

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Fellow Producers,
Delegates,
Governing Body Members,
Cooperatives,
Buyers,
Operational Technical Team,
Símbolo de Pequeños Productores, SPP Global

Dear all,

Welcome to the **XIII General Assembly of SPP Global being held in Guatemala City, Central America. Thank you very much for being here.**

As you already know, today we will be renewing SPP's governing bodies. So, in this regard, I would like to respectfully say a few words, as someone who has been part of this journey that started more than 18 years ago in search of a commercial system that recognizes, prioritizes and values small female and male producers' work and efforts.

I ought to mention, point out, reflect and consider that:

- The Governing Bodies who served the 2021 – 2024 term were confronted with a series of events that hindered the implementation and accomplishment of action plans, initiatives and ideas aimed at making progress to achieve SPP's objectives.
- Despite all those various unfortunate circumstances, that lead many colleagues to feel emotionally worn-out and discouraged, we're leaving our respective positions fully aware and convinced that we did the right thing: we always put small female and male producers and their long-term wellbeing first and we stood up for them, because they entrusted us to represent them and to be their voice.
- Likewise, it should be noted that our actions were always positive, transparent, objective and in compliance with the SPP Global statutes, regulations and institutional framework that govern us all and in line with the genuine interests of all SPP Global member small producers' organizations from all different regions and continents. Governing body members who stayed in office, and Felipe Gurdian (who resigned at a later point), always respected the role and responsibilities we assumed when sworn into office.
- Modern day global, environment, social and economic circumstances and changes, as well as ever-increasing phenomena such as voracious capitalism, neocolonialist manifestations and the negative effects of depersonalizing technology make us realize that we, SPP Global as a whole, still have a huge and important task to accomplish. It is clear that the struggle for true Fair Trade is a never-ending battle, that today more than ever this struggle makes more sense, that we must rethink new ways of moving forward and that the ideals and principles that gave rise to the Fair Trade movement must be restored.
- It is important that we remember, promptly value and keep in mind the principles that have given rise to our pivotal struggle for a fairer trading system. Do not forget that part of those principles and reasons that gave rise to SPP have to do with seeking and guaranteeing not only better prices, but also a greater recognition for small female and male producers' efforts, but above all to have a label belonging to and

aimed at small female and male producers, a label that would allow them to feel identified ensuring they're the only owners, without allowing interference and external impositions willing to hijack producers' voice and decisions. Let's recall the context that existed in the 2000s: the situation was leading to the fair trade system getting weaker. Back then, players controlling the market would only want to impose their will and would silence fair trade voices by using all sorts of mechanisms to game decision-making in their favor; not only would such players dictate what to do, but producers were deprived of autonomy as well, which led to strong competition with private plantations and unorganized producers. Keep in mind that the latter is one issue that SPP's main goal aims to tackle: SPP wants to be told apart from other market actors: we want people to be able to tell the difference between small producers and large farms (often monopolists and big landlords), as well as the difference between companies who are really committed and opportunistic companies, disguised as fair alternatives.

- I invite you all not forget about SPP's essence; to continue privileging consensus; to always attach greater importance to small producers' voice, well-being and autonomy; not to fall prey to individual and material interests that lead to division instead of collective work and unity; to prevent capitalism, neocolonialism and bad corporate/political practices from causing our values to fade away; because those values make us human: respect, dignity, honesty, transparency and above all human dignity.
- Take into account and do not neglect new generations' participation, stimulate generational renewal, women participation and develop new leaders. We need leaders who can take fair trade back on track, who never forget our historical process, the value of community and how hard it has been to build spaces, labels and processes that go beyond financial gain, but have mostly sought better overall living conditions for those who have lived with disadvantage and without equal access to development opportunities. Pass on our values and instill the pride of being a cooperative member and small producer, because being one is no reason to feel belittled, but it is something that makes us stronger: unity IS strength.
- ***I urge you all to work together for the greater good***, let our hearts, our ideas and our efforts unite, let's walk tall and raise our voices to act as one for the construction of a different world where historic domination patterns, vertical relations and paternalism do not exist anymore. Let's build a world where greater equity, justice and dignity prevail.
- Last but not least, I'd like to acknowledge and thank all my fellow governing body members for your participation, commitment, sensitivity, reliability and efforts: we made it, we survived all setbacks! A big shout-out to all of you: Mr. René Ausecha from EXPOCOSURCA in Colombia, Mr. Joey Pittoello from JUST US! COFFEE in Canada; Surveillance Committee members, Ms. Yuridia Pillimúé from FONDO PAEZ in Colombia, Ms. Ana Pisoni from CAFÉ MAM in the United States, Mr. Felipe Gurdian from Cooperative Coffees in Canada; as well as SPP Global's Standards and Procedures Committee members, Ms. Silvia Herrera from Unión de Ejidos San Fernando (UESF) in Mexico and Mr. Luis Ruíz Díaz from MADUVIRA in Paraguay.
- I'd also like to recognize all the hard work the operational technical team does to keep SPP Global's operations going despite all adversities, thank you for your reliability, commitment, sensitivity and loyalty small producers' interests, Hats off to team members: Ms. Kandyam Enciso, Ms. María Hernández, Ms. Ornella Specia, Ms. Ximena Ramos, Mr. Julio Gallegos and Jerónimo Pruijn, our Executive Director.
- I CALL ON EVERYONE TO KEEP A POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE, REMAIN POLITE AND BE A TEAM PLAYER THROUGHOUT THIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, SO THAT WE MAKE DECISIONS BY CONSENSUS TO COME UP WITH THE BEST AGREEMENTS AND GUIDELINES THAT ALLOW CREATING AN OPTIMAL STARTING POINT FOR THOSE WHO TAKE OVER FROM HERE. BE RESPECTFUL, EMPATHETIC AND



Welcome Speech – General Assembly

CD Chair, Fernando Rodriguez Lopez

2024-09-11

COLLABORATIVE, TO MAKE SURE THAT SOLUTIONS AND CHANGES TO BE IMPLEMENTED DO NOT PUSH PRODUCERS ASIDE.

Thank you all for being part of the XIII General Assembly of SPP Global!

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José Fernando Rodríguez López

Chair of the Board of Directors

SPP Global

Wednesday, September 11, 2024.

Guatemala City, Central America.