

**39<sup>th</sup> Session of United Nations Human Rights Council UNHRC  
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19<sup>th</sup> September 15.00 – 18.00 h: General Debate on Rights of Peasants  
Statement of Rudolf Bühler, Farmers Association of Swabian Hall,  
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(Bäuerliche Erzeugergemeinschaft Schwäbisch Hall, Germany)

Excellencies, distinguished Guests, Dear Colleagues,  
Honorable Head of the 39<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Human  
Rights Council!

On the topic of the Declaration of Global Peasants Rights I want to  
point out:

Globalization and Industrial Development goes along with the  
degeneration of local and small scale economies, small sale farming  
and local trade. It has led during the last 40 years to poverty and  
starvation of the rural people in the North as in the South. The global  
“Terms of Trade” are dictated by the imperialistic capital and the rich  
industrial societies, small scale economies and rural societies are the  
losers of this unjust development. This leads to the “New Social  
Question” which is a so far not identified but essential about Human  
Right Policy and struggle.

Along the unjust Terms of Trade, small scale farmers and rural  
societies, who are more then 60 % of the worlds population, are being  
robbed about their common assets especially in the fields of

- land grabbing
- genetic grabbing
- knowledge grabbing

further upon

- lack of access to education
- social/cultural means as the right of practicing indigenous  
culture

as all together have to be considered as part of Human Rights especially of the rural societies and people living in remote areas.

All these important issues and demands had been discussed, compiled and finalized at the last years Global Peasants Rights Conference on 8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> of March in Schwäbisch Hall / Germany which more then 400 Delegates from peasants grass root initiatives all over the world, north and south, east and west.

As result and outcome of the Global Peasants Rights Conference the “Swabian Hall Declaration of Peasants’ Rights” was formulated which is reflected in short:

Under the motto “Getting a step forward for the future of humanity and justice” it was reflected to the first human rights movement in history almost 500 years ago declared by peasants of Southern Germany being oppressed by the feudals and churches within the "Twelve Articles". This document represents the first record of demands for human rights and liberties in Europe, and included the right to equal access to lands, forests and fishing grounds. Although the feudal lords brutally crushed this revolt, peasants kept resisting and showing that the feudal nobility hadn’t defeated them. History shows that when peasants are rolled back in one place they reappear in another one. Peasant revolts are still ongoing!

At the Global Peasants’ Rights Congress, taking place from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 2017, more than 400 peasants, fishers, pastoralists, beekeepers, indigenous people, migrant and seasonal workers, rural women, youth, food consumers, NGOs’ representatives, academics, lawyers, activists and government representatives from more than 50 countries gathered together in the city of Schwäbisch Hall, a hotspot of the 16<sup>th</sup>-century “Great Peasants’ War”, to exchange views, to learn and to increase awareness about the current process of drafting a United Nations ***Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas***. This Declaration has its roots in a long term peasants’ rights movement from all parts over the world.

It was discussed that yesterday's oppressors today have new faces. Instead of feudal lords peasants are now confronted with the weapons of imperialistic capital. Corporations, national elites and governments are grabbing territories, including oceans, and endangering livelihoods, social cohesion, peoples' sovereignty and peace.

Livestock and seeds are at risk of being grabbed by research centers and multinational companies who apply for patents on their genetic traits. Trade agreements, the World Bank, G7 and so-called philanthropic foundations are forcing governments in the Global South to introduce industrial produced and patented seeds and to align their laws with international regimes of intellectual property protection.

Thus, peasants in Europe and other places are criminalized for saving and replanting seeds which fall under the protection of the UPOV convention.

Further the traditional knowledge of peasants is being grabbed and transferred under the protection of WIPO regulations and being lost as common assets of the rural societies.

Furthermore peasants and rural societies are having often lack of access to means of production such as credit, infrastructure and insurance. We are deprived of access to markets, which, along with agricultural policies, are primarily geared to international trade. The market power of companies and intermediaries keeps prices for peasants' products low.

Finally peasants are facing brutal repression in many countries by governments and politics. In light of these common threats, the participants of the congress are deeply convinced of the strategic importance of a *UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas*.

This Declaration will strengthen the legitimacy of peasants demands and makes visible the social, cultural and political values. It will acknowledge the peasants enormous contribution to ensuring collective well-being – whether through the provision of nourishing

food or the development of biodiversity and the protection of the environment.

It will reaffirm the right to land, water and natural resources, to seeds, biodiversity, food sovereignty, decent income and means of production within their collective dimension. Ultimately, it recognizes the collective future and the very future of humanity is bound up with the rights of peasants and other people working in the rural areas.

So most of this thoughts and political demands are layed down now in the latest draft of the “Declaration of Peasants Rights and other People living in Rural Areas”.

Although we are aware that the draft is a compromise as some of the issues and part of the demands are already covered within the “Woman Rights Convention” and the “ International Labour Organization Conventions”.

But this should not been taken to deny the firstly pointed out and formulated demands of the poor peasants and underprivileged rural societies as they are the losers within the industrialized global societies;

but to recognize the new formulated demands as highly important and newly identified and formulated parts of the universal human rights, as the so called Global Peasants Rights.

Please take it all serious, our worldwide struggle for equal human rights of all people and small scale farmers living and working on the lands, feeding the humans all over the Globe, being a seriously disadvantaged group in the global societies.

Rudolf Bühler

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