

Centre Europe - Tiers Monde

Centre de recherches et de publications sur les relations entre le Tiers Monde et l'Europe

CETIM
Rue Amat 6
CH-1202 Genève
Tél. +41 (0)22 731 59 63
Fax +41 (0)22 731 91 52
E-mail: contact@cetim.ch
Site Web: www.cetim.ch

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
26th session of Human Rights Council
Point 5: General Debate

Report of the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Working Group on a Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (A/HRC/26/48)

Oral Statement

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Mr Chairman,

Famine and malnutrition continue to affect nearly a billion persons throughout the world, 80% of whom live in rural areas and most of whom are food producers such as small family farmers. These farmers are confronted, and without any protection, not only with globalized market rules and commodity speculation in food but also with forced displacement and land grabbing on a huge scale. They encounter numerous obstacles in accessing to resources (land, water, seeds etc.), to subsidies and credit. Also small family farmers are victims of many violations of their human rights such as the right to life, the right to food, the right to association and the right to take part in the making of decisions that affect their lives.

Aware of the dramatic situation of the traditional small peasantry, which is particularly exposed to food insecurity, the Human Rights Council asked the Advisory Committee to conduct a study on “ways and means to further advance the rights of people working in rural areas...”¹

In its final study on the promotion of the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas,² the Advisory Committee noted: “Smallholder farmers, landless people, tenant farmers, agricultural labourers and people living from traditional fishing, hunting and herding activities are among the most discriminated and vulnerable people in many parts of the world.” (§ 73) The Advisory Committee further noted, rightly, that the existing human rights instruments are not sufficient to protect the rights of peasants and other people working in rural zones. Thus, the Committee recommended that the Council adopt a declaration on the rights of peasants in response to the specific needs of peasant and other people working in rural areas.

¹ See §§ 15 and 44 of Resolution 13/4, adopted by consensus, 24 March 2010.

² A/HRC/19/75, 24 February 2012, presented to the 19th session of the Human Rights Council.

Following this long process, the Human Rights Council set up an intergovernmental working group entrusted with negotiating a draft declaration on the rights of peasants and of other people working in rural areas, on the basis of the draft presented by the Advisory Committee (Resolution 21/19, § 1).

Today, the Human Rights Council has the report of this working group, presented by its chair and rapporteur Angelica C. Navarro Llanos, whom we thank warmly for the work carried out. It is now a matter of following through on the efforts of the working group.

In the context of the International Year of Family Agriculture, we hope that those governments that, until now, have been hesitant to support this process will do so and will respond favorably to the expectations of the hundreds of millions of peasant families represented in particular by La Via Campesina, the FIMARC and the ROPPA.

Mr Chairman, I thank you for your attention.

Geneva, 23 June 2014