



PRESS RELEASE

UNITED NATIONS: Third Committee approves the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas

20 November. Tuesday, [NEW YORK-BRUSSELS]

Yesterday the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) of the UN General Assembly voted in favour of the UN Declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas, through the [Resolution no. A/C.3/73/L.30](#).

The resolution was approved by [119 votes in favour, 7 votes against and 49 abstentions](#). It is a significant leap forward in a campaign led by La Via Campesina, the world's largest peasant movement supported by many organizations across the world, including FIAN and CETIM.

The UN Declaration aims to better protect the rights of all rural populations including peasants, fisherfolks, nomads, agricultural workers and indigenous peoples and to improve living conditions, as well as to strengthen food sovereignty, the fight against climate change and the conservation of biodiversity. The endorsement of the UN Declaration also constitutes an important contribution to the international community's effort to promote family farming and peasant agriculture.

Bolivia, the chair of the process, stressed upon the importance of the UN Declaration in realising more resilient, sustainable and inclusive societies:

"We believe this is a major step towards public policies that recognize not only the rights and needs of peasants but also their contributions to the well-being and quality of life of the societies they nurture through their daily work. We are sure that this instrument will play a central role in human rights as well as in the eradication of hunger and poverty, in line with Agenda 2030 for sustainable development and the Decade of Family Farming, without leaving anyone behind."

Since its adoption at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva in late September, La Via Campesina and its allies' focus has been to make sure that this UN Declaration is adopted by the UN General Assembly. La Via Campesina delegates who have been present in New York since the beginning of the Third Committee session expressed their satisfaction after the voting results.

"In this historic moment, in which financial capital and corporations are deepening their offensive to monopolize food and concentrate land and natural goods, at the cost of our lives, the adoption of the Declaration of Peasant Rights in the Third Committee of the UN General

*Assembly is a strategic victory, not only for peasants but for the peoples of the world as a whole. We will continue on this long path of struggle and unity, for rights and social justice, convinced that full democracy is only possible through Agrarian Reform, the social function of land and the full enjoyment of the rights of peasants”, said **Diego Monton La Via Campesina (CLOC)***

The Committee’s approval of the UN Declaration was marked by some debate but it benefitted from a consistent support from Africa, Asia and Latin America regions. Some negative reactions came from Europe and other regions, with the US delegation rejecting the text as they have longstanding concerns about the UN Declaration, which sought to expand upon existing rights, singling out the human rights of peasants above those of other groups, and also on the collective rights stipulated in the contents. The European countries were divided in their response.

*“Yesterday’s vote was not symbolic, it was the necessary step to move ahead with the decision taken by the UN’s Human Rights Council last September. In the 3rd Committee, where all the UN countries participate, we have witnessed a great diversity of positions coming from Eastern and Western Europe. We thank greatly those who supported us. Your vote in favor put human values in human rights, giving hope for millions of peasants, men and women, across the continent. For those that went down in history with their abstention or negative votes, you should know that peasants and small family farmers in your countries cannot be left behind.” said **Ramona Duminicioiu from the European Coordination Via Campesina.***

“After December’s UNGA approval, we will start a new chapter of the Rights of Peasants and we are demanding that all UN countries commit themselves to implementing the Declaration. We are determined to contribute to a better society, to fight climate change, to end hunger, to provide diverse and nutritious food for everyone. Fortunately, by recognizing our rights, this new international instrument will allow us to do just that”, she added.

Zainal Arifin Fuat, from La Via Campesina Asia, said that this declaration is a landmark moment in the peasants struggle.

“The Declaration acknowledges the prominent role that peasants play in solving multiple crises facing us today – food, environmental, social and economic. Peasants are essential to food security and sovereignty and the realization of the right to food, particularly in developing countries where they provide up to 80% of the food locally consumed. This UN Declaration will also contribute to the humanity’s efforts to end poverty, hunger and achieving our sustainable development goals. In Asia, we believe that if our rights are recognized and further protected, people will be able to develop rural areas and then avoid the rural-urban migration that creates insoluble problems”, he added.

*“The scramble for resources that is going on in the African continent and elsewhere has put peasants in an extremely vulnerable position. The ongoing attack on peasant seed systems have repercussions that go beyond those who produce the food. It indeed affects everyone. For 17 years we have been patiently campaigning for an international instrument that can protect our rights as peasants and to guard our food systems from being dismantled to favour a few. It is a proud moment for millions of peasants worldwide, who never give up when faced with adversity”, said **Elizabeth Mpofo, General Coordinator of La Via Campesina***

“The power of the peasant movement is being felt at the highest level of international governance: for this, we must acknowledge the hard work and passion of so many peasants

worldwide. The solidarity of peasants internationally is a testament to how closely we and our issues are linked, regardless of where we live. However, today is only a stepping stone on the long path of human rights justice for rural people. We must carry forward this momentum and put the declaration into action at every level of society," said Jessie MacInnis, La Via Campesina North America

The UN Declaration will be formally ratified by the UN General Assembly on December 2018, following the decision taken by the Third Committee yesterday.

Editor's Note:

Information Note on UN Declaration can be downloaded [here](#)

Full text of the Resolution and Declaration is [here](#)

For more information, visit www.viacampesina.org

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