

## Press Release – La Via Campesina

### La Via Campesina welcomes UN preliminary recognition of peasant's rights

(Jakarta, February 12, 2010) The international peasant's movement La Via Campesina welcomes the preliminary UN recognition of the role and rights of peasants and small farmers in the world. The Fourth Session of the Advisory Committee of the UN Human Rights Council, who met in Geneva on 25-29 January 2010, adopted the report of the Advisory Committee titled "Discrimination in the Context of Right to Food" (A/HRC/AC/4/2). This report describes the marginalisation of peasants, rural women and traditional fishing, hunting, and herding communities. It also explains the work of La Via Campesina in establishing the rights of peasants and fully adopts La Via Campesina's Declaration of Rights of Peasants, including it in the report's annexes.

According to Henry Saragih, General Coordinator of Via Campesina who addressed the Committee in Geneva on January 27, *"It is a very important step for the defence of our rights. We now urge all the member countries to adopt this declaration during the March session of the UN Human Rights Council. We are asking for a new legal framework with clear standards to recognise the basic rights of more than 2,2 billion of peasants in the world"*.

Marginalisation, exclusion and repression of peasants and small farmers has been going on for centuries, and La Via Campesina has been struggling for the recognition of the rights of peasant – men and women- since 2002. In this process, Henry Saragih also addressed the UN General Assembly in April 2009 in New York at the dialogue on the Global Food Crisis and the Right to Food.

However, the breakout of the food crisis in 2007-2008 revealed to all, including policy makers, governments and institutions, the severity of the situation. This crisis raised the number of undernourished people worldwide to more than one billion, among which 80% live in rural areas (smallholder farmers, landless, and agricultural workers...). Meanwhile profit makers in the sector of food production have been increasing their benefits. While the rhetoric of transnational corporations seems convincing (when they say that they can feed the world), the stark food shortages and speculation only confirm that it is misleading.

Therefore the recognition and the defence of peasant's rights is an unavoidable condition if we want to feed the world and combat hunger and poverty.

In August 2008, the Advisory Committee recognised the positive role of peasants and small farmers in the world food system and began to look very carefully on the nature of the food situation, the role and rights of peasants, and the types of discriminations, obligations, and good practices. As a result, the current report recognises that many small farmers cannot feed themselves and their communities because they are losing control over their productive resources, such as land, water and seeds. Those resources are being increasingly controlled by agrochemical giants and transnational food producers.

La Via Campesina is now calling all the UN member states to support this new resolution at the March session of the UN Human Rights Council. The movement also asks all its members and allies to raise awareness among their governments on the importance of adopting this resolution in order to combat hunger and bring social justice worldwide.