



Fifth session of the open-ended working group on a United Nations Declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas.

Statement by Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, Director, FAO Liaison Office to the United Nations in Geneva

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Excellencies and Distinguished Members of the Open-Ended Working Group on a United Nations Declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural area, it is an honour to address you in the framework of this fifth session.

First of all, I wish to congratulate you on your tremendous efforts thus far, in the preparation of the Declaration.

By producing 70% of world's food, family farming, peasant agriculture and small-scale food production are of vital importance for food security worldwide and contribute to a fundamental extent to the economic, environmental and social sustainability of food systems.

Despite their huge contribution to the fight against hunger, peasants face increasing levels of vulnerability to a variety of threats, which underlines the need for increased attention to and protection of their rights and other people working in rural areas.

The International Year of Family Farming in 2014 paved the way for a global recognition of the role played by family farmers, peasants and all small food producers, and for their repositioning at the core of the ongoing national and international debates on food and agriculture.

The celebration of the Year of Family Farming significantly raised the profile of family farmers, peasants and all small food producers, which were included in the follow-up on the Zero Hunger Challenge launched by the United Nations Secretary General in 2012 and in the preparation for the United Nations Post-2015 Development Agenda.

The SDGs ensure that the role of small-scale food producers is recognized with a dedicated target to increase their productivity and income within Goal 2, 'End hunger and achieve food security' but also in several other goals, constituting an integrated, indivisible set of global priorities that address small-scale agriculture in all of its dimensions relevant to sustainable development.

The UN Decade of Action on Nutrition proclaimed in 2016 speaks to the importance of peasants, small-scale fishers and pastoralists, as key actors for sustainable and healthy food production, and the need to support small-scale production. The UN Decade on Family Farming (2019-2028) further demonstrates the increasing centrality that small-scale producers are gaining in the framework of present and future strategies for the achievement of sustainable and inclusive food systems.

The draft Declaration before us addresses some of the most relevant and established areas of work of FAO aimed to rapidly advance the achievement of Zero Hunger and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Specific reference is made to the right to adequate food, land, water, pastoralism, cultural identity, agroecology, traditional knowledge and social protection for rural people, gender equality in rural areas.

The Declaration is strictly linked with the most relevant principles and guidelines adopted by the Committee on World Food Security and the FAO bodies, with a particular reference to the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, among others.

FAO also continues to intensify its work with Indigenous Peoples, with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the ILO C169 Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention as overarching frameworks.

I am therefore pleased to reaffirm FAO's support to the UN Declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas, which will help in reaching their potential and overcoming the challenges that they face in their everyday life.

I thank you and wish you all a very productive and fruitful debate.