

***Speech on Via Campesina {Henry Saragih} on the closing plenary of the FAO High Level Conference
5 June 2008***

Ladies and gentlemen,

The High Level Conference that is taking place now actually should be to celebrate the successes of leaders of states and governments eradicating hunger and poverty in the world. This because the Head of States have given their commitment during the World Food Summit in 1996 to eradicate hunger by half in 2015.

- At the moment however the world sees thousands of peasants committing suicide because they are bankrupt and cannot pay back their loans. The world sees people suffering from hunger everywhere and children who are malnourished. The world sees ordinary people who have to queue in line under the sun with a coupon in their hand, waiting for food aid. In some places these queues have turned into food riots.*
- These are the results of the policies that you are responsible for. These are the results of the liberalisation of food and agricultural markets, in which WTO, World Bank and Free Trade Agreements FTA has promoted. Policies which force farmers to produce for export and push the government to import basic foodstuffs. The industrial model of agriculture has brought agriculture under the control of transnational agribusiness corporation. Many who have benefited enormously from the current crisis, some doubling their profits in the first quarter.*
- This is a failure of the people's right to food. This is a failure of the people's right to a livelihood.*
- In 2002, I was standing in the same place in front of you, during the FAO World Food Summit + 5. In 2002, I tore the paper I held in my hands and I ate it. I ate it because at the time, we did not believe that the policy of FAO would eradicate hunger. I ate it because we knew that the people of the world would be left with only paper and no concrete policies which would feed them.*
- I represent millions of peasants and small farmers, members of Via Campesina around the world in more than fifty countries.*

I am here again, in this same building, with the delegates representing the countries of the world, demanding the same things I demanded in 2002. The policies you prescribed in 1996 have failed. There are more people in the world suffering from hunger and poverty now than in 1996.

We don't want to see the same mistakes made again!

- *Our solution to solve the food crisis is to put the control of food production into the hands of the small farmers. As you are all aware, small farmers are those who produce the food, but they also are consumers of food. We cannot put the control of food into the hands of agribusiness corporations. We have to let farmers feed their own families, their own local communities and produce for their domestic markets. This is what food sovereignty means. This is what we demand.*
- *We want FAO and the governments to rebuild national food economies, set up national policies to protect and support peasant and small holder food production for domestic market. You have to stop the liberalisation of agricultural markets and the ongoing destruction of our peasant based food production. You have to stop the corporate driven production of agrofuels which throws millions of peasants into poverty.*
- *You have to stop speculation on food. Food is a necessity for life. It cannot be a commodity to speculate upon on international markets.*
- *Via Campesina have been struggling for agrarian reform and land reform. The FAO should continue their commitment made in 2006 at the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development(ICARRD). FAO has also supported integrated pest management, which does not make farmers dependent on chemicals produced by transnational companies.*
- *Sustainable peasant based agriculture IS the answer to the climate crisis. It is an efficient model of agriculture, which does not need the fuel and energy demanded by industrial agriculture. It will cool down the earth.*
- *We should be ashamed and filled with guilt because we could not eradicate hunger. Instead of eradicating hunger we have increased the number of hungry in the world. Therefore today we should evaluate the policies have been implemented. You have to admit you were wrong. The proof is in the empty stomachs of millions of people.*