

Declaration on Endogenous Development and Bio-cultural Diversity

Lezajsk, Poland, 27 September 2006

We, the members of the Compas network, who are the representatives of different community-based organisations, NGOs, universities and peoples, with different cultural backgrounds from Latin America, Africa, Asia, Europe, gathered at the Compas partner meeting in Lezajsk, Poland, September 2006, have agreed on the following:

1. For the last ten years we have been working to maintain and enhance bio-cultural diversity by supporting Endogenous Development. This is development based mainly, but not exclusively, on locally available resources, values and knowledge. We are developing mechanisms for local learning and experimenting, for building local economies and for retaining benefits in the local area. We are determined to further contribute to efforts which enhance Endogenous Development and bio-cultural diversity by:
 - supporting local communities;
 - cooperating as partners in the Compas programme;
 - collaborating with other community-based organisations, NGOs, universities and governmental and international agencies that support Endogenous Development and bio-cultural diversity.
2. We recognise that there are important and valuable initiatives for bio-cultural diversity: national and international policies and conventions, initiatives by grassroots organisations and social movements. Yet not enough is being done to prevent further erosion and destruction of bio-cultural diversity. We are concerned about the global environmental, social, economic and cultural crises as well as the way biological and cultural diversity is being eroded and destroyed by human activities.
3. We note that the domination of materialist and mechanistic worldviews in mainstream sciences, technology and commercial systems is contributing to the global crises and the reduction of bio-cultural diversity. We therefore draw attention to worldviews, systems of wisdom and sciences present in:
 - the history of humankind, also of cultures now dominated by materialism;
 - the diverse cultures and sciences throughout the world;
 - the minds and hearts of people and social movements;
 - feminine perspectives on life;
 - recent scientific developments such as transdisciplinarity and new trends in quantum physics.
4. We call on scientists, educators, policy makers and corporate organisations to be fully aware of the consequences of the proliferation and domination of materialistic and commercial values and practices. We invite initiatives from these, and from all parts of civil society, to enhance and respect endogenous innovations and recognise collective rights.
5. We acknowledge that local knowledges, sciences and wisdom of traditional and indigenous peoples may have their specific strengths as well as weaknesses. We also affirm that mainstream science has its own strengths and weaknesses too. Hence, activities are required which build on the strengths and reduce the limitations of both.
6. Intra-cultural and inter-cultural processes of learning and research should be strengthened and collective rights acknowledged.

We reject:

- The growing levels of material, social and spiritual poverty in all parts of the globe.
- The loss of territorial and food sovereignty, as well as the destruction of ecology and livelihood systems.
- The global geo-political, socio-cultural and economic power strategies and the expansion of the global market economy, with its destruction of biological and cultural diversity.
- The loss of social cohesion, solidarity, reciprocity and mutual help in rural and urban communities.
- The negative effects of globalisation, the market economy, and commoditisation of life, water, genetic resources, and the knowledges and wisdoms of traditional and indigenous peoples.
- The loss of spiritual values and practices and the reduction of the role of spirituality in giving people meaning and direction.
- The imposition of dominant values, religions and belief systems on diverse cultures and peoples.
- The lack of respect for and communication between different religions and spiritual traditions, and the related increase in tensions and aggression.
- The dominance of mainstream science as well as the marginalisation and underestimation of traditional and indigenous sciences.
- The imbalance in credibility, prestige, power and access to resources between mainstream and traditional knowledges and sciences.
- The global and national policies that promote and generate the erosion of biodiversity, and of the knowledges and wisdoms of traditional and indigenous peoples in the fields of agriculture, health and conservation of nature.
- The erosion of roles and functions of traditional institutions; systems of governance for managing ecosystems and social organisation of traditional and indigenous communities.
- The dominating role of materialistic and mechanistic worldviews, as well as the global spread of these in policies for development, commercial activities and sciences, and their impact on bio-cultural diversity.
- The lack of recognition of and regard for the collective rights of traditional and indigenous peoples, and the imposition of laws of intellectual property rights and free trade agreements upon these groups.
- All forms of intellectual property rights on living beings.
- The production of genetically modified organisms which is taking place, predominantly driven by commercial interests of transnational corporations, with insufficient attention to environmental and bio-safety aspects, and the lack of transparency in the processes of decision making. We reject the negative impact that the production of GMOs has on farmers' autonomy.



We recommend:

For policy



1. That the international and national bodies concerned with development policies incorporate programmes and projects that defend collective rights, support the revaluation and revitalisation of wisdoms and ways of knowing of traditional and indigenous peoples, and the non-commodification of local knowledges and natural resources.
2. That national governments respect and acknowledge traditional institutions and organisational systems.
3. That global and national policies strengthen local economic systems, giving priority to local production and marketing, sovereignty and safety of food.
4. An increase in the allocation of resources for research and development of knowledges and sciences of traditional and indigenous peoples.
5. Training for scholars and professionals who are committed to the values and principles of traditional and indigenous peoples to:
 - Develop, update and improve their theories and practices;
 - Set standards for students and professionals;
 - Evaluate mainstream knowledge and practices from traditional perspectives;
 - Enrich the foundations of their own sciences.
6. An increase in intra- and inter-scientific cooperation for mutual learning and co-evolution of mainstream and local sciences (e.g. in health and agriculture), as well as the interaction between folk, classical and mainstream practitioners, enhancing the symmetry in power position and resource access for both types of sciences.

7. Acknowledgement of and respect for the views of territory held by peoples and communities.
8. Acknowledgement of and support for cultures, nations and traditional and indigenous peoples to protect their systems of health and medicinal resources, including their physical, spiritual, mental and social aspects.

For research



1. Recognition of the collective nature of traditional knowledge.
2. Attention by mainstream scientists and thinkers to traditional and indigenous knowledges, sciences and wisdoms as valuable sources.
3. The establishment of an international research centre and/or an alliance for Endogenous Development and Bio-Cultural Diversity.
4. Support for local experts to assess, understand, document and disseminate information on:
 - Indigenous plants, crops and animals, as well as local knowledge, values and land-use systems;
 - Indigenous institutions and effective practices in community organisational development;
 - Local and indigenous concepts of territory and the existing threats and opportunities for peoples' territorial sovereignty;
 - Gender perspectives on bio-cultural diversity in different cultures;
 - Collective rights and ways to protect these.
5. Support for carriers of local knowledge and wisdom in their own research and dissemination of the outcomes, and acknowledgement of them as researchers in their own right.

For education



1. That primary, secondary and higher education curricula include traditional sciences and technologies in their theories, methods and practices.
2. Support of informal and non-formal education focusing on Endogenous Development and bio-cultural diversity.
3. That self-confidence and pride in local culture and traditional professions be reinforced and strengthened.
4. Sharing information with farmers and communities on bio-safety and land-use rights, cultural rights, ownership of knowledge and commodities.
5. Incorporation of local experts as teachers in schools and in research.

For activities and initiatives



1. Development of methodologies for working with indigenous and traditional institutions.
2. That in engaging with communities, outside agents identify and work with existing institutions rather than establish new organisations.
3. The promotion of empowerment of traditional authorities through training, networking and exchanges.
4. The recognition and use of traditional structures as channels through which traditional authorities and their communities influence the development process.
5. Initiation and support for policy dialogues among stakeholders from different cultural backgrounds on cultural rights and local management of natural resources.
6. Coordination of initiatives for promoting local resources such

as indigenous seeds and animal breeds in different parts of the world.

7. That dominant religions respect local spirituality, religions and belief systems.



Members of the Compas network agreed on the Declaration of Lezajsk and undertook wood sculpting (see the 2,5 meter sculptures on the back cover) and ironworking as an expression of cultural diversity and unity of peoples. Both monuments were handed over to the local community of Lezajsk in Poland.