

# REPORT ON THE WORKSHOPS- DISCUSSIONS

## Oloron-Sainte-Marie

### Third World Meeting of Mountain People

27-29 September 2010

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#### **Workshop 1: STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES FOR MOUNTAIN TERRITORIES**

Our mountains are becoming depopulated. The rural communities are threatened with extinction. However, mountain peoples have an ancestral know-how and a very good knowledge of the natural elements surrounding them (medicinal herbs, management of water, cultivation of hostile lands, etc.).

We live our territory as a unit. Actually, imposed categories (e.g.: the economy which divides the resources) do not match up with our conception of the territory. We have a deeper and more integral (holistic) view which corresponds to our traditional lifestyles.

Our cultures, the mountain spirituality, are threatened all over the world. We have a strong culture which “sacralizes” the mountains and its elements. It is a guarantee of protection and responsible management. It conceives the human being, not as being superior to the nature or the rest of the living beings, but as being part of the world. We are the depositaries of the world and we have to transmit it to future generations.

Biodiversity, important natural resources living in quantity and in quality in our mountains, seems threatened all over the world with extinction or with appropriation to the profit of external interests (parks, mining contamination, oil exploration, desertification or disappearance of valleys flooded by dams, bottled water, patents on living organisms, intensive and large-scale pesticide-based agriculture, GMOs, mass tourism, climate change – already lived in several massifs as the Himalayas and the Andes–). The climate change worries locally and reveals the common destiny that we share.

According to the ancient historical logic, the Southern countries are just limited to provide natural resources for the “energivorous” Northern economies, as well as mountains are for the plains. Often, the mountain peoples who “share” their resources do not retain anything for them (desertification, mining destruction).

Pressures on local productions by international markets are enormous and they provoke disastrous effects on the mountain economies (drop and variation of the price of alpaca wool, of the fruits and vegetables, etc.). We suffer directly from the global variations of the commodity prices and there are not mechanisms for safeguarding our “cultures and traditional know-how”, or State aids. Our mountain economies are threatened with extinction in a number of world regions.

In line with that, conservation policies (e.g.: Parks) are denounced as being:

1) factors of exclusion of the populations,

2) they are a phase towards the privatization of our territories (whose management will be given to private agencies).

The power of the multinationals is denounced everywhere. We are missing true public policies facing the current problems in our territories. The laws are not only badly adapted but also badly applied (corruption). State models are not appropriate (or they are no longer appropriate). More and more they become repression bodies and they deprive the minorities of their territories. We need Plurinational States who recognize indigenous peoples' specificities. Public management, together with the privatization of the natural resources, is no longer certain to ensure the equity and the justice.

We want to call the attention to the rising repression and criminalization (terrorist accusations, for example with the Tuareg people in Niger) of the individuals, of the communities and peoples who resist and claim their rights over their territories, as well as their right to choose their own development model. Mountain people make huge efforts to conserve their identities, their cultures, etc. We are struggling against the colonization of our minds.

Our mountains run the risk of stopping being living mountains. There are not living mountains without mountain people.

## **WORKSHOP 2: PROPOSED AND EXISTING ACTIONS IN DIFFERENT MOUNTAIN AREAS AROUND THE WORLD**

At present, all over the world's massifs there is a need for a new paradigm based on the Andean "good living" and the complementary relationship between Man and Nature. While reconsidering the relationship between Man and Nature, we can imagine and live other forms of democracy (community, participative, etc).

### ***Local organization and valorization of our know-how and our products***

We should go for projects enabling the products to be processed in our territories (good value added). The product is more expensive, but it contains a non-economic value: respect for the traditional lifestyles.

The territories need reasonable economic activities to develop and to enable the populations to obtain profits. We all agree with the advantage of privileging an economy based on short distribution channels, enabling the local production and the mountain products to be valorized.

For example, the model of small family or local cooperatives is a good option. But they have to federate to economically survive. They also have to look for markets where to sell the production in a profit-making way.

We hope that the know-how and the traditional local governance will be valorized and recognized throughout the world. The traditional governance has evolved to modernize itself. (e.g.: in Nepal, a participative process put in place has enabled us to be trained on know-how and on forms of political participation).

The traditional knowledge is transmitted towards education. This should be a priority option (in particular, the right to study in the mother tongue = Quechua and Aymara in the Andes, Amazigh in North Africa, etc.). Women and girls should have access to education, schools and jobs where they can put in practice their autonomy.

There is not misfortune. It is necessary to initiate a process of recovery of our mountains by making recognize the specificities of the people who live in mountains since millennia.

The mountain people's lifestyles are respectful with future generations and with the preservation of the territory. This knowledge and these values should be conserved. We are getting into the questions posed currently with regard to the lack of water, the famines, desertification, etc.

We repeat that there are no living mountains without human beings living in them, maintaining them and protecting them.

### ***Political innovations***

**In the Andes the people succeeded in rebuilding their unity, thanks to the will of rebuilding their territories; firstly, inside their ethnic groups and, secondly, beyond the borders of the countries (Colombia, Bolivia and Peru).**

We believe that the attempts of reappropriation of more democratic and green ways of

management of the natural resources implemented in Bolivia and Ecuador are an interesting option.

In Southern and Eastern Africa, mountain associations start to be recognized, to create movements and to collaborate.

There have been some successful experiences in some territories of the Himalayan countries. They have fought to save the forests and they have achieved it (India). These movements to defend our resources have allowed us to create political movements.

The declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations) is an important tool to fight in favour of the mountain communities, which are mainly indigenous people (e.g.: Amazigh World Congress).

Decentralization is also important, because it enables mountain peoples to manage the competences over their territories and to have a certain power in the political scene. We are best placed to manage the local situations and to find appropriated answers to the needs and problems. The civil society is an important alternative force to face the failure of the State policies and the pressures exerted by the economic markets.

It is necessary to promote or to preserve the local participative democracy, which is a traditional specificity of the mountain people. In the mountains, collective ownership and community management of the resources are very widespread and it is important to preserve and valorize them. Throughout the world, the mountain people claim the right to govern themselves.

# **WORKSHOP 3: HOW CAN SOLIDARITY BETWEEN MOUNTAIN PEOPLES BE STRENGTHENED THROUGH ORGANISATION?**

Mountains are biodiversity areas (fauna and flora) and they are a source of life and resources for the other regions. Mountains feed us, they provide of quality products which have to find their right place in local, national and international markets. Mountains are hostess: they welcome the foreigners (tourists). The tourism has to be respectful with the environment. They are also foster mothers: citizens who were not born in mountains become mountain dwellers by own choice.

From this data:

We have to think about the specificities of the mountain identity, emphasizing the demographic weight and the importance of the mountains in the global context (area and environmental richness).

Our diversity has to be taken into account, but also our mountain unity, to ensure that the mountain specificities and the right to be different are recognized.

The heritage is owned by the mountain dwellers. Natural resources must be protected.

We have to be organized to ensure that the rights of the people and the social associations are respected. The mountain people carry a message of brotherhood and solidarity, but it does not mean that they accept the impunity of the associations and the individuals who have imperils the preservation of the mountain.

We are also seeking recognition for the role of mountain producers, as well as for their capacity to innovate.

Our particular know-how (valorization of our products), as well as our deep knowledge about the territories (especially the farming systems of the small agriculture), have to be recognized.

The mountain peoples have to be actively involved and they have to be the decision-makers with regard to the future of their territories.

We have to militate in favour of fair policies of distribution of the natural resources and of the incomes.

## ***Actions and means***

### **1) A role of promotion of the natural resources**

- Implementing actions to conserve the life and the mountain people living in the mountains.
- Quality labels for quality products from the mountains. Supporting local organizations.
- The pride of being mountain people has to be restored. In particular, the youth population has to receive economic means to enable them to continue living in the mountains.

### **2) Political role**

Each one in his or her territory, but together: we have to lobby the States, because political measures recognizing the specificities of the mountains have to be taken.

One of the key targets is to guarantee that States enforce and/or reinforce the basic public services, the infrastructures (schools, roads, health centres, etc.), while respecting the mountain environment.

We have to insure a reactive presence within the big international instances deciding on the future of the mountain.

We must engage to ask the international community to create a right of the mountain people on the basis of the rights of the indigenous peoples.

### **3) Responsibility to spread the information and to communicate any problem concerning the mountain areas.**

It is our responsibility to make the conflicts, the local struggles, the positive actions and the difficulties faced by the world's mountains visible.

Another key target: the WMPA works have to be more widely spread.

Mountain people should keep in touch by means of the new communication technologies (organizing virtual meetings)/forums, website.

### **4) Financing**

According to some participants, we should have recourse to –or envisage– sponsoring or private aids provided that we conserve our freedom of action and speaking.

## **Role and structure of the WMPA**

### **STRUCTURE**

The linkages between national and regional WMPAs and the social associations should be strengthened. THE WMPA has to be a platform which brings together associations, institutions and individuals.

The WMPA has to keep an eye on the problems concerning the mountain areas by means of all local members.

We have to rethink and implement the idea of establishing regional centres which could be laboratories of ideas and action (to conserve the local know-how, to train people, to spread the information and the activity of the association).

### **Agenda and common programme in all massifs**

The participants asked: is the WMPA a link, a platform or a team? What is certain: the WMPA is a privileged internal communication network between mountain people.

They all agree that the WMPA members have to define a common programme and an agenda to be implemented at each regional level.

### **PROMOTING COOPERATION**

We have to create alliances with other movements working on the same areas.

We have to establish partnerships with the people of the other territories (plains, etc.).

We have to promote the regional and international cooperation with and between the local elected authorities of the mountains. Exchanging experiences.

## **FUNCTIONING**

A system of information and communication has to be implemented. The communication strategy of the WMPA has to be rethought and new Internet means have to be developed in order to bring together people from all massifs.

The WMPA has to have active members, support members and associate members (without the right to vote).

Some people think that the WMPA offices should not be in Paris, but in the mountains.

The more proactive people (researchers, NGOs) could be the international linkage between the Secretariat and the massifs.

The three governing bodies of the WMPA should continue existing, but they have to be flexible, so every regional WMPA can structure its bodies according to the local conditions.