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Chair-Rapporteur**

**WORKING GROUP ON THE RIGHTS OF PEASANTS
AND OTHER PEOPLE WORKING IN RURAL AREAS**

**80th session of the HRC
Item 3**

**PRESENTATION OF THE REPORT ON THE PARTICIPATION OF
FARMERS AND OTHER PEOPLE WORKING IN RURAL AREAS**

16 October 2025

New York

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to present the findings and recommendations from the second thematic report of the Working Group on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas (A/80/180).

This report is a timely and urgent call to action. It reminds us that peasants and rural workers form the foundation of the world's food systems. Small-holder farmers, fishers, pastoralists, and other rural workers are responsible for producing over 70 per cent of all food consumed globally, managing 80 per cent of the world's farms, and contributing nearly half of all fish consumed.

Their stewardship not only sustains billions but also underpins rural economies, cultural heritage, and the resilience of communities against the planetary crises of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. Peasants lead agroecological innovation, conserve seeds, steward ecosystems, and play a vital role in climate mitigation and adaptation. Yet they consistently face exclusion from key decision-making spaces.

Peasants and rural workers confront deeply entrenched barriers. Legal, linguistic, and technological obstacles, lack of access to information, and structural discrimination, especially against women, Indigenous Peoples, older persons, and youth, perpetuate their marginalization. At the policy level, rural voices are routinely silenced or disregarded. Urban-centric governance and the dominance of agribusiness, extractive industries, and corporate interests in food systems have distorted priorities, eroded land rights, and increased rural poverty and inequality. Multi-stakeholder processes often reinforce, rather than dismantle, these inequities, making true participation elusive for peasant communities and rural workers.

In recent months, our Working Group has been particularly concerned about the serious human rights situation in some Andean countries in Latin America, as well as in Asia and Africa. In these regions, peasants, rural workers, and indigenous peoples have been denouncing serious violations related to state persecution of their right to protest, as well as their weak participation in decisions that are crucial to their future survival.

Excellencies,

Drawing on submissions received from governments, social movements and civil society, the Working Group's report has identified the following specific challenges facing peasants and rural workers:

- Persistent discrimination and barriers facing women, who own less than 15 % of agricultural land globally, and Indigenous Peoples, youth, and older persons, who remain excluded and lack accessible entry points into policymaking.
- Weak institutional mechanisms for participation, with insufficient capacity-building or legal empowerment tailored to peasants and rural workers.
- Growing power imbalances in “multi-stakeholder” policy spaces, enabling the corporate sector to overshadow or dilute government accountability and public interest.
- Lack of specialized consultation mechanisms for peasants and rural workers in decisions that directly affect them.
- Limited awareness, visibility, and implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) at local and national levels.
- Scarce financial resources to support rural participation, awareness, and implementation of rights under the Declaration.

Distinguished delegates,

The Working Group is convinced that UNDROP serves the international community and national governments as both a legal and moral lodestar. It affirms not only individual rights but also collective ones—anchoring participation, informed consent, and self-determination at every level from village councils to international climate negotiations. The Declaration recognizes that participation must be meaningful, active, and informed - enabled by legal, institutional, and material support, alongside protection from reprisals and discrimination.

The report shares some loadable practices documented across the world. In Kenya, participatory budgeting empowers rural communities to shape public resource allocation. In Nepal, inclusive consultations have led to constitutional guarantees for peasants’ rights. In Colombia, Constitutional reforms ensured that peasants are recognized as a category deserving special constitutional protection. In Belgium, civil society has translated the Declaration into local policy proposals. And across Latin America, Africa, and Asia, women’s assemblies, youth schools, and both peasant and Indigenous platforms are reclaiming space and voice.

These examples show that when peasants and rural workers are empowered, they do not merely participate, they lead. They shape policies, defend ecosystems, and build solidarity across borders. Their knowledge and lived experience are indispensable to solving the triple planetary

crisis of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. They reinforce the hope that change is both possible and already underway in diverse settings.

Mr. President,

The conclusions drawn from our report underscore several fundamental truths about the rights and realities of peasants and rural workers. The right to participation is fundamental to rural dignity, agency, and empowerment, serving as the gateway for accessing vital rights related to land, water, food, health, work, and cultural life. Excluding peasants and rural workers from participation fuels rural poverty, hunger, environmental degradation, and social injustice, making the empowerment of their voices indispensable for creating sustainable, equitable food systems and resilient rural communities. While legal frameworks provide a necessary foundation, they are not enough on their own. What is needed is effective implementation requiring dedicated resources, robust institutions, inclusive platforms, and genuine political will. Protecting the rights of peasants and rural workers is intrinsically linked to the need to confront and regulate corporate power, uphold accountability, and ensure transparency across all sectors impacting rural life and food systems. Ultimately, societies thrive when they value and invest in the knowledge, innovation, and stewardship of peasants and rural workers, by supporting their organizational capacities and recognizing their leadership in public decision-making processes.

Excellencies,

The Working Group affirms that the right to participation is integral to the dignity, agency and empowerment of peasants and rural workers worldwide. UNDROP provides a robust legal and normative framework. It recognizes peasants and rural workers across gender, age, ethnicity and all forms of rural activity as key rights holders and crucial agents of sustainable food systems, climate adaptation and environmental stewardship. Upholding the right to participation of peasants and rural workers is central to the realization of all human rights, social justice and global sustainability.

Recommendations

The Working Group calls for continued vigilance, robust action and genuine partnership among all duty-bearers to ensure that no rural voice is left unheard and that peasants and rural workers can exercise their rights in full dignity and equality.

In particular, the Working Group calls for:

- Urgent alignment of all national laws and policies with the Declaration, ensuring active, effective, meaningful, and informed participation of peasants at every stage of governance.

- Legal reforms to remove barriers to rural participation and institutionalize timely, accessible, and inclusive consultation mechanisms, especially for the most marginalized.
- Systematic implementation of free, prior, and informed consent, and the creation of participatory structures that include peasants, rural workers, women, youth, and other groups disproportionately affected by exclusion.
- Investment in capacity-building, civic and legal education, and resources dedicated to participatory processes, translated into local languages and designed to reach all rural communities.
- Regulation of corporate influence in decision-making forums, preserving the primacy of public interest and human rights above private gain.
- Stronger international cooperation, monitoring, and extraterritorial application of human rights standards to corporate actors and public institutions alike.
- Support for ongoing mobilization and documentation of successful participation practices by peasant and rural worker organizations, and the expansion of partnerships across social movements and advocacy networks.

Honourable delegates,

The findings in this report demonstrate that upholding the right to participation is not simply a matter of policy or procedure, but a matter of justice, dignity, and the sustainability of our global food systems. Let us stand together in ensuring that peasants and rural workers everywhere rise from the margins to the centre of decision-making. That they become empowered, organized, and respected as full partners in the creation of a fairer, greener, and more resilient world.

I look forward to the interactive dialogue and proposals for cooperation and follow up.

Thank you for your attention.