

**Statement delivered by South Africa**

**working group on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas**

**09 – 13 april 2018**

***Check against delivery***

Chairperson,

The Government of the Republic of South Africa aligns itself with statements presented by Venezuela and Togo on behalf of the Non- Aligned Movement and the African Group respectively.

We congratulate you Chair on your appointment and assure you of our support.

The Republic of South Africa attaches the highest priority to the notion of the rights peasants. Likewise, South Africa also accords high priority to the issue of people working and living in rural areas. A significantly high number of South Africans live and work in rural areas and are primarily dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods including farm dwellers who provide labour to the commercial farming sector in the country.

Support to smallholder and subsistence producers is necessary to ensure food security, full utilisation of resources, land being one of the critical ones, job creation and the overall achievement of ensuring vibrant, equitable and sustainable rural communities and food security for all. Having dedicated 2017 as the year of the youth in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, youth recognition and forging more youth participation in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors is a high priority.

The question of land ownership is central to economic and social development in all communities. One of the main focus areas of Government’s land reform programme has been appropriate institutional reform to address the legacy of colonialism and apartheid, still manifested in our land administration systems. The impact of the systematic disempowerment under apartheid laws contributed to a landless majority with restricted access to skills development but also deliberately prohibiting people from generating self-employment and entrepreneurship.

With the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994 and the collective desire to make our people successful and improve the land ownership system in the country, the Government initiated numerous Programmes for land reform and redistribution. This was undertaken upon the realisation that the promise of economic development and benefit for all South Africans, including the constant improvement of their quality of life would not be possible without resolving the question of land ownership.

It is for this reason that the South African parliament is seized with the issue of expropriation of land without compensation within the Constitutional and legislative framework inclusive of effective national consultative processes and the assurance of food security, increasing agricultural production and improving economic growth. In this process, the key objective would be to redress the historical injustices meted out against the majority of South Africans leading to the disempowerment and lack of access to the means of productive and economic growth and empowerment.

Notwithstanding the many challenges South Africa faces as a developmental State, the majority of South Africans are using the opportunities of democracy to adapt their means of livelihood in the agricultural sector as smallholder, small-scale and subsistence farmers within the limitations of the access to land.

Chairperson,

South Africa is working jointly with all the African countries within the framework of Agenda 2063, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation as well as Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the UN towards the realisation of food security and nutrition on the continent.

In order to achieve this noble objective, numerous strategies and programmes must be in place such as:

1. Training of the small holder, small scale and subsistence farmers and the transition into fully fledged commercial farmers
2. Access to inputs like fertilisers, veterinary services, farming equipment, broadband and greater access to markets
3. Support for small holder, small scale and subsistence farmers and preferential allocation of water rights and infrastructure provisions

It is for this reason that, South Africa has also established a technical assistance programme called the African Agricultural Development Programme (AADP) contributing towards regional stability and sustainable development of the economies of African countries. Further to that the country, has established support programmes for training and skills development.

South Africa’s National Development Plan envisions rural areas that are spatially, socially and economically integrated, where residents have economic growth, food security, access to basic services, health-care and quality education. In this regard, the South African Government is working on the premise of understanding that agriculture is one of the critical sectors that can serve as a catalyst for radical socio-economic transformation, job creation and food security for all. Under this notion, the Government has established Revitalisation of the Agriculture and AgroProcessing Value Chain, known as RAAVC, as a driver of economic growth and job creation by focusing on the key areas of land reform, market access and trade, producer support, research and innovation, and production

South Africa, like many developing countries, is highly vulnerable to the impact of climate change. The increasing frequency of natural disasters and hazards in a rapidly changing climate is a serious global concern to many people; especially the poor and rural communities, particularly the household and smallholder producers who depend on agriculture as a livelihood. In this regard, the adoption of climate-resilient agricultural practices is therefore of great importance and we highly welcome the commitment of States working together to combat climate change and complying with their obligations.

Chairperson,

South Africa is a State Party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and is committed to the provisions of this important Covenant and its Constitution is fully complimentary to the agreed to its provisions, including more fundamentally the notion of justiciability and progressive realisation. Equally paramount in this regard, has been the evolution of the notion of the Right to Development (RTD) within the UN Human Rights System. In the spirit of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (VDPA), South Africa fully shares the notion that the RTD is a fundamental and inalienable right and an integral part of fundamental human rights. The human person inclusive of Peasants and other people working in rural areas are an essential subject for development and should be an active participant and beneficiary of the Right to Development.

Chairperson,

We are convinced that the complementarities of this Working Group and other UN organizations, in particular FAO will strengthen our endeavours. The South African delegation looks forward to the deliberations of this week and assures you of its unwavering support as we move towards the conclusion of this Declaration.

I thank you