

The International Land Coalition's Asia Regional Assembly marks the beginning of a new phase of action plan for just, equitable and inclusive land rights

On October 6th 2015, more than 80 representatives from the 40 Asia members of the International Land Coalition (ILC) and other land governance advocates gathered in Chiang Mai, Thailand, and developed a regional work plan in implementing the first phase of the ILC 6-year global strategy. This plan puts into action the collaborative implementation of the 10 commitments of ILC on land governance in the context of Asia which include secure land tenure for farmers and local communities, territorial land rights for indigenous peoples, equal land rights for women with 3 key strategies of connect, mobilize and influence. Mr. Mike Taylor, the Executive Director of the ILC global secretariat stated that collaboration will be key to the diversity across our network in achieving our goals as he encouraged the ILC members to work together.

Mr Iwan Nudin, from Consortium for Agrarian Reform/Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria (KPA), the regional host organisation for ILC-Asia secretariat explains; "As Asia is the centre of economic growth, investors are coming from all over the world. The problem is that the investors want to grab the land in the name of economic growth. They need the land for mining and infrastructure. But, we need to secure that land, regionally and nationally. We need to promote policy implementation at the grassroots level, so that we can truly achieve land rights (in Asia)."

Among the key achievements of this event is the unanimous endorsement by the ILC-Asia members of the "Global Call to Action on Indigenous and Community Land Rights" with the aim to double land tenure for Indigenous Peoples and local communities in 2030. Ms. Joan Carling, Secretary General of the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) which hosted the meeting said this Call to Action is urgently needed to mobilize the broadest support and solidarity for the struggles and aspiration of indigenous peoples and local communities from the global, regional to national levels to make positive changes on the ground in upholding the collective wellbeing of indigenous peoples who have been nurturing their lands and resources as integral to their diverse cultures and for the future generation. Participants joined in solidarity to demand for 'Land Rights Now! as part of the overarching vision of a 'just, equitable, and inclusive world in which land rights are secured and poverty is eradicated.'

Participants to the meeting also reiterated their interest in engaging further with existing frameworks, including the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT) and the newly adopted Global Development Agenda 20:30 on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), and the monitoring of potential threats to the coalition's mission such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the extractive industries. The undisputed theme of grounding the new ILC strategy at the local level and the facilitation of people-centred activities, with a persistent focus on gender equity, was reflected in the final strategizing and planning sessions.

The ILC Asia Regional Assembly and Knowledge Exchange proved to be a fruitful platform to further networks within the region, to catalyse stronger cooperation and share updates on the situation of land governance, from the national, regional and global levels. The participants included representatives of organisations, alliances and networks from South East, South and Central Asia working on land related issues such as land reform, sustainable agriculture, food security and sovereignty, women and land rights among others. Key international member-organizations of ILC, particularly the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Oxfam also actively participated in this meeting.

The three-day meeting culminated with inspiring community exchange visits to two indigenous/hill-tribe communities which are leading the way in the protection of lands and resources through sustainable resource management systems including the practice of shifting cultivation/ rotational agriculture as part of their culture and identity.

To endorse the Global Call to Action on Indigenous and Community Land Rights, or for more information, please go to <http://landrightsnow.tumblr.com/>.