

Torrecuso Declaration

We, members of the International Land Coalition (ILC), representing 18 organisations from 9 countries¹ in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa (EMENA), gathered in Torrecuso, Italy from 10 to 12 of October 2019 for our Regional Land Forum and Assembly of Members under the theme “Land and Territories: Diverse Movements, Common Futures”. We thank our member Lentamente, and the other community-based associations in Torrecuso, as well as the Municipality of Torrecuso and Regional government of Campania for generously hosting us.

We recognize that Europe, the Middle East and North Africa cover three continents with diverse geographies, climates, and cultural, social and political dynamics. We have nonetheless identified a larger purpose in uniting in a single regional platform to join our efforts to build people-centred land governance in our region. The challenges we face across this region are inextricably linked: from the **climate emergency** to the **depopulation of rural areas, conflict and migration**, access to land, **dispossession of common lands**, the **exclusion of women**, and the wide-ranging impacts of the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Along with the rest of humanity and life on earth, we face the existential crisis of the **climate emergency** as a result of human activity, including unsustainable land use management practices. This calls us to fundamentally re-examine our relationship with land and natural resources, how we produce our food and how we relate to each other.

Rural and urban landscapes throughout Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa are experiencing combined processes of **depopulation and dispossession**. In Albania, Kosovo, Palestinian occupied territories, Italy, Scotland, Spain, and Moldova, rural populations are dwindling and rural landscapes are becoming “social deserts” as young people, even if they wish to stay, find less hope and opportunity in their lands. In Jordan and Morocco, good customary land systems are at risk if they do not become formally recognised and protected. Palestinians face the occupation of their land, and are regularly subject to human rights violations and systematic dispossession.

The EMENA region lies at the intersections of forced displacement due to ongoing wars and global **migration** that has the hope of a better life at its core. Migration is a fundamental trait of humanity and an activity we have engaged in for millennia. However today, as the movement of goods and services occurs with greater ease, walls and visas and passports limit and define the movement of human beings in the architecture of a global caste system.

Local communities, for millennia, have shaped landscapes, biodiversity and ecosystems through their own governance systems, including the **commons** (commonly managed forests, grasslands, irrigation systems, hunting societies, etc.). Current figures indicate that the commons in EMENA are still very relevant both for their socio-economic and environmental values. Nonetheless, the role of local communities as custodians of the commons has been largely unrecognized and threatened by opposing trends and commercial pressures.

Despite the cultural and political diversity within the majority of EMENA countries, **women** face similar challenges: unequal access to land, limited social and economic rights and opportunities, lack of social recognition, participation in decision and policy-making processes and underrepresentation in leadership roles. These issues make them vulnerable and dependent on men as well as unable to secure safe livelihoods for themselves and their families.

We do not underestimate the challenges we face, which strike to the heart of the economic, social and political systems we live and work in. Nonetheless, we are inspired by the many visionary initiatives of our members and others across the region to meet these challenges. We congratulate Lentamente, Sale della Terra, Small Communities of Welcome, Consorzio NCO and Forum Nazionale Agricoltura for the extraordinary work we witnessed in Campania towards building a more vibrant and inclusive rural economies and societies.

¹ ACAD, Palestine; ADFM, Marocco; CLS, Scotland; CNVP, Kosovo; Iniziativa Comunales, Spain; NAPFO, Kosovo; NCFPA, Albania; NGO Bios, Moldova; PARC, Palestina; PASTO, Lebanon; Seeds, Jordan; Sharaka, Palestine; TWA, Albania; TyN, Spain; SONIA, Italy; Slow Food International; Lentamente, Italy

As organizations from three different continents, we are aware of the challenges we face related to our diversity. However, we believe that people-centred land governance is fundamental to our common efforts and humanitarian values should be at the core of our work as a platform.

We, ILC Members from the EMENA countries, commit to working together in solidarity across our region, assuming that gender equality is integrated in all our actions, learning from and supporting each other, as we prioritise:

1. Recognizing that our actions have direct impact on the quality of life of the present and future generation, we commit to share and implement good sustainable practices in order to prevent the effects of **climate change**. Understanding that the **climate crisis** is also the cause of land conflicts, displacement of people and migration, we call upon governments to prioritise, in its policy framework and especially through the CAP, **sustainable agroecological systems** that strengthen **small-scale farming** in contrast to industrial production models and agricultural monopolies;
2. Targeting **secure tenure rights** for men and women equally, including pastoralists. In support to the **commons** and communal systems of land governance, we urge the European Union to reorient CAPs and other EU programmes to in order to integrate them into national policies, making them more visible and committing to provide effective, true support;
3. Advocating and promoting inter-generational dialogue and the transfer of leadership, including a facilitation of access to and control over land for **youth**, especially those that are disadvantaged and disabled, as well as a reclaiming of traditional values and knowledge;
4. We call upon governments to concentrate efforts on implementing specific policies targeting the **development of rural areas** in order to encourage and enable people of working age, especially youth, to repopulate these lands and contribute to the local economies while living with quality and dignity;
5. Applying more **gender justice principles** in our work and in the way we manage our organizations. We recognize the challenges faced by **women** to have their voices heard and their rights respected. We call all the stakeholders to take action to fight against discriminatory practices and unequal power structures that undermine women's rights, specially their access to land and economic empowerment;
6. Opposing **criminal and financial speculation of land** and we commit to lobbying government for land to become a common property resource to create wealth, wellbeing and justice;
7. Being a Coalition based on solidarity and **universal human rights principles**, we reject any official policy or non-official practice that violates the basic human rights of people, especially those related to land. In this spirit, we urge governments to implement and promote the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and to respect the resolutions of UN bodies, especially those related to the occupation of Palestine territory and the forced displacement of its people.
