



**Fifth Session of the open-ended intergovernmental working group on United Nations
declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas
(Geneva, 9-13 April 2018)**

Statement by Portugal

Madam Chair,

In addition to the statement delivered this morning by Bulgaria on behalf of the European Union, Portugal would like to congratulate you for your election as Chair-Rapporteur of this Working Group and to wish a very successful session.

We would also like to thank Bolivia for all its efforts in order to achieve consensus around the text of this draft declaration and for the very open, transparent and constructive way in which it has been conducting this negotiation.

Madam Chair,

Last September, as a member of the Human Rights Council, Portugal voted in favour of HRC resolution 36/22 which allowed for the convening of this session. We deemed it essential that after almost five years of formal and open negotiations of this text, the Human Rights Council gave the opportunity for the continuation of the negotiations in another session of this Working Group. We do sincerely hope that at the end of this week, in accordance with the mandate of the above mentioned resolution, we will be able to finalize this process and to have a text which will be adopted by consensus by the Human Rights Council.

Peasants and other persons living and working in rural areas are more prone to suffer from discrimination and to be victims of human rights violations and abuses, in particular of their economic, social and cultural rights. Women and children are even in a more vulnerable situation in that context. Levels of poverty are constantly higher in rural areas. Thus, we all need to join forces in order to respect, protect and promote the human rights of peasants and all other persons living and working in rural areas. Portugal is very committed to this goal. We believe that this declaration, when adopted, will contribute to better support the existence of peasants and rural workers, including women and children, inter alia by raising

awareness, in particular of Governments, to the need to fully respect their human rights without discrimination and on an equal basis with the human rights of all other human beings.

Madam Chair,

Agriculture plays an absolutely essential role in our societies. It is, just as mere example, the most important activity for the realization of the human right to food and for human survival.

In Portugal, and throughout the rest of Europe, the rapid disappearance of family farms and small-scale farms is a major concern. Be it for employment reasons, for ensuring food security and for countering the desertification and promoting the vitality of rural areas. This was one of the reasons why Portugal decided to be part of the core-group of countries, representing all regions, which put forward at the UN General Assembly a resolution aimed at proclaiming the United Nations Decade of Family Farming 2019-2028. The resolution – 72/239 - was recently adopted on 20 December 2017 in New York and it recognises, inter alia, the role that family farms plays in improving nutrition and ensuring global food security, eradicating poverty, ending hunger, conserving biodiversity, achieving environmental sustainability and helping to address migration.

Madam Chair,

(i) As you are well aware, exactly two months ago, the Ministers of Agriculture of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) met in Lisbon and adopted the Lisbon Charter for the Strengthening of Family Farming. That meeting counted with the participation of the Director General of FAO and with representatives of 500 civil society organizations. We would like to take this opportunity to renew to you, Madam Chair, our thanks for your own participation at that meeting in Portugal and for the very useful exchange of views on the activity of this Working Group and on the draft UN declaration on the rights of peasants.

We are very pleased that the Lisbon Charter foresees the commitment of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) and of its Member States to performing an active role not only in the implementation of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming but also in the negotiations towards the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants, here at stake.

At the Lisbon Charter, their signatories further commit themselves to recognise the contributions of family farming and of the rural communities as producers of healthy food, as promoters of cultural and social expressions as well as of public goods that need to be protected and promoted, through specific and tailor-made public policies which bear in mind the specificities of each territory.

(ii) We believe that it is also worth mentioning that already in 2013, in another framework, the one of the Ibero-American Conference, the Heads of State or Government of the 22 Member States of this body, including my own country, had signed in Panama a statement urging the continuation of the discussions on this draft UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants with a view to its adoption.

(iii) We would also like to express Portugal's satisfaction with the resolution adopted last 27 February by the European Economic and Social Committee, an advisory body of the European Union, regarding this UN draft declaration on the rights of peasants.

Finally, Madam Chair, since this will probably – and hopefully – be the last session of this Working Group before the submission of the draft declaration to the consideration of the Human Rights Council, Portugal would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and wholeheartedly thank the very valuable contribution of civil society, in particular of peasants' organizations throughout this process and to this outcome, which we hope will be a successful and consensual one.

I thank you very much.

