

Hofgeismar Agenda

V. International Colloquium. Traditional Peoples and communities „Traditionally Sustainable”

From the 23rd until 26th of June 2017 about 100 experts from sciences, non-governmental organizations of development cooperation as well as representatives from indigenous organizations, traditional peoples and communities from twelve different countries came together to discuss links and potentialities of traditional communities to strengthen sustainability in four continents. The colloquium decided the Hofgeismar Agenda, which formulates and expresses a basic understanding, challenges, tasks and future agreements. Following colloquiums will evaluate realization of the Hofgeismar agenda.

Heritage of humankind

Traditional peoples and communities are the most important guarantors of the world's diversity. They represent more than 90% of diversity in different dimensions as

- their social relationships
- their relationships with nature
- their languages
- their ethnics
- their religious and spiritual systems
- their knowledge about biodiversity
- their capacities on agriculture diversity
- and further aspects of diversity.

Traditional peoples and communities are the most important heritage of humankind.

Collective Identity and Tradition

All traditional peoples and communities have their own collective identity. This analytic category about society is not everywhere accepted as a fact. Tradition should not be confused with folklore or limited on history. Tradition in its meaning is much more a starting point for emancipated projects for the present. Tradition in this meaning has to adapt itself on external terms to maintain sustainability for every community. Traditional communities are leading towards a sustainable future with their way of living and their forms of economics. Therefore, the understanding that traditional peoples and communities are “not yet” fully integrated in modern society or “still” living in harmony with nature is wrong. This myth has to be overcome.

All traditional peoples and communities have to be aware about their collective identity.

Territory

The connection between territory and traditional peoples and communities is constituent. There are many symbolic and religious relationships connected to territory and its landscapes, waters, forests and further resources. Moreover the communities histories have partly inscribed themselves over centuries in the landscape. Territory cannot be reduced to a place of production or a tradable commodity.

Sustainable social subjects

Most of the traditional territories are marked by a high biodiversity and agro-diversity. Ways of living and economic acting of traditional peoples and communities are not only to a great extent social but also ecologically and economically sustainable. Based on these facts traditional communities can be described as sustainable social subjects on global and local levels. For that reason it's necessary to pay more attention on traditional people, communities and organizations in international debates about sustainability, climate and biodiversity.

Threats

All traditional communities are currently or potentially threatened.

Territorial conflicts

In many countries of the global south, territorial conflicts are a dominant feature. The worldwide paradigm of development is accelerating this tendency. The expansion of land and forestry monoculture, cattle ranching, mining, industry and large energy projects are essential causes for territorial conflicts. Territorial conflicts are intensified by nature reserves, which have been acknowledged in traditional territories.

In Europe different processes of ousting related to traditional groups and communities territories, for example in the peasants agriculture, is happening more subtle.

Civil rights

Humans do not have the same civil rights, de jure or de facto. Traditional peoples and communities are part of the groups which are affected by multiple discriminations and threats.

Specific legal status

Traditional peoples and communities need a special legal status of protection against major societies. Many national states do not guarantee this status. Currently there is a perceptible tendency to cut down and disband rights that have been implemented before. While the specific legal status for traditional peoples and communities actually need to be extended.

Food sovereignty

At least 1.5 billion people worldwide produce their own food and exchange seeds directly in their environment , including most traditional peoples and communities. Circa 65% of produced food is consumed in the same eco-region apart from the “world food system”. These economic activities are often invisible in official statistics. This invisibility is threatening the right for food sovereignty, territorial and other infringements not only for traditional people and communities.

Fundamental challenges

- Basic human rights for traditional peoples and communities must apply in all nations.
- The right for traditional territories should be established internationally and nationally.
- Rights for traditional peoples and communities should be established in the national legal systems; threats to vested rights must be prevented.
- The language diversity and other local traditions should be supported.
- Seeds should not be patented; traditional medicinal plants and alternative medicine must be protected and supported.
- Adaptions and strategies from traditional communities towards climate change must be supported.
- The political deputizing and representation of rural areas and traditional communities must be strengthened.
- The equality of living between urban and rural areas as equal conditions must be preserved.
- The social subjects of sustainability must be further acknowledged in the international debates about biodiversity, climate and sustainability.

Challenges

- Traditional communities should be visible in all countries.
- Traditional economies should be reasonably acknowledged.
- Traditional governance systems and their contribution to regional development should be acknowledged by the states.
- It is necessary to search for instruments to overcome internal conflicts and contradictions in traditional communities.

- It must be understood whether and how lively traditions can counteract youth migration from the communities.
- The debate about adequate community oriented educational systems must be enhanced.
- The debate about central terminology must be moved forward.
- International cooperation and networking must be strengthened.
- A worldwide mapping of all traditional peoples and communities is pursued.
- New instruments for communication and exchange must be found (internet platforms, multilingual newsletters, lasting working committees, exchange-programs).
- Projects in traditional communities ideally should come from communities; external projects must guarantee a crucial influence from the communities right from the beginning.
- Innovations that support traditional economic expert must be strengthened.

Tasks

- Currently, attacks against traditional peoples and communities rights must be repelled.
- The participants of the V. international colloquium agree on a mutual support to repel particular national threats.
- Scientists are called to accept traditional communities as an analytic category.
- Scientific work about traditional peoples and communities should be supported.
- The history of returning migrants back to their communities must be payed more attention.
- all social groups must be included in the preparation for the United Nation declaration on peasants rights, the terminology of territory and specific challenges for traditional communities should be found in the declaration.
- in Europe traditional communities and their potentials have to be visible; traditional forms of common land have to be supported.
- for regional visions West-African traditions have to be involved much stronger.
- the group of pastoralism should be involved much stronger in the debate about traditional peoples and communities.

Agreements

- The next colloquium should be taken place in Brazil.
- The structure of the colloquia which has proven to be effective shall be continued with the dimensions: 1. scientific exchange, 2. political articulation and 3. exchange between traditional peoples and communities.
- Further internationalization of the colloquia should continue.
- There will be a discussion about the establishment of an executive committee for the next colloquia.
- It should be taken into consideration to have national or regional colloquia between the international colloquia.
- The participating non-governmental organizations as KOBRA, Adivasi Coordination in Germany e.V. and Baobab e.V. will be looking for cooperation.
- Results of the colloquium will be published in book form. The German publication will be coordinated by the University of Kassel. Opportunities for publication in Portuguese and English have to be found.
- West-African participating non-governmental organizations and scientists are interested in organizing the next but one colloquium.