

## **OPENING REMARKS TO THE CAUX DIALOGUE ON LAND AND SECURITY**

**Bianca Jagger**

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Good morning.

Thank you Martin for your kind words. It is a pleasure and a privilege to be speaking at the Caux Dialogue Conference on Land and Security – especially in this beautiful setting! Thank you for inviting me.

Thank you also to Professor Lal and Ian Johnson for their insightful presentations. It is inspiring to see so many of you gathered here –so much expertise and commitment assembled, to address the critical issue of land security.

Before addressing the subject of my speech I would like to tell you a little about myself. I was born in Nicaragua, and left with a scholarship to study political science in Paris. For over three decades, I have campaigned for human rights, social and economic justice and environmental protection throughout the world. I founded the Bianca Jagger Human Rights Foundation in 2006 to be a force for change, and a voice for the most vulnerable members of society. The BJHRF is dedicated to defending human rights, achieving social justice, speaking up for future generations and addressing the threat of climate change.

My work has taken me to many corners of the world. I have witnessed the human cost and environmental destruction that results from our current model of development and the irrational exploitation of our natural resources.

I firmly believe that we must move away from our obsession with profit and growth towards a new model of development, which incorporates respect for human rights, good governance, social and economic justice, environmental protection and respect for the rights of indigenous and tribal people.

Today the attention of the world is focusing on the unrest in Egypt and the conflict in Syria. Almost everyone is concerned about the security impact it will have in the Middle East and the world. But seldom land is seen as a security issue. Despite being the most critical issue of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

As Ghandi said, **'the earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed.'** We cannot continue to indiscriminately pillage the land as we have done since the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Our short term view, driven by profit and growths, is undermining our chances of survival, the survival of future generations, and of the survival of the planet. Governments and corporations cannot continue to systematically violate human rights in their quest for profit. People, and the environment, must be our priority, not a negligible appendix to large scale development plans. As the UNDP report, 'Defining and Measuring Human Development' states, **'People are the real wealth of a nation. The basic objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. This may appear to be a simple truth. But it is often forgotten in the immediate concern with the accumulation of commodities and financial wealth.'**

In the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) last estimate: 925 million people in the world are hungry. 1.29 billion live below the poverty line. We cannot continue to exploit the many for short term profit and the benefit of the few.

## **Climate Change and Land**

The most basic human rights, the rights to life, food, health and water to name a few - are directly connected to the land. Poverty, hunger, climate change, land security... they are all interconnected. Restoring and preserving the land is more than a socio-economic or environmental issue - it is critical to our survival.

We stand on the precipice of various global crises. The world is getting warmer, resources scarcer, energy prices higher. 2012 saw extreme weather events and droughts - in the US, drought conditions have worsened in 2013 - Utah, Nevada, California and Oregon are experiencing record breaking [heat waves](#). In May of this year the [concentration](#) of Co2 in the atmosphere reached 400 parts per million. These are signs of times to come - we have reached the stage of dangerous climate change - the catastrophic warming of the earth's atmosphere is upon us.

I don't need to tell you how drastic the consequences will be of even a few degrees rise in the global temperature. We have all seen the alarming figures. Climate change will affect everyone, everywhere, in every nation and from every socio-economic group, in the developing and developed world, in hundreds of ways.

In 1896 Svante Arrhenius, a Swedish scientist, had already observed that if CO2 levels continued to rise, global temperatures would also rise by around 4 degrees Celsius by the end of the 21st century.

Why has it taken us over a hundred years to come to the same conclusion?

Climate change is a threat to the security of nations. It is no coincidence that more than 75% of the world's conflicts occur in [dryland](#) areas - home to only 35% of the world's population. Climate change is stretching our already overstretched resources – water, energy, land - to the breaking point.

## **Hunger**

[The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization](#) (FAO) estimates that between 2010-2012 nearly 870 million people were starving. Land insecurity goes hand in hand with poverty and hunger. Almost all the hungry people, 852 million, live in developing countries.

All too often, poverty leads to the over use and over farming of land. Traditional indigenous cultures use natural resources sustainably: forests, grasslands, farms, fisheries, and wildlife, and preserve biodiversity. According to the International Society for Ethnobiology, "native peoples have been stewards of 99 percent of the world's genetic resources."

Indigenous people have been shown to be the best guardians of the land they live on – but farmers are forced to abandon traditional practices and knowledge in favour of high production and development. Homogenised large scale farming and development are decimating our ecosystems.

As with most of the global crises that are bearing down upon us, food and land scarcity will hit the poorest first, and hardest. This can only exacerbate the vast glaring global inequalities we already face.

## **Women**

Worldwide, women earn only 10% of the world's income and own only 1% of its property. 70% of the world's [poorest](#) are women. Woman farmers make up 43 per cent of the agricultural workforce in developing countries. The number is growing, as more men migrate to the cities leaving the farms in women's hands.

Women farmers encounter discrimination and lack access to seeds, equipment and resources which lowers productivity. In 2012 Michelle Bachelet, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women [stated](#) that empowering women farmers would end hunger for 150 million people worldwide. As Oliver de Schutter wrote in the [New York Times](#) earlier this year, 'Recognizing the burden that the feminization of global farming places on women requires us to overturn longstanding gender norms that have kept women down even as they feed more and more of the world.'

## **Moving forward**

What is clear is that we cannot go on as we are. Business as usual is not an option.

Land restoration will play a vital role in climate change mitigation and adaptation. We must support restoration initiatives that put communities at the centre and protect ecosystems. That is why, in May 2012, I became Ambassador to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Plant a Pledge campaign, to support the Bonn Challenge target, to restore 150 million hectares of degraded and deforested land by 2020. This is the largest restoration initiative the world has ever seen. In my keynote address tomorrow I will describe how, through this unprecedented restoration initiative, we can repair the damage not only to ecosystems but, crucially, to human lives. I hope to see you there.

The coming years will bring tough choices, if we are to keep up in the desperate race against climate change. We must revise our model of development and move away from a fossil fuel guzzling economy. We must change everything about the way we eat, shop, travel and do business – and we must fundamentally change the way we use and care for the land. At this critical juncture in history we will either stand or fall together.

Earlier Professor Lal mentioned Ghandi's 7 sins of humanity. Under the current model of development corporations, CEOs and governments commit the 4<sup>th</sup> sin all over the world: commerce, and business without morality. We must make morality the cornerstone of development.

Since its inception in 2006 the Bianca Jagger Human Rights Foundation has been advocating for the recognition of Crimes against Present and Future Generations and for the International Criminal Court (ICC) to extend its jurisdiction to hold corporations, CEOs and management accountable for the harm they cause to communities and individuals and for the irreparable

damage done to the environment. We urgently need legal mechanism to ensure that governments and corporations cannot ride roughshod over the human rights of the people.