

# JOINT STATEMENT ON UNDROP BY UNITED NATIONS' HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERTS

19 December 2022

The partners of the project Rights-based and Agroecological Initiatives for Sustainability and Equity in Peasant Communities (RAISE), supported by the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), welcome the [Joint Statement released on 16 December 2022 by 12 United Nations \(UN\) Special Procedure mandate holders](#), at the occasion of the 4<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP).

These UN Special Procedures have very broad and important mandates to protect the rights to food, to water and sanitation, to development and to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; to fight against extreme poverty, climate change and toxic waste; and to promote human rights in the context of business activities. Such mandates are all relevant to UNDROP's implementation.

In their joint statement mentioned previously, the UN human rights experts recall that “(w)hile small-scale farmers and peasants feed around 70-80 per cent of the world, they shockingly represent 80 per cent of the world's hungry and 70 per cent of those living in extreme poverty. Besides their disproportionate exposure to environmental degradation, toxic substances, land grabbing and climate change, peasants and rural workers also suffer from the burdens caused by poverty, hunger and malnutrition. More recently, their situation has become even more dire, due to the direct effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as its subsequent harmful impact on food and cost-of-living crisis.”

The UN human rights experts “commend peasants and rural workers across the world who have shown great resilience in the face of multiple challenges and intersectional oppression facing them and their communities”, and ask “world governments (to) do more to protect, support and listen to peasants and rural workers.”

Moreover, for the UN human rights experts, the “current global crises make it more urgent than ever to enact the commitments in UNDROP and fulfill everyone's human

rights. We have witnessed some commendable efforts to incorporate UNDROP provisions in national laws and policies, in what is a unique and unprecedented opportunity to redress various forms of discrimination, systematic violations and historical disadvantage that have affected peasants and rural workers for many decades.”

Based on the above, the same group of UN human rights experts urge “States to show leadership and implement the UNDROP by incorporating its norms and standards into national laws and policies”. They also “encourage the UN human rights mechanisms to closely review state practices in the context of the UNDROP provisions” and “call on the United Nations agencies to systematically apply the UNDROP in their programmes and activities, as well as to support and empower peasants and rural workers in throughout their work, both at policy and operational levels.”

For them, UNDROP is “a call for justice, based on the culmination of grievances and struggles of the world’s peasantry. It is also a plan of action for governments to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of peasants while also effectively regulating transnational corporations to prevent harm. UNDROP provides a framework to enable a just transition to a food system where biodiversity and human rights flourish. (...) UNDROP provides not only a recognition of peasants’ and rural workers’ rights and contributions, but also serves as a roadmap for States, the UN, business enterprises and other stakeholders to take concrete actions on the ground.”

The Joint Statement released by UN human rights experts very much echoes the positions and work of RAISE partners, which together aim at supporting UNDROP’s implementation in 10 countries of the Global South, as well as through national, regional and international human rights mechanisms. With other civil society organizations and coalitions, RAISE partners support the creation of a new UN Special Procedure in charge of monitoring UNDROP’s implementation.

### **The RAISE Project Partners**

[SEARICE](#) is active in various regional and global platforms where it brings evidence-based discourses in support of the rights of smallholder farmers to seeds. Through empowering methodologies, SEARICE builds farmers’ technical knowledge and skills, as well as their aptitude to claim their right to seeds.

[DKA Austria](#) is the development agency of the Catholic Children’s Movement in Austria. Regarding the right to food, DKA Austria is supporting peasants’ and their communities in their transition towards agroecology and advocates for UNDROP’s implementation, for Children’s environmental rights and binding commitments to human rights in supply chains.

[VSF-Suisse](#) is a Swiss NGO active in the livestock and livelihoods sector and is present in eight countries in East and West Africa. The Pastoralist Cluster with VSF-Suisse as a Cluster lead is closely collaborating with the Center for Minority Rights Development (CEMIRIDE), that works to strengthen the capacities of minorities and indigenous peoples to secure their rights and whose current focus is on economic empowerment (secured livelihoods and better access to basic services including health, education,

security, food and water) for sustainable livelihoods, and Réseau Billital Maroobé (RBM), engaging for local livestock breeds as well as for local fodder use with the idea of conserving locally adapted varieties of fodder species in the ASALs.

[Rural Women's Assembly](#) (RWA) is a rural women's movement, anchored in ten countries in Southern Africa. Its more than 120'000 members are smallholders, producers, farm workers and fishers, including the most marginalised. It has a longstanding record of accomplishment in amplifying rural women's voice in demanding their rights to land, food and seed sovereignty and commons as well as in advocacy work towards the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Union as well as UN human rights mechanisms.

[SOCLA](#) is a regional association of scholars that works in research and education, from transdisciplinary and inclusive perspectives in the socio-ecological, cultural and political dimensions of agroecology. SOCLA ultimate purpose is promoting agroecology and its territorial scaling out through participatory action research, implementation of practical experiences, promotion of different forms of knowledge and the dialogue among them, as a strategy to achieve sustainable food systems in America Latina, prioritizing the values food sovereignty, restoration and health of ecosystems, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and integral well-being.

[FASTENAKTION](#) is leading the RAISE consortium under the SDC funded project on human rights in food systems. Created in 1961 as Fastenopfer, Fastenaktion has been working with a human rights-based approach for many years. In recent years, it has been involved intensively in strengthening peasants' rights through engaging in international processes, working with partner organizations in the South, and raising awareness in Switzerland.

[The Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights](#) is engaged in a number of projects and activities on the right to food and the rights of peasants, at the [international level](#) and [regional level](#). With La Via Campesina, CETIM and FIAN International, it has created a [new website on UNDROP](#).