



PRESS RELEASE

The Declaration for the Rights of Peasants adopted at the Human Rights Council: a historic vote with worldwide support

Only a few but meaningful countries in Europe join the international community in defense of peasants rights. The text will be presented to the United Nations General Assembly in the coming months.

Geneva, 28 September 2018 - With 33 votes in favor, 3 votes against and 11 abstentions, the "Declaration of the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas" was approved this morning by the Human Rights Council of the UN and will be presented in autumn 2018 at the UN General Assembly in New York. This vote is a huge success for all peasant organizations, pastoralists, artisanal fishermen, indigenous peoples, rural workers who along with La Via Campesina carried and defended this declaration in their countries, and at the Human Rights Council.

Three countries from our region stood out for their commitment to defend the rights of vulnerable rural communities and voted in favor of the text : Switzerland – a long term supporter; Ukraine – a committed first time member of the Human Rights Council ; and Portugal – a country who made great efforts to moderate the position of EU countries and who co-sponsored the Declaration. ECVC wishes to extend its gratitude to the supportive European countries who stood up for the dignity of peasants and rural communities.

Despite this victory, the European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC) deplores the lack of commitment of European Union countries in favor of the declaration. *"Germany and the European Union often express their support to human rights protection, to the development in the South and to family farming. But in this very crucial moment of needed action they opposed the declaration and isolate themselves from the international community. This is neither understandable nor acceptable."* said Paula Gioia , member of the German Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft (AbL) and ECVC.

"I am very disappointed, recognized Jose-Manuel Benitez, farmer from Spain. We had hoped that Spain would follow Portugal, Ukraine and Switzerland. We had high expectations for a vote in favor of the thousands of peasants who are struggling for a decent income and recognition in our country."

This comes in contrast to the support for the declaration already expressed by major EU institutions. In July the European Parliament adopted a resolution "calling on the EU and its Member States to support the declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas and to vote in its favor at all levels of UN decision making processes".

The UN Special Rapporteur for the Right of Food, Hilal Elver, urged all UN member states to vote in favor of the Declaration. In her official letter, the UN representative said *«the imminent adoption of the Declaration will be a significant sign of progress, a proof of the serious and urgent preoccupation of the international community for building solutions to eliminate hunger and malnutrition as well as poverty and promote sustainability in agriculture and food production. »*

A European petition gathered more than 72,000 signatures in a few weeks, and many voices of support were heard as the vote approached. Also, a petition launched by UK citizens gathered the support of over 5000 people in 24 hours.

ECVC notes with regret that the interests defended by Europe are not aligned with the aspirations and needs of its citizens for food produced on farms on a human scale, and which demand that the rights of producers are recognized and protected!

We demand all European countries to review their position towards the final approval of the declaration in the UN-General Assembly in the upcoming months and to follow the example of Portugal, Ukraine and Switzerland.

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