WG on the Rights of Peasants, 17 May

General Statement by Themba Chauke, Landless Peoples Movement South Africa statement, La Via Campesina

Firstly we would like to congratulate you madam chair for your election as the chairperson rapporteur of the 3rd session of the open ended of the Intergovernmental working group of peasants’ rights and other people working in rural area.

We appreciate the steps taken to take this declaration forward and for inclusive participation and we guarantee you all our support.

Africa is one of the continent that has the highest rate of people suffering from hunger attack, though the continent itself has policies in place that can address the issue of hunger in the continent. Since we are living in the global world, We believe that It is through the recognition of the proposed declaration, that can yield positive results, by putting policies in place and implementations that can help eradicate hunger in our region.

Peasants are the marginalized people, prone to the pervasive land grabbing of their communal land which is essential to their social and economic livelihood, should be protected from any human rights violation or act that prevent them from producing their own food. With this regards, the state should have the obligation to protect the land that peasants use collectively for their livelihood. With little resources they have peasants continue to produce food that feed many people around the world.

Selecting, storing, and sharing seeds have been peasants practice for decades, and this practice is threatened by the new seeds laws. The new seeds laws protect new seeds varieties which are out of reach for peasants because they are expensive, while on the other hand peasant’s seeds have fed millions of people for decades and states should support, develop and undertake research on peasant’s seeds and should recognize the existence and importance of peasants’ seeds, which also need to be protected by seeds laws to enable peasants to produce more food, which should be recognized internationally starting from the national level.

Having said this states should not juxtapose human rights and commercial rights, and right to peasant’s seeds is the fundamental right that promotes food sovereignty, and biodiversity and state should protect peasant’s seeds against bio-piracy.

State should adhere to its obligation under their constitutions, and should guarantee equal right of every member of the society, under their national laws.

We believe that peasant’s agroecology is the core practice for peasants’ agriculture, whereby peasant continue to use their available natural resources using traditional knowledge, and there should not be any form of interference to impose how peasants should carry on  their duties.

We urge all African representatives in the house, to participate actively and constructively in the session as your contribution mean a lot to the African population who are prone to hunger, malnutrition, discrimination and other factors caused by lack of access to means of production specifically food production.

Madam chair we hope to have a constructive and fruitful week ahead.

Thank you.