



The call from small-scale farmers to domesticate the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP)

Background:

Small-scale farmers, peasants, and rural workers are important to feeding everyone and maintaining biodiversity, but the world treats them as throwaway. La Via Campesina, a global movement of millions of peasants, small and medium-sized farmers, landless peoples, rural women and youth, indigenous peoples, migrants, and agricultural workers, has documented peasant rights violations over the years. These include forced evictions, occupation and appropriation of peasant territories, financial speculation of land, natural resources, and agricultural products, seed laws that threaten biodiversity and peasant seeds, agrotoxic poisoning, criminalization and imprisonment of peasant leaders, and violent demonstrations.

Resolution 73/165 of the General Assembly adopted the UN Declaration of Rights of Peasants and Rural Workers on December 17, 2018. The UN 122 UN General

Assembly members voted for the declaration, 8 against, and 54 abstained. Peasants are more than "**subjects of rights**" according to this Declaration. Instead, it identifies peasants and rural residents as key crisis-fighters. This UN Declaration helps rural movements.

The UNDROP is a global peasant movement for justice. It also requires governments to respect, preserve, and fulfil peasant rights and regulate transnational corporations to prevent harm. UNDROP facilitates a just and sustainable food system that promotes biodiversity and human rights. Even while a proclamation is not legally binding on governments, its substance typically reflects international human rights obligations. It emphasises the international community's commitment to protect, fulfil, and respect peasants' human rights.

Articles of the UNDROP summarized:

The UNDROP has 28 articles dedicated to protecting the rights of small-scale farmers, peasants, and rural workers, as summarised below:

- 1. Articles 1, 2, 27, and 28 provide general provisions that define basic concepts, focus on the general obligations of countries, and list the responsibilities of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organisations.
- 2. Article 3 introduces the concept of equality and non-discrimination among peasants and other people working in rural areas.
- 3. Article 4 states the major role of women in rural agricultural settings and calls for zero discrimination against women, sound gender balance, and women's participation and involvement at all levels.
- 4. Articles 5 and 18 focus on the right of peasants to access natural resources, including genetic resources, and specific rights to a clean, safe, and healthy environment.
- 5. Articles 6, 7, 8, and 9 address the Right to Life, security of persons, freedom of Movement, freedom of thought, opinion, and expression, as well as the freedom of association.
- 6. Articles 10, 11, and 12 focus on the rights to Participation, information, and justice, including access to justice and fair treatment, as well as the right to a remedy and reparation in cases of violations of the peasants' rights.
- 7. Articles 13, 14, and 16 address the right to work and the right to work in a safe and healthy environment with appropriate labour conditions and focus on the right to a decent income, the right to choose and maintain one's livelihood, and the means of production chosen.
- 8. Article 15 explores one of the main asks of peasants' movements through the years: the right to food, food security, and food sovereignty.
- 9. Article 17 focuses on the right to land for small-scale farmers, peasants, and rural workers.
- 10. Article 19 focuses on the right to seeds for small-scale farmers, peasants, and rural workers.
- 11. Article 20 addresses the right to biodiversity.
- 12. Article 21 focuses on the right to water and clean water systems.
- 13. Articles 22 and 23 highlight the right to health and social security and build on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.
- 14. Article 24 provides for the right to housing for small-scale farmers, peasants, and rural workers.
- 15. Article 25 focuses on the right to education.
- 16. Article 26 focuses on socio-cultural aspects, in particular traditional knowledge and traditional cultural heritage.



UNDROP and agroecology:

Adoption of the Declaration is first and foremost an acknowledgment of the political nature of food and our vital connections to Mother Earth, from production to consumption. In fact, there is neither a free citizen nor a citizen who is nourished in a healthy and sustainable manner without a free peasant. Respect for peasants is a necessary condition for ensuring the dignity and complete exercise of civil and political rights for all individuals. UNDROP provides a human rights framework for an agroecological transition. Some of the rights enshrined in UNDROP that are essential for agroecology

include: the right to land, seeds, biodiversity, and water for irrigation; the right to access and use in a sustainable manner natural resources; the right to the conservation and protection of the environment; the right to adequate training tailored to the specific agroecological environment in which peasants find themselves; and the right to food sovereignty. Realising these rights would facilitate the transition to agroecology, and implementing agroecology would facilitate the realisation of these rights on their own.

Calls to action:

The Declaration is now in force and can be effectively used to protect peasants' rights and further recognition of collective rights. Small-scale farmers call for the following actions:

1. Small-scale farmers, peasants, and rural workers have been subjected to decades of discrimination, systematic violations, and historical disadvantage as a result of UNDROP's provisions not being incorporated into national laws and policies. As a result, there is an urgent need to implement UNDROP's commitments and ensure everyone's human rights by incorporating UNDROP provisions into national laws and policies.

2. The government should demonstrate leadership and implement all national laws and policies that incorporate UNDROP's standards and norms. The government should establish a Working committee or group, comprised of small-scale producers, to monitor and direct

the implementation of UNDROP.

3. The UN human rights mechanisms should conduct a thorough review of state practises in light of UNDROP provisions. The agencies of the United Nations should systematically apply UNDROP to their programmes and activities, as well as support and empower small-scale farmers and rural workers at both the policy and operational levels of their work.

4. The East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) should support the domestication of UNDROP in the East African Community (EAC) region.

5. Given that the Declaration fills a crucial gap in the international human rights architecture, human rights tribunals should

develop jurisprudence around it and make it a decision-making instrument.

6. Build a movement of small-scale farmers, peasants, and rural workers capable of holding the government and other stakeholders accountable by utilising both media and non-media methods to promote UNDROP within the communities. The UNDROP should be disseminated in rural communities across the nation in all languages and using popular education materials that are easily understood by the general public. The government should also promote UNDROP within its ministries and institutions in order to facilitate its domestication and application.

Conclusion:

Peasants, small-scale farmers, fisher-flocks and other rural workers assure the food security and food sovereignty of communities and the general public. UNDROP recognises the dignity of the world's rural populations, their contributions to global food production, their 'special relationship' to land, water, and nature, as well as their susceptibility to expropriation, hazardous working conditions, and political repression. It reaffirms human rights protected by other international instruments and establishes new norms for individual

and collective rights to land and natural resources, seeds, biodiversity, and agricultural sovereignty. UNDROP is crucial for agroecology because it implies the preservation of collective management of natural resources, decision-making procedures, and participation. Small-scale farmers, small-scale producers, fisher-flocks, and pastoralists, as well as other rural workers, recognise that rights are not a favour bestowed upon them.

ESAFF Uganda pledges to continue grassroots mobilisation and communication efforts, which are crucial because hegemonic media conceal what large corporations do and the impact of agribusiness on rural and urban areas.

