DECLARATION

Women human rights defenders (WHRDs) have a very strong connection with their lands and territories, which they describe as a source of life. In addition, the environmental damage generated by the extractive industry impacts women’s ability to provide food and clean water for their families and communities. Also with the loss of land and displacement, women’s workload to provide for their families increases, including the impact on women who are trafficked and victims of forced migration. Destructive and large-scale mining also impacts on their and their families’ health, and their livelihood.

For all these reasons, many women have taken leadership roles defending their lands and communities. They are building and strengthening their organizations and communities; creating spaces for the development of their capacities; leading protests and direct actions; asserting women’s voices in negotiation platforms, political and governance processes; and are building solidarity across communities and national borders to resist transgressions on their rights.

Assuming these new roles has increased their visibility, but has also put them at greater risk. WHRDs are exposed to violence from businesses, governments and repressive institutions, including patriarchal structures that perpetuate violence.

There are numerous cases of extrajudicial killings, and use of criminal and civil cases being brought against defenders by governments, companies and security forces based on vague definitions of crimes in the context of the leadership roles they take on in their communities resisting “development projects.” Criminalization, which is reinforced by gender-based discrimination and violence, is an attack against women defenders. It is often accompanied by smear campaigns that include defamation and rumours about WHRDs’ gender and sexuality that reinforces gender stereotypes and generates rejection and isolation from their families and communities. These campaigns can also undermine their leadership role in their organization and movements.

In addition, the increased use of the military, police, paramilitaries and private security agencies to counter opposition to “development” projects has had a severe impact on the lives and security of WHRDs. In particular, WHRDs are at high risk of sexual harassment and rape by security guards or military personnel.
around mining sites. Deception tactics are also being employed, such as the manipulative process of obtaining the free, prior and informed consent, to attempt to divide communities and derail their resistance to extractive industries. Impunity and lack of access to justice for these violations are a major challenge for WHRDs.

Our experience of repression and impunity as WHRDs are brought about by the complicit actions of States and corporations where policies and laws are created in favour of corporate interests over the rights of women and peoples. These happen despite the presence of international human rights laws, including the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Governments and trans-national corporations exacerbate the dire impacts of extractive industries on women and their communities through the plunder of their lands and resources, and multi-lateral and bilateral trade and investment agreements that infringe on women’s rights, the right to self-determination and sovereignty of peoples.

However, women are organizing and mobilizing their communities, and other sectors, to resist the onslaught of these extractive industries. They are challenging government policies through direct action, protest demonstrations, and all forms of resistance. They are also creating visions of genuine peoples’ development that is based on gender equality, environmental sustainability and social justice and working towards making these a reality.

**ACTION POINTS AND RESOLUTIONS**

**Campaigning**

We are organizing days of simultaneous global or regional actions focusing on WHRDs for land, territories, life and resources. This includes solidarity actions profiling women defenders and leaders and raising the visibility of the role that women defenders are playing.

The following are proposals for global actions: October 15 – International Rural Women’s Day, November 25 – December 10 (16 Days to End Violence Against Women), March 8 – International Women’s Day, April 22 – Earth Day, August 9 – International Indigenous People’s Day

**Strengthening Capacities**

a) Document stories of struggles of WHRDs and use these stories for the coordinated campaign
b) Organize leadership, skills, and media communications trainings, which can be organized back to back or within the next IPMC or in other international/regional events
Networking

a) Regional and international organisations to build bridges to ensure local participation of WHRDs
b) Work with media/journalists and parliamentarians for them to hear the testimonies of the communities
c) Create a global campaign mechanisms where women’s movements can strengthen solidarity with other social movements and generate support for campaigns of women’s movements
d) Strengthen our networking between women’s movements and with other social/people’s movements; with women lawyers, ecumenical women and organizations that document human rights violations.

International advocacy

a) Bring stories of WHRD struggles to the attention of the UN through the Special Rapporteurs, including SR on Violence against women and HRDs, through consultations, meetings and interface with them
b) Maximize international mechanisms and events to bring forth the women’s voices, such as in the United Nations negotiations on the international treaty/a legally binding instrument on TNCs; regional human rights mechanisms; special procedures and treaty bodies, and UN guiding principles on HR and business.
c) Strengthen women’s resistance to trade agreements that further violate the rights of WHRDs opposing the entry of extractive industries in their communities and countries (i.e. Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement, TTIP, World Trade Organization). Mobilise for the protests during the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting on November 2015 in Manila, Philippines.

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