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**“There is not one developed world
and one underdeveloped world
just one maldeveloped world”**

EDITORIAL

In his recent report on ways forward to a transformation of today's highly problematic dominant industrial food systems, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food also tackles the subject of the impact of foreign debt on States' capacity to honor their commitments in this area. He underlines the harmful effects of sovereign debt and its concomitant budget policies on the capacity of States to guarantee the basic right to adequate food. And he shows how the current structure of international financing, coupled with economic power concentrated in the hands of transnational corporations, thwarts governments' efforts to set up resilient, fair and sustainable food systems.

This is, of course, a crucial point when one acknowledges that, contrary to conventional wisdom, financial flows from the Global South to the Global North are not only skewed in favour of the latter but gigantically so. According to the World Bank, “developing” countries paid out US\$ 1,400 billion in 2023 in “service” on foreign debt (interest), whereas public aid to development from the OCDE members was only US\$ 212.1 billion in 2024, also according to the World Bank. With the 2025 budget cuts decreed by the United States in this area, followed by those of several European countries, public aid will be halved.

In this context, it is imperative to thoroughly refashion the international financial architecture, including carrying out a total remake of the unjust foreign trade and investment rules. To do this, States must take back the political decision-making on development matters that they yielded to private capital several decades ago, with the catastrophic consequences we are now living with. This is the *sine qua non* if States are to assert their right to the self-determination of their peoples and to their sovereignty, with the resulting reigning in of power of transnational corporations. As well, they must invest in public services in order to respect their commitments in the area of human rights, especially economic, social and cultural rights of peasants. It goes without saying that international solidarity in this framework must be emphasised, for it is essential. In this regard, one can assert, along with the Special Rapporteur, that international cooperation “should be extended as a means of reinforcing international solidarity and food sovereignty”.

This present issue is devoted to the various aspects of peasants' rights: current struggles supported by CETIM (in the Philippines, Morocco, etc.), activities at the UN and training for partner organisations.

THE FAILURE OF INDUSTRIAL FOOD SYSTEMS: HOW CAN THEY BE CHANGED TO UPHOLD THE RIGHT TO FOOD?

In his report submitted to the 58th session of the Human Rights Council (24 February - 4 April 2025)¹, Mr. Michael Fakhri, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, suggested ways to transform the industrial food systems that have become harmful.



In his report, the Special Rapporteur highlights the effects of sovereign debt on fiscal policies and unequal economic systems that affect the ability of States to guarantee the right to food. It demonstrates how the current structure of international financing, coupled with the concentration of economic power in the hands of some multinational agri-food companies, impedes governments' efforts to establish resilient, equitable, and sustainable food systems. He also criticised the World Bank's "national budget reallocation" initiative, which aims to exclude any government-led initiatives (research, rural infrastructure) in this sector.

According to his analysis, despite food production that is largely sufficient to feed the world's population, "1 in 11 people face hunger today, while one third of the global food production is lost or wasted" (§ 23). This is not due to a shortage of resources, but to economic and political choices that maintain an uneven distribution of wealth and impede equitable access to food. The Special Rapporteur emphasises that hunger is a violation of human rights and often results from inadequate policies that favour financial interests at the expense of the people.

The Special Rapporteur illustrates how, in times of economic crisis, governments must choose between fulfilling their financial obligations and ensuring access to food for their people.

In many cases, these trade-offs result in budget cuts in food subsidies, weakening social safety nets, and privatising farmland to generate additional revenue. But these policies heighten inequality and put vulnerable populations at increased risk of food insecurity.

The Special Rapporteur is denouncing the adverse effects of industrial agricultural systems based on the intensive exploitation of natural resources, the massive use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers, and large-scale monoculture. While this model has increased production in the short term, it contributes to land degradation, deforestation, and the depletion of water resources. Moreover, it makes food systems vulnerable to climate change, making crops more vulnerable to droughts, floods, and natural disasters. In summary, he points out that: "industrial food systems have been designed and developed to generate profits at the expense of human and environmental health." (§ 25)

As "a guide to how countries can develop national plans" (§ 8), the report contains a series of recommendations aimed at transforming industrial food systems and ensuring equitable and sustainable financing of the right to food: "(a) from industrial agriculture to agroecology; (b) from giving priority to global markets to supporting territorial markets; (c) from a reliance on corporations to more support for social and solidarity economy entities; (d) from a multilateralism based on a multi-stakeholderism to one based on solidarity and food sovereignty."

To ensure that the right to food is respected, States must avoid, amongst other things, "large-scale expropriation of agricultural land for industrial development" and "regulate the power of businesses and individuals so that these third parties do not violate or threaten the right to food." (§ 89) They must also create conditions that enable everyone to produce food, by ensuring "access to land, water, seeds, and other resources, including access to credit, insurance, and technical knowledge." (§ 89).

¹ See A/HRC/58/48, 2 January 2025.

CETIM STATEMENT

During the plenary of the 58th session of the Human Rights Council, CETIM intervened to encourage the Forum to promote a rapid change of course. We proposed, on the basis of food sovereignty, to establish a social and solidarity economy capable of removing fundamental and structural obstacles to the right to food.

In this sense, the CETIM recommends intensifying the initiative promoted by the member organisations of Via Campesina in Switzerland and France, Uniterre and the peasant Confederation, in favour of the creation of a social food insurance, which would enable the whole population to have access to a healthy and local diet, irrespective of their financial means.

PROTECTING SUBSISTENCE FISHING COMMUNITIES IS PROTECTING OUR OCEANS

A large civil-society movement has emerged relating to the protection of our oceans, and there are many initiatives underway to regulate predation by major powers. The result of a long-term commitment, this issue has finally reached the Human Rights Council.

In her report to the 58th session of the Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur on the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, Ms. Astrid Puentes Riaño², painted an uncompromising picture: 492 million people, wholly or partly dependent on artisanal fisheries, are seeing their fundamental rights threatened by the ecological crisis and unfair economic and trade policies.

The report emphasises that coastal populations, indigenous peoples, subsistence fishers and marginalised communities disproportionately suffer from the adverse effects of ocean degradation. Women, who make up almost half of the workforce in the fisheries sector, are particularly vulnerable, because they are often excluded from decision-making processes and do not benefit from the recognition of their traditional rights. Subsistence fishers, whose ancestral knowledge and practices contribute to the preservation of biodiversity, face the expansion of industrial fishing, which monopolises resources and erodes marine ecosystems.

In response to these challenges, the Special Rapporteur urges States to adopt an ecosystem and human rights-based approach to ocean management, and to prevent, control and reduce damage to the marine environment by strengthening environmental regulation and applying the precautionary principle.

She also recommends ensuring access to information, public participation and access to justice for communities affected by marine activities. She emphasises the need to restore marine ecosystems, such as coral reefs, mangroves and seagrass, and to protect habitats that are vulnerable to industrial activities. She also calls on States to strengthen the rights of subsistence fishers, to end overfishing and to eliminate subsidies that favour unsustainable industrial fishing.

It should be recalled that, like the rights of peasants and other land workers, the rights of subsistence fishers are protected by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (art. 1). If used wisely by rights holders, the Declaration will help to advance the implementation of the right to food and the protection of the rights of people who depend on artisanal fisheries.



² See. A/HRC/58/59, 31 december 2024.

PEASANTS AND THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN DECISION-MAKING

The 3rd session of the Working Group on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas was held at the United Nations Office in Geneva from 24 to 28 February 2025.

This session of the Working Group comprised mainly meetings of Member States and United Nations bodies to discuss the promotion of the rights of peasants throughout the world, and in particular their right to participate in decision-making. Civil society was able to talk and interact constructively with the five independent experts of the Working Group, all of whom demonstrated a keen interest and a strong willingness to work together with rural and peasants' organisations, as well as with their allies.

French and Swiss members of La Via Campesina (LVC)

presented an overview of the current problems affecting peasants in their countries. In Switzerland, Uniterre's representative pointed out that roughly 80% of retail sales are controlled by only two major corporations. Thus, these two giants can often dictate the price paid for farm products and determine working conditions in agriculture generally, which highlights the great imbalance in the power relations that pervade the Swiss food system.

If the peasants' right to participate in decision-making is to be respected, they must have a say in price negotiation processes, which is currently not the case. Furthermore, in the Swiss context, it was

pointed out that small peasants' organisations noted for their progressive views on agriculture and food systems have been excluded from the group set up by the Swiss government to define the country's agricultural policy, officially owing to a "lack of space".

The CETIM recommended that the Working Group take into consideration and study States like Cuba and Nepal, as concrete examples of good practices

in national policies and laws implementing the rights of peasants enshrined in the Declaration. It also called on the Working Group to promote the

Declaration's rights holders' right to participate in decision-making within all relevant bodies, instances and mechanisms, whether at the national or the international level. Without the genuine participation of peasants in decision-making processes, it will simply not be possible to implement the rights contained in the Declaration in a coherent, inclusive and targeted manner.

As part of these discussions on the right to participate, the CETIM collaborated with LVC and its partners to draw up contributions on the issues surrounding this right in Switzerland, Brazil and in the rest of the world.

In Switzerland, roughly 80% of retail sales are controlled by only two major corporations



TRAINING BRAZILIAN PEASANTS' ORGANISATIONS IN THE DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF PEASANTS

Since the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP), the CETIM – in collaboration with La Via Campesina in particular – has been running training courses for peasant organisation executives.

The goal of this training is not only to familiarise rights-holders with the UNDROP, but also to facilitate and encourage the appropriation by peasants and other rural populations of this Declaration in their political and legal struggles at the local, the national, the regional and the international levels. The aim is also to draw up a strategic plan for lobbying various governmental, judicial and political bodies, in order to achieve the concrete implementation of the Declaration with the active participation of the peasants and other rural populations concerned.

Brazil: building UNDROP capacity, a fundamental political and legal lever

In January and in March 2025, the CETIM organised UNDROP training for the LVC-Brazil organisation's members, with the support of the human rights organisation "Terra de Direitos" (Land of Rights). It was the first UNDROP coaching for social movements and popular rural organisations in Brazil. This is a practical example of the implementation of the LVC/CETIM strategy of organising training sessions on the Declaration for its members in different countries.

During this first session in Brazil, participants from all 10 social movements that make up LVC-Brazil studied the history of the UNDROP process and the content of the Declaration, emphasising peasants' rights to land, biodiversity, seeds and food sovereignty. Following that, they discussed case studies on rights' violations of the UNDROP that occurred nationally. Taking advantage of the political capital of the social movements present, promotion of the implementation of the UNDROP from the grassroots is crucial in the long and difficult work for social justice, access to land and food sovereignty in rural

areas in Brazil. In this sense, the strategic plan drawn up collectively during the training helped clarify the way forward for promoting and implementing the UNDROP and for translating its provisions into legal and public policy.

The various initiatives to be implemented also include advocacy at the United Nations, in particular with its Working Group on the Rights of Peasants, set up in 2023.

By participating in the Working Group's debates and collaborating with its work, peasants' organisations around the world can use this United Nations mechanism to advance the implementation of the UNDROP in their respective countries. After all, one of the functions of the Working Group is precisely to recommend, support and accompany United Nations Member States in the implementation of the Declaration, so that it can be a practical instrument in the development of public policies, programs and laws that actually correct inequalities in the countryside.



THE RIGHT TO STRIKE: AGRICULTURAL WORKERS EXCLUDED

On 5 February 2025, the Moroccan Parliament adopted Law 97.15 regulating the exercise of the right to strike. Rather than a simple law, it constitutes a form of discrimination towards workers in the informal sector, especially in rural areas. Between the legal procedures imposed on the call to strike and the waiting period, non-compliance with which is considered illegal, this legislation is an infringement on workers' rights in this country.

This law has been rejected by all major trade unions, such as the *Union Marocaine du Travail* (UMT), *Confédération Démocratique du Travail* (CDT) and the *Fédération Nationale du Secteur Agricole* (FNSA), which have referred to it as 'strike prohibition legislation'. It should be borne in mind that the right to strike is a fundamental right recognised not only in international law but also in Moroccan national legislation. This right has been enshrined in the Moroccan constitution since 1962 and was reaffirmed in Article 29 of the 2011 Constitution.

Even more disturbing, this law does not take into account in a pragmatic manner the reality of the different Moroccan professionals' sectors. In Morocco, more than 80% of rural workers are employed informally, without work contracts or social protection. The agricultural minimum wage is 30% lower than that of the industrial sector, which reinforces inequality between rural workers and workers of other sectors.

The principle of fair regulation should instead have led the Moroccan legislature to abolish this situation of inequality and allow these people, whose working conditions are already unfavourable, to assert their rights.

The law imposes strict conditions for calling a strike: a representative trade union (although 75% of agricultural workers are not union members) or a strike

committee must obtain a favourable vote of 25% of paid workers, and then a ratification by 35% in a general assembly. It also requires complex administrative procedures, rendering this right inaccessible to most unorganised workers.



Yet, the right to strike is vital to obtain just working conditions. This law impedes wild-cat strikes and imposes complex procedures that prevent the majority of the

rural working population from defending their rights.

Such legislation establishes a disadvantageous regime that runs counter to the principles and provisions relating to the protection of fundamental rights, in particular economic, social and cultural rights, workers' rights and the rights of peasants and people working in rural areas. The CETIM, in support of the FNSA (Moroccan member of La Via Campesina), has submitted a complaint to the United Nations Human Rights protection mechanisms, demanding the repeal of law 97.15.

A social dialogue with trade unions and agricultural workers must be initiated to develop a framework that respects rights and protects workers in this sector. International standards such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the ILO Conventions and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants, to which Morocco is a signatory, must be incorporated into the country's legislation.



LAND STRUGGLE IN THE PHILIPPINES

On April 17, the International Day of Peasant Struggles highlighted an essential battle on the international scene: peasants and rural communities fighting for their lands and rights.

Land grabbing is spreading like wildfire, spurred on by profit-driven agribusiness, transnationals corporations' extractivism and large-scale "development" projects. These dynamics are detrimental to peasants, resulting in deforestation and commodification of natural resources, as well as the transformation of agricultural lands into commercial and industrial zones. Facing this threat, peasants' resistance is often brutally repressed: bullying, surveillance, false accusations of being "enemies of the state" or against "progress", imprisonment under unfounded accusations, even disappearances. Those who destroy the lands are protected, while its protectors are criminalised. Despite this hostile context, peasants continue to defend their right to land and to a decent life.

In the Philippines, an emblematic case supported by the CETIM and its partners illustrates this struggle: since 2009, peasants of the Bataan region, organised under the movement SANAMBASU, are fighting land grabbing by two companies: Litton & Co. and Riverforest Development Corporation. These companies, looking to industrialise agricultural zones, have intensified the repression: criminalisation of peasants who mobilise for the defence of their rights and eviction proceedings to remove them from their homes and farmlands.

On September 16, 2024, following the submission of a complaint by the CETIM and its partners, several United Nations Special Rapporteurs addressed a joint statement to the companies involved and to the Philippine government, expressing serious concerns over arbitrary arrests, forced evictions, housing demolitions and the criminalisation of civil society's struggles.

Riverforest Development Corporation denied these accusations, stating that the land was not suitable for farming and accusing peasants of abusing the agricultural reform program. The Philippine government falsely stated that peasants' accusations of consolidated group fraud ("estafa sindical")³ had been withdrawn, despite their litigation being still under way. On a positive note, in January 2025, following the complaint and pressure exerted at the national and the international level, the imprisoned farmers were released.

The SANAMBASU movement, with the support of numerous organisations and civil society movements, including the CETIM, continues its fight to obtain :

- the implementation of agrarian reform and the redistribution of land to those who cultivate it;
- the protection of ancestral domains and native territories;
- an end to land grabbing, militarisation of the region and private companies' expansionist and aggressive policies;
- repeal of laws and policies that promote private interests over those of communities;
- justice for the victims of arbitrary arrests and harassment linked to the struggle for land;
- an end to the criminalisation of leaders and defenders of peasants' rights;
- the recognition and protection of peasants' rights, as enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas;
- the realisation of food sovereignty.

³This is defined in Presidential Decree no. 1689 and involves a group of five or more individuals forming a syndicate to defraud the public, usually with the intention of embezzling funds or property on a large scale, which is punishable by life imprisonment.

READING NOTE



Déni d'humanité, de Claude Calame Editions du Croquant, 2024 – in French

The subtitle of this sixty-page pamphlet is “The European rejection of people driven into exile”. In it the author, the academic director of the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales* (School of Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences) in Paris, denounces the EU policy (although it is also applicable to Switzerland) in relation to people forced into exile, which results in a denial of humanity or even a crime against humanity. Since the beginning of the 2000's, there have been no less than 50,000 to 60,000 migrants who have lost their lives trying to cross the Mediterranean to seek refuge in Europe. The author highlights the deadly policing role of the European Frontex Agency, the main aim of which is to stop all “illegal” immigration, at the expense of being complicit in violent expulsions (known as pushbacks) of exiled people. The EU policy (again Switzerland is not exempt) laid down in the European Pact on Migration

and Asylum, is characterised by the increase in mechanisms for the detention, sorting and expulsion of migrants at European borders. The author also opportunely recalls that forced migration is a consequence of war but also of economic, social and environmental inequality caused by the process of financial and economic globalisation. Given this situation, the author calls for a twofold response, one that is both humanitarian and political.

PUBLICATION

N°5 of Lendemain Solidaires is out!

War as a geopolitical tool of domination – in French

The growing militarisation of societies, the intensification of conflicts, the dizzying increase in arms spending at the expense of public services, the rise of reactionary and even fascist political movements... the Pandora's box has been opened. Against this backdrop, doesn't the arms race violate international norms enshrining peace and disarmament? Why is the multilateral system represented by the UN under attack, or ignored, by the powerful? What can peace movements do, when they are often repressed and criminalised by the war-mongering powers that be? N°5 sets out to answer these questions from different points of view, highlighted by vibrant original illustrations by the talented artists of Utopix.



Read now on the website (in French) : lendemainssolidaires.org

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Many thanks in advance and we wish you a great summer !

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