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Farmers Major group

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Thank you Chair!

We in the farmers major group think that sustainable agriculture and well being of the small farmers, women farmers and small food producers is critical for sustainable development. For us, the departure point in this process is to ensure essential human rights like the right to food and water for peasants, small and landless farmers and small fisherfolks, and pastoralists.

One of the major issues demanding increased attention is agricultural land grabbing as we have only around 37.5% of the world's land area available for agricultural. Foreign investors and developed nations sought or secured between 37 million to 49 million acres (out of 5 billion hectares of agricultural lands) of farmland in the developing world between 2006 and middle of 2009.

Implementing a genuine agrarian reform, which include equitable land distribution, including women's right to land, access and control over productive resources, land tenure, water, livestock, seeds and other inputs. We need to recognize that, a large number of workers in agriculture (70-80 percent) are women in many countries of South Asia and they have limited or no right to own land and lack access to other resources, knowledge and innovations, rural advisory services/extension, infrastructure, veterinary services, financial services and markets to increase their resilience, productivity and income sustainability and their quality of life.

Another critical area of concern is commodification of genetic resources particularly through introducing genetically modified seeds by the corporations posing threat to farmers rights and biodiversity. The TRIPs agreement in the WTO legitimizes corporations control over farmers agriculture and food production.

There is need to restore and protect farmers' rights and farming communities control over genetic resources, biodiversity and sustainable farming practices. Equally important is to restore the forest and its resources in the hands of communities, which depend essentially on them as against the corporate control.

Sustainable agriculture is the only way to get rid of the use of highly hazardous pesticides with safer alternatives and implement policies to move towards biodiversity-based ecological agriculture.

Policy prescriptions for agriculture must be based on the consultation with farmers and the most affected constituencies rather than with corporations and technical experts.

Many across the world consider the concept of food sovereignty to be a comprehensive framework, which addresses the issue of poverty, hunger, climate and the environment, it also addresses poverty in both rural and urban areas through sustainable local food systems.

The new development and sustainable pathways must entail empowerment of communities whose voices have been on the margins particularly the small and landless farmers.

Thank you.