



FINAL DECLARATION

As part of the 4th Edition of the West African Caravan of the CGLTE-OA on climate change with a focus on environmental, agricultural and economic challenges, we, the social movements of West Africa, travelled from 06 November to 01 December 2023 through Burkina-Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Senegal and The Gambia, covering almost 3,000 km in 27 days to meet rural communities and political authorities. This will be achieved through conferences, debates, peaceful marches, meetings with administrative and political authorities and traditional chiefs, exchanges of experience and visits to communities that are victims of land, water, forest and farmer seed grabbing, with the aim of contributing to the definition of policies based on the principles of farmer agro-ecology and good governance of natural resources to meet the challenge of food sovereignty in the face of climate issues and other crises that are not sparing the West African region.

Comprising farmers' organisations, religious authorities, traditional and customary chiefs, fishermen, herders, rural communities, human rights defenders, academics and other civil society organisations from 15 West African countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

Guided by the ancestral principles and ideals of the Mandén Charter, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Peasant Declaration, the FAO guidelines on good land governance and ILO Convention 189 on the protection of the rights of domestic workers;

Recognising the importance of land, water and farmers' seeds for humanity and biodiversity, and the need to conduct information and awareness-raising campaigns.

Noting that capitalism and neoliberalism, the spearhead of colonialism, are the main causes of climate change, the disastrous consequences of which are being felt on the African continent, which contributes only 4% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Aware that without securing and controlling our common heritage : Land, Water and Farmers' Seeds by and for communities, including women and young people; there will be no sustainable development that meets the issues and challenges linked to global warming, food sovereignty, economic, energy and environmental shocks, peace and social cohesion...

Recognising the urgent need to pay more attention to the issues of water, land and seeds in the farming world, in order to reduce inequalities, open up prospects for young people and women, promote the sustainable development of land, generate decent jobs, and optimally address the causes of rural urban exodus and irregular migration.

Noting the harmful effects of climate change: degradation of arable land, flooding, forest fires, rising sea levels, advancing desert, etc;

Concerned about the lack of funding and good support policies for farmers in the face of the investment needs required to help achieve the 169 targets of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2035;

Aware of the inadequacy of funding for African countries to tackle climate change and the colossal indebtedness to the World Bank;

Noting that African socio-economic development is threatened by the climate crisis: 13.5 million people in the Sahel could fall into poverty as a result of climate change-related shocks by 2050 if urgent climate adaptation measures are not taken;

Determined to combat industrial agriculture, which favours multinationals at the expense of farming communities through land, water and seed grabbing, and which is backed by Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, the so-called carbon sequestration process;

Aware of the decisive role that women in the informal sector and domestic workers play in the economy and in stabilising many households; paradoxically, they face many difficulties in carrying out their duties, in particular low income, violence, etc;

Noting the weak application of the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons and Goods within the ECOWAS zone, adopted in 1975, and the follow-up mechanisms for its improved applicability at border level;

Concerned about the low level of ratification of ILO Convention 189 on the protection of the rights of domestic workers;

We commit ourselves to

- Strengthen synergies between actors and organisations involved in the fight for land, water, farmers' seeds, pastoralism, small-scale fishing and forestry in order to develop a common vision for global change in our countries;
- Work to strengthen political dialogue and social cohesion for lasting peace,
- Demand the revision of Article 06 of the Paris Agreement on carbon credits;
- Fight for inclusive and equitable governance of cross-border natural resources;
- Combat all forms of grabbing of natural resources, including land, water and farmers' seeds, and support communities that are victims of this injustice;
- Accompany and support projects and programmes to secure, preserve and protect communities' legitimate land rights;
- Support secure access for women and young people to land and natural resources in order to empower them.

We urge our authorities to take concrete steps to:

- Support all proposals for laws, regulations and public policies in favour of communities to secure their collective rights, particularly to natural fisheries and water resources;
- Protect land, water and farmers' seeds, our common property in particular, from commodification;
- Ban dredging, the use of toxic products and all forms of exploitation and production in watercourses, especially the Niger and Senegal rivers;
- Start an energy transition based on the sustainable use of autonomous, economical, renewable and circular energies without greenwashing, fossil fuels or nuclear power;
- Return land to communities that have been the victims of land grabbing, in particular NDiael in Senegal, Ingall and Aderbissinatt in Niger and Sanamadougou in Mali;
- Ensure equitable representation and meaningful engagement of women and young people, including girls, in all their diversity, in all processes related to climate change;
- Unreservedly denounce Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, whose approaches primarily benefit financiers and the private sector and contribute to reinforcing the commodification of natural resources, including land, water and forest grabbing, to the detriment of communities and nations;
- Ratify ILO (International Labour Organisation) Convention 189 on the protection of the rights of domestic workers and give them special status in the labour codes of the various countries;
- Apply the free and informed consent advocated by the UN before approving any project related to land, water and natural resources, as part of a thorough environmental, social and economic impact assessment and a gender-sensitive feasibility study;

At ECOWAS, we recommend

- The establishment of mechanisms for better protection of the land heritage of local communities and the recognition of customary rights in land policies embodied in laws;
- Harmonization of agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries policies at regional level to improve inclusive and equitable governance;
- The promotion of farmer agro-ecology for better protection of biodiversity and an alternative to climate change;
- Take appropriate measures to stop the abusive exploitation of forests and the hunting of wildlife in Africa;
- Setting up a joint mechanism to eradicate terrorism in the Sahel in order to secure and protect goods and people in West Africa;
- Strengthening mechanisms for the protection and development of livestock in West Africa by encouraging countries to introduce consensual pastoral codes in order to avoid frequent conflicts between tribes and villages.

- The adoption of appropriate measures to stop the plundering of fisheries resources by multinationals, leading fishermen to become couriers for potential African candidates for irregular migration;
- The effective implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons and Goods and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that it is applied more effectively at border level;
- The granting of consultative status to the CGLTE-AO in the areas of Land, Water and Farmers' Seeds, in the process of drawing up and implementing development policies, particularly those relating to natural resources, and in the monitoring of these policies;
- Taking into account the joint advocacy document for responsible and equitable governance in West Africa, securing the rights of communities including women and young people, submitted to the ECOWAS Commission in Abuja, Nigeria;

Yes to an ECOWAS of the peoples respecting the sovereignty of States, taking into account women and young people for controlled food sovereignty and concerted climate justice!

Signed in Serrekunda, Gambia, on 30th November 2023.