

**GENERAL statement delivered by south africa**

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL Working Group on the rights of Peasants and other people working in rural areas**

**15 May 2017**

*Check against delivery*

Chairperson,

South Africa aligns itself with the statement delivered by Tunisia on behalf of the African Group.

South Africa wishes to congratulate H.E Ambassador Suxo Iturry for her election as Chairperson-Rapporteur and assure you of our support. South Africa expresses its appreciation to the Chair-Rapporteur for the commendable stewardship in taking forward the elaboration of a Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and People Working in Rural Areas including presenting us with a more focused and streamlined Declaration. We also thank the distinguished panellists for their presentations this morning.

The South African Government wishes to affirm the importance of elaborating norms and standards on a range of important thematic issues in the rubric of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Declaration on the Right to Development. This is the area in International Human Rights Law that has been glaringly neglected. In this regard, we have heard extensively on the importance of the Declaration which will complement both national and international processes including the development of a legally binding instrument on TNCs and Other Business Enterprises with respect to Human Rights.

Chairperson,

Smallholder agriculture in South Africa has been identified as the vehicle through which the goals of poverty reduction and rural development can be achieved. The South African Government has prioritized programmes aimed at the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights on a non-discriminatory basis. Furthermore, the South African Constitution entrenches economic, social and cultural rights and to safeguard these rights and to make sure they are reality, it makes them justiciable.

In recognition that a large number of people are still based in the rural areas, the South African Government guided by the National Development Plan has prioritised inclusive rural economy wherein rural communities have greater opportunities to participate fully in the economic, social and political life of the country.

Chairperson,

The question of access to land, food security, rural development, the eradication of poverty, inequality and unemployment is at the core of the Government’s programmes aimed at redressing the inequalities of the past and ensuring the human dignity of all our citizens. The Government has also identified the agricultural sector as one of the important contributors towards economic growth, job creation and food security. Key to this sector is an urgent need to manage the risks associated with the impact of climate change with specific emphasis on the risks associated with water management and sustainable agriculture.

The elaboration of this Declaration reaffirms our collective efforts to the unfinished business of the MDGs and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals which would inevitably ensure that the rights of peasants are also realized. In this regard, we wish to underscore the primacy of means of implementation for the realization of the Agenda.

Finally Chairperson, we hope that our deliberations within this Working Group will be guided by the letter and spirit of the Declaration of the Right to Development which places the human person at the centre and as a beneficiary of public policy and development programmes. The South African delegation assures you of its unwavering support to engage constructively in this regard.

I thank you