



## Toward a Decolonized International Cooperation

### *Declaration by social movements, organizations, and academia of Latin America and the Caribbean:*

As signatories, both individuals and organizations, we are firmly convinced that International Cooperation plays a pivotal role in fostering the realization of human rights and advancing sustainable development. It is imperative that such cooperation acknowledges and addresses the historical legacies of colonialism in North-South relations. These legacies are characterized by extractivism, political subordination, violence, structural racism, and the marginalization of native / indigenous knowledge.

For many years, the management of International Cooperation has perpetuated power relations influenced by coloniality, especially through the control of resources and the imposition of agendas.

We are hopeful about the efforts that some NGOs in the Global North are making to address the structural problems of International Cooperation and identify sustainable proposals to overcome them. This signifies an awareness that North-South Cooperation is not a matter of «rich countries aiding poor countries» but a commitment to justice and reparations for a common history marked by unequal relations, where the North has enriched itself at the expense of extracting resources and knowledge from the South.

In this sense, we believe it is possible to decolonize International Cooperation and transform it into a space for repair and horizontal intercultural dialogue. For this to happen, it must at least:

1. **Definition of agendas and priorities:** Who has the power to define the problems and solutions in the field of International Cooperation? Historically, this has translated into the imposition of models and policies decided far from where they are implemented, without giving sufficient weight to local knowledge and their aspirations for systemic change. These knowledge and aspirations should be the basis for the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of agendas and priorities.
2. **Resource management:** It is necessary to redistribute resources more equitably and grant greater participation to organizations from the Global South in their use and management.
3. **Models of International Cooperation management:** Changing eligibility criteria and technical procedures that increasingly hinder access to cooperation for movements and organizations without intermediaries, perpetuating dependence and inequality.
4. **Long-term transformation processes:** Processes for the effectiveness of human rights, including strategic litigation leading to landmark judgments or political advocacy for the change of norms and public policies, can involve years of continuous efforts. There must be a sincere commitment from International Cooperation to long-term processes and not cease supporting processes of structural change for considering them «political matters.»
5. **Protecting our lives:** Changes generate risks, such as the persecution of social leaders, indigenous authorities, and rights defenders. International Cooperation cannot be oblivious to this reality; it must prioritize the protection of our lives.
6. **Native / Indigenous knowledge:** Too often, the knowledge and experience accumulated by social organizations and communities over generations are overlooked in favor of external and universalistic approaches. Recognizing and valuing this knowledge is essential to achieve truly inclusive and sustainable development.

We call for continued and expanded reflection and collective action to decolonize International Cooperation with genuine and effective commitments from all involved parties.

This is an ethical and political imperative. Therefore, it is necessary to expand spaces for dialogue and collaboration where diverse perspectives are heard and respected, and work together to build a fair and equitable system of International Cooperation.

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