org.

3. Text from United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/66/222, "International Year of Family Farming, 2014."

ACKNOWLEDGING that there are environmental threats and diverse problems in the region to do with food production, access, and consumption, which are exacerbated by extreme weather conditions, water shortage, and climate change that can or do adversely affect agriculture production and the poorest populations.

BEARING IN MIND that food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life;^{4/}

CONSIDERING that “food sovereignty” is under discussion at specialized international forums, that some countries have incorporated it into their national laws, and that it is related to food security and the realization of the right to food of our peoples in the Americas;^{5/6/7/8/ 9/10/11/12}

CONSIDERING the importance that developing countries determine their own food security strategies, that the adoption of food security policies is a national responsibility and that plans for confronting the challenges of food security and eradicating poverty in relation to food security should be devised, formulated, adopted, and directed by each country, as well as be based on consultations with all the principal stakeholders at the domestic level, and it urges, in particular for those affected by food insecurity, that food security to be made a high priority and that this be reflected in their programs and national budgets;

BEARING IN MIND their commitments regarding the right to adequate food contained in international instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;

UNDERSCORING the importance of the contributions of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, the Pan American Health Organization, and the Inter-American Development Bank for strengthening food and nutrition security and partnership for development in that area;

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4. See Rome Declaration on World Food Security and World Food Summit Plan of Action, paragraph 1, November 1996.
 5. Footnote from the delegation of the United States: We believe that a Declaration focused on food security and nutrition is important and timely. However, the United States reserves with regard to ...
 6. Canada attaches great importance to the efforts by OAS Member States to achieve food and nutrition security for all, which
 7. Footnote from the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela: Food sovereignty is a concept that we progressive governments use to ensure our people’s right to an adequate, ...
 8. For the Government of Nicaragua, the concept of food sovereignty, pursuant to Article 2.1 of Law No. 693 of 2009, the Law of Food and Nutritional Sovereignty and Security, ...
 9. Footnote from the delegation of Chile: Until there is an international definition of the concept of "food sovereignty," Chile believes that the concept ...
 10. Barbados continues to support efforts at achieving food and nutrition security at the local, regional, hemispheric and global levels. It is, however, ...
 11. The Plurinational State of Bolivia fully recognizes food sovereignty as a right of peoples to food, and since food is a fundamental right
 12. Ecuador understands, pursuant to Article 13 of its Constitution, that food sovereignty is the right of people and communities to safe and ...

CONSIDERING that agricultural innovation is a catalyst for growth and positive change, and that its advancement is vital to increase and intensify production and productivity, improve incomes, reduce poverty and inequality, decrease the environmental impacts of the agrifood sector, respond to natural disasters, increase access to new technologies, adapt to climate change and, consequently, achieve food security and a better quality of life for all our peoples;

DECLARE:

1. Their decision to promote agriculture development with the goal of strengthening food security in the context of national, regional, and international development policies, taking into account the importance of modernization and technological innovation for increasing output and productivity as well as synergies between sustainable agriculture, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, food security, nutrition, and development policies.

2. Their commitment to the goal of eradicating hunger and malnutrition in the Americas through initiatives and public policies taking into account the principles of the World Summit on Food Security held at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in 2009 and, for those countries that recognize the concept, “Knowing how to Eat in order to Live Well.”

3. Their commitment to promoting, at the Río+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the incorporation of food and nutrition security and, as appropriate, the right to an adequate diet as one of the key objectives of sustainable development.

4. Their readiness to support inter-American and regional efforts to advance a joint agenda on food and nutrition security, taking into account progress and contexts at the national level.

5. Their commitment to fostering diversification of output and of food products on the market and in homes, as well as the preservation of local food traditions, varieties, and cultures.

6. Their readiness to move forward, as each member state deems appropriate in their respective domestic context and in a manner consistent with international agreements and obligations, with public policies on:

- a. Support for family farming, as appropriate, promoting efficient land use and sustainable agricultural activities, taking into account the degree of vulnerability of smallholders to hunger and poverty;
- b. Fostering regional humanitarian cooperation and the promotion of food transfers and donations, strengthening solidarity among states and peoples in emergencies, in accordance with international agreements, subject to the needs of the beneficiaries and the will of states;
- c. Promoting public-private investment in the agriculture sector, with particular attention given to smallholders;

- d. Establishing, where appropriate, strategies and mechanisms to respond to food crises, in the framework of national legislation; and
- e. Fostering an open, transparent, equitable, rules-based, and non-discriminatory system of international trade in agricultural commodities, in accordance with the agricultural mandate of the World Trade Organization Doha Round.

7. Their readiness to develop or strengthen comprehensive national strategies on food and nutrition security, as each member state deems appropriate in their respective domestic context, taking the following elements into account:

- a. Food and nutrition education initiatives and programs;
- b. Agricultural development research and its funding, supporting national research systems, universities, and other research entities, promoting technology transfer under mutually agreed on terms and the sharing of knowledge and good practices; and
- c. The challenges to food security and sustainable development posed by excessive volatility in commodity prices.

8. Their decision to promote and strengthen public policies to stimulate sustainable farming and access to technologies, as well as measures for the management of risks associated with natural disasters and climate change adaptation.

9. Their decision to stress the need to strengthen the capacity of smallholder and women farmers as a strategy to enhance agriculture development and food security by promoting equitable access to land, water, financial resources and technologies in accordance with national legislation, as well as improving smallholder farmers' participation in and access to sustainable agriculture value chains and markets.^{13/}

10. Their commitment to promoting programs aimed at broadening access to safe water and sanitation.

11. Their commitment to advancing biodiversity protection in the region in the framework of national laws.

12. Their decision to promote the sustainable increase of agricultural production and productivity with a view to increasing food supply.

13. Operative paragraph 25 of United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/66/220, "Agriculture development and food security."

13. Their commitment to moving forward with combating desertification, drought, and land degradation, and to expanding areas of cultivable land in arid and semi-arid zones in the context of integrated land use planning, in order to contribute to food and nutrition security, while protecting biological diversity and the environment.

14. Their decision to develop legal and institutional frameworks, where appropriate, for the effective realization of the right to adequate food, within the context of food and nutrition security, in particular for poor and vulnerable individuals and groups, and with gender equity.

15. To instruct the OAS General Secretariat to strengthen coordination with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, under the aegis of existing agreements and subject to the resources available, in order to promote and link the following aspects:

- a. Support for the design and implementation of multilateral efforts in the area of food and nutrition security in the region.
- b. Promoting, as part of the follow-up on the Plan of Action of Panama, “Translational Science, Technology and Innovation: Knowledge for Competitiveness and Prosperity,” the creation and strengthening of cooperation programs, projects, and activities, in order to share knowledge and encourage development in MSMEs, universities, communities, and other production units in the area of food security.
- c. Research, agriculture development, and their funding through international cooperation, particularly of a South-South, horizontal and triangular nature; public-private partnerships; and applied science and technology networks.
- d. Promoting the strengthening of national and local capacities to create and analyze information and in capacities to execute and monitor policies, programs, and projects on food issues.

16. To instruct the Permanent Council, the Inter-American Council for Integral Development, and the General Secretariat to continue, in coordination with all organs, agencies, and entities of the OAS, to facilitate the implementation of the strategies for increasing and strengthening participation by civil society organizations and other social actors in OAS activities in the area of food and nutrition security.

17. Their decision to request the Inter-American Council for Integral Development of the Organization of American States to consider including food and nutrition security in the new Strategic Plan for Partnership for Development as a cross-cutting component of intersectoral public policies.

18. To request the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States to convene a special meeting on food and nutrition security in the Americas, with the participation and input of specialized agencies, such as the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, the Pan American Health Organization, the World Food Program, the United Nations Food and Agriculture

Organization, the Inter-American Development Bank, the “Latin America and the Caribbean without Hunger 2025” initiative, and the Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute, among others.

19. To note the need to further examine various concepts such as, inter alia, “food sovereignty” and their relation with food security and the right to food, bearing in mind the need to avoid any negative impact on the enjoyment of the right to food for all people at all times.

20. Their commitment to making institutional strengthening efforts and to encouraging greater private investment for the issues established in this declaration, and their intention to invite regional and international agencies working in the region to promote cooperation mechanisms and programs that support this effort.

Footnotes

5. ... all references to “food sovereignty”. Food sovereignty is not a well-understood term. There is no single or widely shared definition of this concept. The United States is concerned that this concept could be used to justify protectionism and other restrictive import or export policies with negative consequences for food security, sustainability, and income growth that the Declaration seeks to promote. Improved access to local, regional, and global markets helps get food to the people that need it most and also helps to smooth price volatility. Food security depends on appropriate domestic actions that are consistent with international commitments.

This Declaration uses several different names for the human right concerning food or nutrition. The United States interprets all of them as references to the food related right named in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. As an economic, social and cultural right, this right is to be progressively realized. Although the United States has not ratified the Covenant, as a strong supporter of the Universal Declaration we have endorsed this human right.

6. remains a significant challenge in the hemisphere. We welcome the Declaration’s attention to food and nutrition security, but disassociate from the specific references to the concept of “food sovereignty.” Canada understands that there is no clear consensus on the concept of “food sovereignty” and is concerned the concept may be used to promote protectionist interests.

7. ... nutritional, and timely supply of food. The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela understands that: “Food sovereignty is a concept used by some countries to refer to peoples’ right to define their own policies and strategies for the sustainable production, distribution, and consumption of food that guarantee the right to food for the entire population, respecting their own cultures and the diversity of peasant, fishing, and indigenous forms of agricultural production, of marketing, and of management of rural areas, in which women play a fundamental role.”

8. is “the right of peoples to define their own sustainable policies and strategies for the production, distribution, and consumption of food that guarantee the right to food for the entire population, based on small- and medium-scale production, respecting their own cultures and the diversity of peasant, fishing, and indigenous forms of agricultural production, of marketing, and of management of rural areas, in which women play a fundamental role. Food sovereignty guarantees food and nutritional security.”

9. cannot be linked to food security or to the right to food.

10. unable to support calls for the promotion of a concept, namely food sovereignty, which has technical, legal and political implications without an agreed articulation of its definition and scope.

11. for living well, it endorses the definition given by the 2001 World Forum on Food Sovereignty, held in Havana, Cuba, taking food sovereignty to be peoples’ right to define their own policies and strategies for the sustainable production, distribution, and consumption of food that guarantee the right to food for the entire population, based on small- and medium-scale production, respecting their own cultures and the diversity of peasant, fishing, and indigenous forms of agricultural production, of marketing, and of management of rural areas, in which women play a fundamental role.

12. permanent access to healthy, adequate, and nutritional food, preferably produced locally in accordance with their different identities and cultural traditions.