

**General Statement delivered by South Africa**

**2nd Session of the Open-ended Working Group on the**

**Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas**

**02 February 2015**

***Check against delivery***

South Africa as a member of the core group of the Resolution on the Promotion and Protection of the Human rights of Peasants and other People Working in Rural Areas, welcomes the convening of the 2nd Session of the Open-ended intergovernmental Working Group led by H.E Ambassador Llanos and we commend the efforts of Bolivia for championing this initiative in the Human Rights Council. We further welcome the drafting of a new text on the Rights of Peasants and Other People working in Rural Areas, on the basis of the discussions held during the first session of the working group, including the draft declaration presented by the Advisory Committee and informal consultations convened to date.

Chairperson, the largest segments of the world’s poor are the women, children and men who live in rural environments. According to the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the people most responsible for feeding the world today are small farmers and this is one of the reasons why investing in rural people and in rural transformation, while ensuring their empowerment is a highly effective way of reducing hunger and poverty. Sadly, while we commemorated World Food Day, the International Day of Rural Women and the International Year of Family Farming in 2014, we were and are still acutely aware that millions of people worldwide do not have enough to eat.

In my own country faced with the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality, the South African Government is committed to ensuring radical change, which must bring real benefits to working people and the poor across South Africa. The National Development Plan (NDP) provides a long-term vision for accelerating development so that unemployment and inequality could be reduced, creating a more inclusive society and sets out the trajectory for rural economic transformation and development. In July 2014, at the African Union summit in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, African Heads of State also committed to end hunger and malnutrition in the continent by 2025. All these issues, particularly the realization of the Right to Development are collectively driven by the countries of the South in the context of the Non-Aligned Movement and they form the basis of its engagements with the international human rights system.

Chairperson, the United Nations Human Rights System has done very well in producing a body of law in the form of Declarations providing the basis for protection in the areas such as indigenous, minorities as well as a Declaration on the Right to Development. It is imperative in this context, for the UN Human Rights System to continue in its positive human rights trajectory by elaborating a Declaration on the Rights of Peasant and Other People Working in Rural Areas. The severe vulnerabilities of the peasants which are precipitated by the phenomenon of globalisation makes it absolutely necessary for the Human Rights Council to take appropriate interventions to protect the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas. Rural communities have to take center stage in all development initiatives, and be key subjects to their own development.

South Africa thus looks forward to constructive engagement in the discussions during this Session with the hope that the Declaration will soon be endorsed by the Council.

I thank you