



How big corporations and Bill Gates took over the UN food Summit

This transcript may not be 100% accurate due to audio quality or other factors.

Camila Escalante: On September 23rd, the United Nations will hold a Food Systems Summit in New York. Under the guise of the UN system and despite sleight-of-hand language about "equal opportunities", this summit represents a hostile takeover of world governance by corporate forces and the billionaire elite. Today, social movements are standing up for democracy and against big capital's devastation of our lands, farms and communities. This is Camila Escalante reporting for Via Campesina, North America.

CE: The United Nations is based on the idea of multilateralism, where states seek peaceful solutions on the basis of equality and respect replacing the colonialist institutions that preceded it. That's why for decades, the United States government has pushed for things like G-7 and NATO forms of control over geopolitics. As far-right governments have pulled back from multilateral institutions like the UN and the WHO corporate actors have been moving in. The World Economic Forum and its president, Klaus Schwab, have silently pushed forward the "Davos Agenda", now re-packaged as the "Great Reset", a vast proposal replacing traditional multilateral institutions with secretive, unaccountable bodies run by corporations and the wealthy elite. The "multi-stakeholder capitalism" model is based on the idea that public institutions are by nature, inefficient. During the neoliberal shock therapy of the 1990s the World Economic Forum pushed the idea that corporations are more than just profit-seeking vehicles that they could be socially responsible. Now Davos would argue that transnational corporations are social actors, which needed to be included to make-decision making truly democratic.

Demonstrators: [Singing]

CE: La Via Campesina is possibly the world's largest social movement. Made up of 200 million small farmers, peasants, farm workers and indigenous peoples, it has popularised the idea of food sovereignty as the right of peoples to control and defend their own food systems using healthy, agroecological methods. After years battling against free trade agreements in the World Bank, in the streets of Seattle, Cancun and Seoul, La Via Campesina made an incursion into institutional politics, helping to draft and carry the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants through 18 of negotiations until it was passed by the UN General Assembly in December 2018.

UN Assembly Speaker: The Assembly is now voting on Draft Resolution three entitled United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other People Working in Rural Areas.

UN Assembly Speaker 2: The result of the vote is as follows: Draft Resolution three is therefore adopted.

CE: This declaration protects the right of rural people to access land, water, seeds and other resources in order to produce their own food and that of their society. Worldwide, 70 percent of food is produced by small farmers who use only one quarter of total farmland. Meanwhile, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation created the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, or AGRA, in 2006. AGRA promised to double yields and incomes for 30 million families while cutting food insecurity by half in 13 African countries by 2020. Over the ensuing decade, AGRA collected nearly one billion in donations and spent nearly 524 million on programmes promoting the use of genetically modified and hybrid seeds, commercial fossil fuel-based fertilisers and chemical pesticides. As a formidable corporate lobby AGRA pushed governments in Africa into contributing another billion dollars annually to subsidise agrichemicals and imported seeds sourced from U.S. and European agribusiness corporations, as well as policies to privatise communal lands and reduce taxes on corporations.

AGEF 2016 Speaker: The Rockefeller Foundation is announcing today the commitment of another 180 million dollars.

CE: After 14 years of megaphilanthropy's knee on the neck of Africa a 2020 Tufts University report showed that in AGRA's 13 focus countries hunger had jumped 30 percent as farmers were pushed to abandon nutritious, traditional polycultures to focus on monoculture fields of imported corn seed.

CE: Opposition to AGRA's corporate takeover of the African countryside is part of what drove La Via Campesina and farmers across the continent to demand a place at the table in UN debates about food. After the world food crisis in 2008 the UN Committee on World Food Security was reorganised to allow social actors such as La Via Campesina to participate as non-voting delegates in debates about food policy. Three consecutive UN Special Rapporteurs on the Right to Food have largely endorsed La Via Campesina's proposals, redistributive land reform and agro ecological farming can end hunger while dramatically reducing agriculture's contribution to problems like greenhouse gas accumulation in the atmosphere, pollinator population decline and freshwater scarcity.

Davos Speaker: Secretary General the floor is yours, and welcome to Davos.

António Guterres: Thank you very much. It needs to be a multilateralism in which not only states are part of the system, but we need to make sure that we bring together into this multilateral system the voice and the influence of the business community. Thank you very much.

CE: In June of 2019, the office of the UN General Secretary without previous discussion in the general assembly or in any other intergovernmental process signed a strategic partnership with the World Economic Forum. The Secretary General is supposed to be the world's leading advocate for multilateralism, the idea at the core of the UN. Instead, he has effectively endorsed multistakeholderism, the core idea of the Great Reset.

Klaus Schwab: In short, we need a Great Reset.

António Guterres: Your Royal Highness, Professor Schwab, I send you my warmest greetings and best wishes on the launch of the Great Reset.

CE: The upcoming UN Food Systems Summit was initiated through a partnership with the World Economic Forum with limited participation of other UN bodies, such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation or the Committee on World Food Security that traditionally handle food policies. In contrast to previous food summits there was no intergovernmental body that convened the summit. The current president of AGRA, Agnes Kalibata, was named as Special Envoy to the Summit, a clear sign of the hand of the Gates Foundation. The lack of transparency and corporate agenda of the summit were denounced in an open letter signed by over 500 civil society organisations in March of 2020.

His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales: To salute the leadership shown by the United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres and his special envoy, Agnes Kalibata. Who have so brilliantly mobilised the world in the run-up to this first of its kind summit. The aim is to join the dots between the investors and genuinely investable projects, and I see the food production sector as offering a range of incredible investment opportunities.

CE: The Summit will try to erase the last 15 years of progress in recognising human rights in food systems and instead promote false solutions like "zero- net emissions", "soil carbon pricing" and "a new deal for nature" that in practise put more control over land, biosecurity and water in the hands of elite and secretive bodies run by corporations.

Micherline Aduel: We believe in food sovereignty, we believe in the agroecological method and in the family farming method and in peasant farming...

Geneviève Lalumière: ...We will not let big business, those who created the environmental crisis...

Tamara Harris: ...co-opt our language or right our future...

Kathia Ramírez: ...Farm workers, migrant workers and small-scale agro ecological farmers...

Tamara Harris: ...farm workers, migrant workers and small-scale agro ecological farmers feed our people and build the movement to change the world.

Saira Rivera: The campesino movement is coming together across the world against corporate takeover promoted by agribusiness.

END