**Oral statement of FIAN International during the fifth session of the inter-governmental working group for a UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas.**

**FIAN International – General Statement**

**9 April 2018**

Distinguished Mister Chair-Rapporteur, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Based on our long-standing work in documenting human rights violations affecting rural people and supporting these in seeking justice, FIAN considers that the Declaration makes a crucial contribution to addressing the structural discrimination and marginalization of peasants and other people working in rural areas.

Important advances have been made in recent years in the development of international norms and instruments regarding aspects that are key for the realization of the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas. To name but a few: The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests and the General Recommendation No. 34 by CEDAW on the Rights of Rural Women. However, the international human rights framework recognizing and protecting these rights remains fragmented. The Declaration specifies and concretizes the existing framework with regards to its application to rural people, providing critical guidance to enhance national efforts and international cooperation to improve the conditions of peasants and other people working in rural areas, and to protect their rights in the light of current challenges, such as the financialization of nature and digitalization. It will be an important resource for states seeking to inscribe measures to protect rural people in their constitutions and/or legal frameworks.

It is particularly important that the Declaration recognizes the collective character of several rights contained in it. The reality and livelihoods of peasants and other people in rural areas are based on communal practices and community relationships, such as the collective management of natural resources or the development and preservation of traditional knowledge. Impairments of their human rights, such as the displacement from their lands, affect these groups as a whole, and not isolated individuals in the community. Consequently, their collective rights as well as their collective enjoyment of rights require specific protection. Such protection does not contradict, but complement that of the individual enjoyment of rights. Indeed, the individual enjoyment of human rights is in many cases impossible without their collective enjoyment. Provisions recognizing the collective character of rights already exist in the constitutions or legal frameworks of several states. Examples are the Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, South Africa, South Sudan, Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico, Cambodia, India, Italy and Portugal.

We thank the Plurinational State of Bolivia’s mission and other supporting states for their efforts in this endeavor and support the quick adoption of this Declaration.