



**GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**
21st session, Septembre 2012
Item 3 : General debate

Peasants' rights: the urgency of closing gaps in protection

Oral Statement

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am reading this statement on behalf of CETIM, FIAN International, le Mouvement Contre le Racisme et pour L'amitie entre les peuples —and La Via Campesina, a movement representing aprox. 200 million peasants, landless people, women farmers, indigenous people and agricultural workers from around the world.

In absolute terms, there have never been more peasants in the world than today: around 1.2 billion at the global level. Peasant farmers, landless, rural workers, indigenous peoples, livestock herders and small-scale fishers, their families and communities represent about half of the world's population and constitute the backbone of our food systems. Paradoxically, peasants are at the same time particularly affected by hunger: According to the UN, close to 80 percent of the world's population suffering from hunger and chronic malnutrition live in rural areas. Moreover, peasants are victims of historic and persistent discrimination and other human rights violations such as arbitrary detentions and extrajudicial killings in many countries around the globe.

We are currently facing a new surge in food prices particularly maize, wheat and soybean: after the price spike occurred across almost all commodities in 2007/2008 and a new spike in 2011, food prices are peaking again, reaching the levels of 2008 when high prices pushed – according to the FAO – the number of hungry people in the world to over one billion. The most affected by food price volatility have been countries highly dependent on imports for their food and poor food consumers in rural and urban areas. Price volatility, lack of proper support for peasant agriculture, dumping of agricultural products on local markets, weather-related events and increasing pressures over natural resources are putting peasants in an ever worsening and unbearable situation.

The fate of our daily food, of the peasantry around the world, and other people living in rural areas is being debated in this session. Peasants have a major role to play in overcoming the root causes of hunger. Peasants have developed alternatives to destructive agricultural models that are destroying people and Mother Nature. Peasants have been struggling for recognition and further protection of their human rights and for strengthening small-scale food production.

It is urgent to better implement existing international norms for peasants and other people living in rural areas, but this alone will not be sufficient. We also need to address the normative gaps under international human rights law, and to elaborate a new legal

instrument on the rights of peasants. Peasants, particularly women, need clear recognition of their right to land, to seeds, to information and technology, to freedom to determine prices and markets for agricultural production, to biological diversity, and to preserve the environment.

We welcome the initiative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia and other supporter States to create an intergovernmental open-ended working group to continue advancing towards a Peasants Rights Declaration and urge the Human Rights Council state members to support this initiative.

Time has proven that we can work together, we the people and our governments, along with the international community. This is our chance to make a breakthrough in history. This is our time to recognize and further protect the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas. This is the time for change.

I thank you, Monsieur/Madame President.