

CIVIL SOCIETY STATEMENT

EIGHTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY (GB8) INTERNATIONAL SEED TREATY (IT PGRFA)

CSO opening statement to first plenary session

Neth Daño (ETC Group)

Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm from ETC Group and speaking on behalf of CSOs attending this session.

Fifteen years ago, we celebrated the birth of a legally binding treaty on the conservation, use and exchange of PGRFA, with MLS and Farmer's Rights as central components. Yet, much work still needs to be done to fulfill those obligations.

Benefit sharing has particularly lagged behind. The first and only compulsory benefit sharing payment was only made last year. Efforts to create a revised, transparent, and loophole-free mechanism have failed, demonstrating that the MLS is not working. The MLS needs to be revised and strengthened to ensure predictable, substantial, long-term payments. The rapid pace of technological development has imperiled the Treaty's relevance. DSI presents a major loophole in the MLS. Benefit sharing for DSI must be included in the SMTA in order for it to be successfully revised.

We remind Delegates of the significant steps taken by the UN General Assembly to adopt the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We expect the Treaty secretariat and Contracting Parties to link the realization of Farmer's Rights to these important Human Rights declarations.

Our urgent collective action is needed to realize the objectives of the Treaty - for the world's food and nutrition security, and for the conservation and sustainable use of the PGRFA on which it depends. The climate crisis, erosion of plant genetic resources and agricultural biodiversity, and the lack of institutionalization of farmers' rights, do not allow for any further delay in action. We do not have the luxury of another 15 years.