**First session of the OEWG**

**on rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas**

**Statement by Ireland in general debate, Wednesday, 17 July 2013**

Madam Chair,

As it is the first time Ireland takes the floor during the session, allow me to congratulate you on your election to preside over our work, and to assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation.

Ireland aligns itself with the statement made on Monday morning on behalf of the European Union. As was mentioned then and earlier at HRC 22, we have concerns about the procedure that led to the Advisory Committee working without a mandate on a declaration that the Council had not requested, and therefore about the draft declaration itself as the only basis of our discussion or as a starting point for a meaningful dialogue.

That said, discussions here over the past two days have touched on a number of issues which my delegation believes to be of fundamental importance, such as the elimination of rural poverty and hunger, ensuring food security and the maintenance of biodiversity, and combating climate change. Whether the Human Rights Council context is the best, or an appropriate, place to discuss these issues is a different question.

The issues of rural poverty, nutrition and food security are ones of long-standing concern to my government. Just a few months ago, in Dublin, Ireland hosted a major conference on the linked challenges of hunger, nutrition and climate justice. Ensuring the sustainable and productive use of land in a manner which protects biodiversity and hinders or contributes to reversing climate change is a key way in which to ensure the long-term benefit of the world’s population as a whole and end the enduring scandal of global hunger. Peasants and other people working in rural areas have a central part to play in this effort.

The challenges faced by peasants and people working in rural areas, whether small farmers, farm labourers, fishermen or others, are ones which exist throughout the world, though they may differ in scale. Dependence on the weather, and consequent vulnerability to climate change, is a factor applicable in most areas. Over-dependence on one crop has potentially devastating consequences if that crop fails, something experienced in my country in the mid-19th century. Issues of security of tenure and other rights of smallholders are also familiar ones in many parts of the world, both in developed and developing countries.

However, it is not our task here to solve all of the problems of the world’s rural dwellers, nor would it be wise to attempt to do so. My delegation hopes that, in our work this week and in any further work which may be mandated by the Human Rights Council, to focus can be on issues with a clear human rights relevance and capable of commanding a broad consensus.

I thank you, Madam Chair.