

Submission to the UN Working Group on Peasants Rights on the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in the rural areas

Thank you for the opportunity to provide civil society inputs to your mandate as UN Working Group on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas. [Fastenaktion](#) (previously Fastenopfer) is a Swiss NGO working with partner organisations (many of them peasant organisations) in 14 countries of the Global South on the implementation of the Right to Food. In our advocacy work jointly with our partners of the Global South we focus on the transformation towards socially and ecologically just food and agricultural systems based on UNDROP and the HLPE principles of agroecology.

Information on the measures adopted in our country to disseminate the Declaration at national, regional and global level

As a member of the Swiss coalition 'Friends of the Declaration', Fastenaktion, together with other organisations¹, commissioned a study (2020)² analysing Swiss foreign policy in the areas of trade, seeds and land rights as well as development cooperation with regards to conformity with UNDROP, which identifies shortcomings and presents a list of demands to Swiss Government. The study was presented to representatives of the federal offices, including the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property, as well as civil society organisations. The study was also shared with European civil society organisations, for example with member organisations of [CIDSE](#) (Coopération internationale pour le développement et la solidarité). Based on this study, and with the above-mentioned coalition, Fastenaktion made a [submission to the Universal Periodic Review of Switzerland](#) (4th cycle) at the 42nd Session of the Human Rights Council (2023) with recommendations to Swiss Foreign Policy for UNDROP implementation to close the identified gaps.

Have you or your organisation developed any training or awareness raising activity on the Declaration and the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas for rights holders as defined in article 1 of the Declaration or for civil society as a whole?

We have facilitated a series of trainings and awareness raising on UNDROP and all its articles for peasant organisations/communities within the framework of the [RAISE project](#) of which Fastenaktion is the Lead Agency. The RAISE project is co-funded by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. Trainings of peasant communities were organised in Kenya, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, South Africa and Southern African region (f. ex. Zambia, Malawi, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Mozambique), India, Nepal and the Philippines. The trainings were

¹ CETIM, FIAN Suisse, Geneva Academy, HEKS, Swissaid, Uniterre

² [La politique étrangère de la Suisse et la Déclaration UNDROP](#), with summary reports in [English](#), [French](#) and [German](#)

peasant to peasant trainings drawing on local experience and methodologies. It provided knowledge on UNDROP and encouraged peasant communities to engage with national and regional duty bearers demanding the implementation of UNDROP by revising existing regulations and laws. One of the outcomes was that our partner organisation, the Rural Women Assembly (network of peasant women in 10 countries of SADC) submitted recommendations on UNDROP implementation with regards to seeds, land and women's rights in South Africa. They were invited to the UPR pre-session, and finally the South African government accepted all their recommendations. In the frame of the RAISE project, the Kenyan partners of RAISE as well as the partners of the Fastenaktion's country programme elaborated a comprehensive submission to the 4th cycle of the UPR Kenya, referring to the UNDROP and key rights such as the right to food, land, seeds, and the right to participation. We also organised trainings on the history and content of UNDROP as well as on the mandate of the new UN Working Group on UNDROP for civil society organisations in Europe and their interested partners of the Global South in 2024. In the latter training (online) the Chairperson of the UN Working Group, Ms Geneviève Savigny presented the Mandate and explained how peasant and civil society organisations can engage with the UN Working Group. The high number of participants and active engagement during the event showed the great interest and need for the implementation of UNDROP on national level.

Information on progress made and the difficulties encountered in your country in the implementation of the Declaration. What are the main achievements in protecting and promoting the rights of peasants or other people working in rural areas? What are the main obstacles

As you mention in your *call to inputs*, your mandate is also to identify «challenges and gaps in the implementation at the national, regional and international levels». We think that the incoherence between different policies at the international level is such a challenge. It is often the case that a larger number of policies on a topic does not contribute to a better understanding of the specific expectations of duty bearers. Especially not when it is largely a matter of soft law.

In this context, we would like the Working Group to analyse the extent to which such other policies correspond to - or contradict - the provisions of UNDROP. We are thinking in particular of the various guidelines of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), especially the *Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realisation of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security*, whose 20th anniversary is being celebrated this year.

As stated in the preface to these Guidelines, «States are encouraged to apply these Voluntary Guidelines in the development of their strategies, policies, programmes and activities» (Para 9). Although the Voluntary Guidelines are based on various UN instruments, as set out in the Introduction (Para 10&11), the UNDROP did not yet exist at that time. Accordingly, they may be outdated in certain respects or may even contradict the UNDROP. It may therefore no longer be clear what exactly states are encouraged to do.

We think your Working Group could help to provide more clarity on the coherence between UNDROP and other policies, so that the various stakeholders engaged on issues of peasants' rights, food security and the right to food have a better overview of the different instruments, their scope and the expectations that are tied to them.

Do you or your organisation engage with State authorities or human rights mechanisms (for instance human rights treaty bodies or special procedures of the Human Rights Council) to raise awareness on the Declaration and to promote its integration in their activities?

We have been continuously addressing the importance of UNDROP implementation with the Swiss Foreign Affairs Department, the Secretariat of Economic Affairs and the Institute of Intellectual Property, especially on the right to seeds and peasant participation in policy making with regards to the UPOV91 clause in EFTA Free Trade Agreements, but also via our submission to the UPR process of Switzerland (see above under question 1).

With regards to human rights mechanisms, Fastenaktion has a regular engagement with the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, to whose reports we have contributed together with our partners of the Global South in the past (for ex. A/HRC/52/40 and A/78/202). We also supported and co-organised various UN side-events on the establishment of the UN Working Group on UNDROP in cooperation with different diplomatic missions, La Via Campesina and other Swiss organisations.

Fastenaktion is also engaging with the CFS (via side events and stakeholder dialogues) and CSIPM to promote a human rights-based approach in food and agriculture food systems, based on the UN Right to Food and specifically on UNDROP and UNDRIP.

What do you consider to be priority issues that need to be addressed in the implementation of the Declaration?

- Providing more clarity on the coherence between UNDROP and other policies, so that the various stakeholders engaged on issues of peasants' rights, food security and the right to food have a better overview of the different instruments, their scope and the expectations that are tied to them
- Creating coherence with other UN binding instruments, especially the acknowledgment and integration of UNDROP into the UN Binding Treaty.
- The integration of the right to food sovereignty as in Art.15 of UNDROP has been a milestone and strengthens the right of peasants to define their own policies, way of production, and food systems. The right to food is a states' obligation, food sovereignty is a peasant right, how can both be linked and strengthened in enforcing UNDROP's implementation.
- The right to land is often not considered in agricultural policy making processes. UNDROP being a comprehensive declaration for peasants, including the self-determined way of food production (Art. 15 UNDROP), has explicitly formulated the right to land (individually or collectively) (Art. 17 UNDROP), which is a very important link for peasants to produce at all. No land, no food. The working group should emphasise land rights as being an integral part of any agricultural policy elaboration process.

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Fastenaktion