



## **Statement by Faith communities at ICARRD+20, Cartagena, Colombia.**

### **Introduction**

As faith actors representing diverse spiritual traditions from across the globe, we gather at the ICARRD+20 Conference in Cartagena, Colombia, during 24-28 February 2026, united in our sacred commitment to justice, dignity, and the fundamental human right to food, water and land. Our collective voice emerges from deep spiritual conviction that the Earth is a common inheritance for all humanity, and that true peace cannot exist while millions suffer from hunger and landlessness. We stand together, drawing upon centuries of prophetic tradition that calls us to defend the vulnerable and advocate for transformative change in how we steward God's creation.

### **Context**

Twenty years after the inaugural International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, the global crisis of land concentration and rural displacement has reached unprecedented levels. Today's reality presents a stark contradiction: while technological advances have increased agricultural productivity, hunger affects nearly 800 million people worldwide, and landlessness continues to drive rural communities into urban poverty.

The promises of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, particularly the commitments to end hunger and poverty, remain unfulfilled. Climate change, armed conflicts, economic instability, and extractive development models continue to compound existing inequalities and undermine the resilience of marginalized communities. At the same, rising debt burdens, shrinking civic space, and the corporate capture of industrial food systems further hinder local resilience and constrain the ability of states to meet their human rights obligations.

Rural populations face systematic violence and criminalization when defending their ancestral territories and natural resources, including their biodiversity. Meanwhile, industrial agriculture and speculative land investments, and corporate concentration in global food systems, continue to consolidate wealth and power in the hands of a few, deepening structural injustices. This crisis disproportionately affects women, youth, children, Indigenous Peoples, and small-scale farmers who, despite producing 70% of the world's food, remain among the most food-insecure populations.

ICARRD+20 is therefore not merely a commemorative gathering. It is a moment of moral and political reckoning. It compels us to ask whether past commitments have translated into meaningful agrarian reform transformation, or whether injustice has deepened under new forms. For faith communities, this is a decisive time to reaffirm



that land is not a commodity to be exploited, but a sacred trust and a fundamental individual and collective human right, as recognized in international instruments such as UNDRIP and UNDRP, entrusted to humanity for the common good.

## Problem Analysis

Our analysis reveals a profound moral and systemic crisis rooted in the commodification of land and the prioritization of profit over human dignity. Several interconnected injustices demand immediate attention:

**Land Concentration and Speculation:** Financial institutions and agribusiness corporations increasingly treat land as a commodity for speculation and profit rather than recognizing it as the foundation of human sustenance and cultural identity. This financialization displaces communities, undermines food sovereignty and local resilience. **Environmental and Social Exploitation:** Extractive industries and large scale agribusiness operations, often operating under false environmental conservation narratives, continue colonial patterns of resource appropriation. These practices destroy ecosystems, degrade soils, water resources and displace Indigenous Peoples and rural communities who are the authentic guardians of biodiversity.

**Systematic Exclusion of Marginalized Voices:** Women farmers, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and small-scale producers—those most intimately connected to sustainable food systems—remain systematically excluded from decision-making processes that affect their lives and livelihoods. Furthermore, market based speculation has made land so expensive that young peasants cannot inherit or acquire plots, effectively severing the generational succession of food production and forcing rural youth into urban poverty.

**False Solutions to Climate Change:** Market-based mechanisms, that drives *green grabbing* and expulsion of communities, and technological fixes, such as the increasing digitalisation of land registries which is frequently weaponised to erase customary tenure rights; often exacerbate existing inequalities while failing to address the root causes of environmental degradation. In many cases, these initiatives reinforce land concentration and deepen inequality rather than advancing climate justice and ecological integrity.

**Tenure and governance in silos:** The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT), provide principles for secure and equitable tenure over land, fisheries, and forests to support food security. However, they exclude water tenure, creating silos in resource governance.

## Call to action /Our Demands



To governments, international institutions, and the global community, we make the following non-negotiable demands:

### **1. Constitutional Recognition of Land Rights**

Enshrine the human right to land in national constitutions and legal frameworks, recognizing collective and customary land tenure systems alongside individual ownership models.

### **2. Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Programmes**

Adopt and implement binding public policies for equitable land redistribution that prioritize landless farmers, women, youth, and indigenous communities, supported by adequate technical and financial support resources. The success of these programmes must be measured by auditable physical metrics, for example, the actual number of hectares redistributed to communities and the volume of local food produced, rather than merely by budgets allocated or policies drafted.

### **3. Elimination of Land Speculation**

Condemn the financialisation of creation by establishing robust legal safeguards against the financialization of agricultural land, restrictions on speculative investment that treat life-sustaining land as a mere asset, and regulation of large-scale land acquisition.

### **4. Support for Agroecological Transition**

Redirect agricultural subsidies from industrial agriculture toward agroecological practices that enhance biodiversity, soil health, and climate resilience while ensuring dignified livelihoods for farmers and pastoralists.

### **5. Direct Community Funding**

Create accessible financing mechanisms, including direct climate finance, that provide direct support to grassroots organizations, cooperatives, and communities engaged in sustainable food production and land stewardship.

### **6. Participatory Governance**

Guarantee meaningful and inclusive participation of affected communities—particularly women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples—in all policy processes related to agriculture, land use, and food systems.

### **7. Linkage of land and water tenure governance**



Inspired by the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT), fast track *water tenure* processes and Contribute to a global call to action linking land and water tenure within the post-ICARRD+20 framework, including through CFS (Committee on World Food Security).

## **8. Protection of Land and Environmental Defenders**

Implement robust legal protections for human rights defenders working on land and environmental issues, ending impunity for violence against rural leaders and communities.

## **9. Corporate Accountability**

Establish binding international mechanisms to hold transnational corporations accountable for human rights violations and environmental damage throughout their global value chains.

## **Conclusion**

As people of faith, we affirm that land is not merely an economic asset, but a fundamental human right and a sacred trust entrusted to humanity for the common good. Our spiritual traditions remind us that justice is not optional but fundamental to our relationship with the Divine and with one another.

We commit ourselves to continued advocacy, dialogue, prayer, and action until every person has access to land, food, and dignity.

The time for incremental change and half-measures has passed. We want a profound restoration of the covenant between humanity and the earth. The harvest of justice cannot wait. We call upon all people of conscience to join us in advancing transformative policies that place human rights, ecological integrity, and the well-being of future generations at the center of global food and land policies. The future of our planet and the well-being of future generations depend upon the courage we demonstrate today.

*In solidarity and hope, Faith communities at ICARRD+20*

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