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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Joint written statement* submitted by Centre Europe - tiers monde, FIAN International e.V., a non-governmental organization on the roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[19 August 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Promoting and Implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas: A Key Step for Achieving Social and Climate Justice

17 December 2018 marks an historic achievement for the international peasant movement and all rural organizations and communities that have been fighting for the protection of their human rights. After several years of mobilization, monitoring and reporting work and different types of advocacy efforts, the UN General Assembly adopted, by a very large majority, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP). Lately a number of Member States which abstained in 2018 have politically declared that they adhere to the UNDROP, advancing towards a consensus around this key instrument.

The idea behind the UNDROP emerged from internal discussions within the international peasant movement, led by La Via Campesina, as a response to the aggressive actions of the agribusiness sector. This sector sought, and seeks, to monopolize food and agricultural systems to maximize profits, leading to widespread and systematic violations of human and environmental rights against small-scale food producers. These violations continue to contribute to broader social challenges, including migration, conflict, and hunger. The initiative arose from the peasant and rural communities' inability to meet their needs within an international economic system designed to favor dominant political and economic elites. The aim was to update international law, establishing a legal framework to protect family farming and rural communities in general.

As we repeatedly say, the process that led to the adoption of the UNDROP has to be seen as an exemplary process of building international law from below, putting people and the planet first. This approach should inspire all organized people that are struggling for a better world where human rights are fully realized by States.

Now, UN Member States, as well as all other relevant actors in the field, should adhere to the principles, rights and provisions of the UNDROP. These should guide them in implementing existing international law, supporting its promotion and enforcement and putting an end to all initiatives and actions that contradict UNDROP. UN Member States must adapt their national legal frameworks, in order to make sure that they comply with the UNDROP and translate them into action at local, national, regional and international level. Furthermore, in line with the principle of good faith and the provisions of article 2.4 of the UNDROP, they should now review their existing agreements in order to ensure they honor their commitments regarding peasants' rights. This is extremely relevant to respond to the multiple crises our world is facing, including the triple planetary crises as well as the several wars and conflicts affecting our societies.

Given the urgent need to implement the Declaration following its adoption, the organizations and movements that were historically involved in the elaboration and negotiation process of the said instrument have called for the creation of a United Nations Special Procedure to follow-up on the situation of peasants' rights worldwide and to report on the progress made in terms of promotion and implementation. In October 2023, during the 54th session of the Human Rights Council, this new mechanism was established in the form of a Working Group. This new achievement is the result of the fundamental advocacy of these organizations and movements and of the fruitful collaboration with supportive countries, and in particular the Plurinational State of Bolivia (pen-holder of the resolution) and the other members of the core-group (Cuba, South Africa, the Gambia, Luxembourg, Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan).

The newly established UN Working Group on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas holds great promise for the promotion and implementation of the rights of rural communities (which include peasants, rural workers, fishers, pastoralists, nomadic people, Indigenous people working in the rural areas, hunter-gatherers, migrant workers, landless communities and others under Art. 1) as enshrined in the UNDROP.

The Working Group provides a crucial space to support initiatives aimed at protecting and realizing the fundamental rights of a peasants and rural communities - a group that has been placed in a state of extreme vulnerability and has been resisting the offensive of a predatory monopolistic agribusiness sector, as well as extractive mining industries, real estate companies, tourism corporations, the financial sector and more recently emerging digital technologies, among others

In this sense, the Working Group will play a pivotal role for States, offering them technical cooperation, sharing examples of good practices, and providing concrete recommendations on the best ways to make their actions and national legal frameworks comply with the principles and provisions of the UNDROP. For us, rights holder's organizations and civil society organizations, the Working Group will enable a more inclusive and robust implementation of the UNDROP. We anticipate that it will bring greater visibility to the structural causes that led to the adoption of UNDROP – such as various forms of discrimination, systematic human rights violations, and historical disadvantages - calling for adequate attention from multilateral organizations, and in particular from the international human rights system.

For peasants and rural communities – the small-scale food producers outlined in article 1 of the UNDROP, who, according to FAO data, provide up to 80 % of food production worldwide – to have full agency, visibility, participation, and fully enjoy their human rights without discrimination of any kind, States must ensure that they have equal access to control over and ownership of resources. This includes control over the processes of production, transformation, exchange and marketing of their products. It is also essential to address the structural and non-structural barriers that limit their economic empowerment.

As a priority, the UN Working Group on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas should:

1. Promote best practices and lessons learned, foster collaboration between States, rights holders and civil society groups and organizations. Highlight and promote diverse public policies which recognize and protect the rights of peasants and of all people working in rural areas in international, regional, and national level.
2. Provide technical capacity-building support to States, rights holders, civil societies, and relevant UN mechanisms and bodies. By doing so, the Working Group will elevate the global prominence of the UNDROP and address the underlying issues hindering the realization of the rights enshrined in the instrument.
3. Follow-up on the implementation of UNDROP, while focusing on the challenges and key issues identified by the Working Group which are central to the struggles faced by peasants' and rural communities all over the world. Among others, the Working Group should monitor, analyze and report on how agroecology and truly sustainable farming practices can foster climate and environmental justice, ensure the right to food for everyone, enhance the right to health and generally protect human rights. It should also examine how peasants, rural communities and indigenous peoples' initiatives can contribute to safeguarding biodiversity; address and reverse the structural dispossession of peasants and rural communities from means of production (such as seeds, land, water etc.); address the issue of dismantling the transnational architecture of the dominant trade and investment regimes that promote monopolistic and predatory agribusiness and other harming corporate practices at the expense of peasants' rights; and explore how food sovereignty and social justice serve as alternative principles for better access to markets.

The UN Working Group should highlight the importance of UNDROP by recognizing the past, present, and future contributions of peasants and rural communities, to the issue of development, conservation and improvement of biodiversity, which constitutes the basis of global food and agricultural production.

We remain ready to collaborate with the UN Working Group and to work closely with our governments and Member States to implement measures that safeguard and protect the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas, thereby advancing towards the proper implementation of the rights, principles and provisions of the UNDROP.

La Via Campesina, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.