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SWITZERLAND

Submission by:
Swiss Coalition of the Friends of the UNDROP¹



FRIENDS OF THE UNDROP

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1 The Swiss Coalition of the Friends of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) was created in Switzerland in 2019 to promote UNDROP’s implementation. It brings together peasant organizations and non-governmental organizations as well as an academic institution working in the fields of human rights, development and cooperation: Action de Carême, Alliance Sud, CETIM, FIAN Suisse, Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, HEKS/EPER, SWISSAID and Uniterre.

Switzerland's Foreign Policy and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants (UNDROP)²

INTRODUCTION

1. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) has been adopted in 2018. Switzerland voted in favour of this adoption and played a central role during UNDROP's negotiation. This positive role should now be translated into clear, tangible support for UNDROP's implementation, both nationally and internationally.

2. In this contribution to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Switzerland in 2023, we present measures that Switzerland should take in its foreign policy to support UNDROP's implementation in Switzerland and abroad. As host to some of the world's largest multinational companies, and as a respected partner in development and trade cooperation, Switzerland can have a real impact on the implementation of the rights enshrined in the UNDROP. As the UNDROP was not yet adopted when Switzerland was last reviewed by the UPR in 2017, this topic is new. It was not included in any of the recommendations addressed to Switzerland in 2017.

THE UNDROP IN BRIEF

3. The aim of the UNDROP is to better protect peasants, fisherfolk, livestock breeders, gatherers and agricultural workers (hereinafter referred to as peasants), all of whom are disproportionately affected by hunger and extreme poverty. Their vulnerability notwithstanding, peasants play a key role in global food security and in the preservation of natural resources, biological diversity, and food systems. Peasants are thus key contributors to ensuring the resilience needed to cope with climate change and other crises.

4. The UNDROP complements and reinforces other human rights instruments, and reaffirms the principle of international law according to which the obligations set out in the UN Charter, including those relating to human rights, take precedence over obligations under other treaties.

5. The UNDROP thus affirms that States should elaborate, interpret and apply the international standards and agreements to which they are a party in a manner consistent with the rights enshrined in the UNDROP (Art. 2.4). It affirms that States should ensure that their agricultural, economic, social, cultural and development policies are coherent with the realization of the rights its sets out (Art. 15.5). It also recognizes the importance of international cooperation in support of national efforts for the realization of the rights set out in the UNDROP (Art. 2.6).

6. The UNDROP recognizes many rights, including the rights to food and food sovereignty (Art. 15), to an adequate standard of living (Art. 16), to land and other natural resources (Arts. 5 and 17), to a safe, clean and healthy environment (Art. 18), to seeds (Art. 19) and to biological diversity (Art. 20). It stipulates that States should respect, protect and fulfil these rights (Art. 2), guarantee their enjoyment without discrimination (Art. 3), and eliminate all forms of discrimination against peasant women and other women working in rural areas (Art. 4). It also provides that international and regional organizations shall promote respect for and full implementation of the UNDROP, and

2 This contribution is based on the study *Switzerland's Foreign Policy and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants* written by Caroline Dommen and Christophe Golay, published in 2020 by the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, Action de Carême, CETIM, FIAN Suisse, HEKS/EPER, Pain pour le prochain, SWISSAID and Uniterre.

contribute to the full realization of the rights it sets out, including through the mobilization of development assistance and cooperation (Art. 27).

IMPLEMENTING THE UNDROP

7. Switzerland should ensure that the rights protected by the UNDROP are taken into account in all relevant international fora, including SDG monitoring mechanisms, human rights protection mechanisms and international organizations concerned with food security and agriculture, labour, trade, intellectual property and development.

8. Switzerland should raise awareness of the content of the UNDROP among all actors of Swiss foreign policy. It is essential, for example that all divisions of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), and the Federal Institute of Intellectual Property (IPI) are made aware of the impacts that their activities can have on peasants' rights.

9. In its human rights work, Switzerland should support the establishment of new mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the UNDROP. It should also encourage discussion on how existing mechanisms, such as the treaty bodies, the universal periodic review and the Human Rights Council special procedures, can monitor UNDROP's implementation.

ENSURING PEASANTS' PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING PROCESSES

10. The right to participation, defined in Articles 2, 9 and 10 of the UNDROP, is fundamental to its implementation. The UNDROP enshrines the right of peasants to active and free participation, directly and/or through their representative organizations, in the preparation and implementation of policies, programmes and projects, and in decision-making processes that may affect their lives, land and livelihoods (Art. 10).

11. The UNDROP identifies some of these processes, including the development and implementation of international standards and agreements and public policies promoting the rights to food and food sovereignty and sustainable and equitable food systems, or relating to trade, seeds and intellectual property (Arts. 2, 10, 11, 15 and 19).

12. The UNDROP also provides that peasants have the right, in order to protect their interests, to form and join organizations, trade unions, cooperatives or any other organization or association of their own choosing - such organizations to be independent, voluntary and free from interference, coercion or repression - and that they have the right to bargain collectively (Art. 9). It stipulates that States should respect and encourage the establishment and development of strong, independent peasant organizations (Arts. 9 and 10), and that international organizations should consider ways to ensure the participation of peasants on issues affecting them (Art. 27).

13. In practice, peasants are often forgotten, or even excluded, when decisions are being made, for example on trade or development cooperation. Yet action in areas as diverse as trade, migration, water, investment, services and climate change often affect peasants' lives, land and livelihoods.

14. In addition to being necessary from a human rights perspective, it makes sense to support peasants' organizations and facilitate their participation in decision-making processes that affect them, as policies that respond to their needs contribute to reducing poverty as well as maintaining agrobiodiversity and promoting resilient food systems from which the world benefits. Peasants and

their representative organizations, unions, and cooperatives are a rich source of knowledge. The participation of independent peasants' organizations is essential in defining the rules determining access to genetic resources, including seeds, given their unique expertise in the area. They must be involved in discussions on development and trade policies because they have a better understanding than anyone else of the structure of agricultural markets in the regions where peasants live, and are the only ones who can express their needs.

Recommendations

15. Switzerland should promote effective participation of peasants in all decision-making processes that may affect their lives, land and livelihoods. It could encourage the establishment of a UN voluntary fund for peasants, to facilitate their involvement in the various activities of the UN and other international organizations, and contribute financially to this fund.

16. Switzerland should ensure the active and free participation of peasants and/or independent organizations representing them, at all stages in the development and implementation of trade-related agreements, in the design and implementation of international cooperation activities, and in international discussions on intellectual property relating to seeds.

MAKING TRADE POLICY CONSISTENT WITH THE UNDROP

17. Trade may serve as a safety net against hunger by allowing imports when local harvests fail. The new opportunities for food sales that trade offers may also create jobs for peasants and workers in rural areas. However, international competition resulting from liberalization often puts pressure on natural resources, land, and food prices. This adversely affects peasants, often with a disproportionate impact on peasant women and women agricultural workers. Trade rules also limit the policy space available to governments to support their peasant and rural communities.

18. Trade-related agreements negotiated by Switzerland as a member of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) are generally negotiated without the participation of groups or individuals who may be affected. Consultations with public-interest stakeholders or members of parliament are rare. Surveys indicated that during the negotiations for the EFTA-Mercosur agreement, none of the eight negotiating countries consulted peasant or rural stakeholders or allowed them to participate. Given the impact of this agreement on peasants, the process should have allowed them to take part in the negotiations. The agreement should also have explicitly addressed their needs and rights, as is required by the UNDROP, notably in Articles 2, 10 and 11.

Inequitable equality

19. The World Trade Organization (WTO), that started its work in 1995, was supposed to establish a global level playing field for agricultural trade. In practice, the WTO system put unequally matched countries and producers on the same "level playing field", thereby giving the strongest the upper hand, intensifying global competition in the agricultural sector, and undermining local food systems. As a founder member of the WTO and a party to numerous regional and bilateral trade agreements, Switzerland participates in this liberalized trading system. It is to its credit that it strives to protect Swiss agriculture from international competition.

20. Industrialized countries continue to subsidize their agricultural sectors, even though the WTO Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) was intended to put an end to the practice. Subsidies in European

countries, for example, allow European farmers to sell their produce abroad at prices that do not cover production costs, thus undermining peasant agriculture throughout the world.

21. Trade agreements also limit the policy space available to developing countries to support their peasantry. The procurement rules in these agreements, for example, may limit the ability of governments to purchase from local peasants. Yet local procurement is an important source of support for the peasant community, and for the local markets referred to in the UNDROP, which are crucial for economic development and poverty reduction among both rural and urban populations.

Global competition

22. In all regions, small-scale local production is being forced to compete with industrial-scale producers, some of whom receive subsidies. The structure of agricultural markets is characterized by “global value chains” (GVCs), whereby all the activities necessary for producing food – from the provisioning of inputs, production, processing and trading, up to distribution to the final consumers – are spread over several countries and organized in tightly coordinated chains that are dominated by transnational companies. GVCs in agriculture and food foster industrial agriculture and food systems skewed in favour of large agribusinesses.

23. Economic and agricultural policies have pushed developing countries to produce for export, confining them to the bottom of GVCs and making them vulnerable to fluctuations in world prices and markets, over which they have no control. Peasants are further penalized by the difficulties they encounter in gaining access to land and other natural and productive resources which would enable them to benefit from new market opportunities. Articles 11 and 15 of the UNDROP point to the need for States to address this situation. International competition also works against agricultural workers, who are exposed to low wages and poor working conditions, in violation of Articles 13, 14, 16 and 22 of the UNDROP.

Fragility of food systems

24. Agricultural subsidies in rich countries, combined with underinvestment in agriculture and rural areas in many developing countries, have made developing countries dependent on food imports, to the detriment of local production. As peasants are the backbone of food production in many regions, this compromises food production and therefore resilience and food security in the medium and long term. The UNDROP calls on States to protect and promote the rights to food and food sovereignty (Art. 15).

25. Disruptions of production and trade, such as these caused by the 2020-2021 coronavirus pandemic and the 2022 war in Ukraine, highlight the inherent fragility of the long, complex supply chains on which modern societies depend for their food. Such disruptions draw attention to the risks that our GVC-based food system – and international competition – pose not only for peasants’ rights but also for global food security. Switzerland committed to support agroecological production and agroecological food systems. These have proven to be more resilient to climate change adaptation and mitigation as well as to crisis-endured shocks (like Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine).

Lack of assessment and knowledge

26. Despite the increasingly evident shortcomings of the current trading system in terms of environmental sustainability, resilience, global food security and peasants’ rights, trade agreements remain essentially unchanged. New agreements are concluded without adequate assessment of the

impact of existing, similar, agreements. Virtually no attempt is made to ensure participation of vulnerable groups such as peasants, nor to anticipate and avoid possible adverse effects on these groups. The consistent lack of assessment of disaggregated impacts adds up to a series of missed opportunities to generate knowledge about how increased trade affects different groups. This in turn makes it difficult to adapt agreements under negotiation to the specific needs of peasants, or to introduce measures to address possible adverse effects of new trade rules on peasants.

Recommendations

27. Switzerland should ensure that new trade rules or measures to which it is a party do not impair peasants' rights in any of the countries involved. To this end, it should carry out or commission impact assessments of existing trade agreements and agreements under negotiation, making sure that the assessments pay particular attention to peasants' rights. Switzerland could also support the development of indicators on peasants' rights to gauge the compatibility of new agreements with the UNDROP.

28. In order to bring its trade policy into line with the UNDROP, Switzerland should ensure that new trade rules or measures to which it is a party give each country the flexibility it needs to develop and implement policies to support its peasants and strengthen local agricultural markets.

29. Switzerland should ensure that the monitoring mechanisms for the trade agreements it negotiates with third countries as an EFTA member take into account the effects of each agreement as a whole on the rights of peasants.

30. Switzerland should ensure that trade agreements are accompanied by measures on the ground, within the framework of cooperation activities, to help peasants in developing countries to benefit from the advantages that free trade agreements can offer. These measures should pay explicit and specific attention to peasants' rights, and recognize their traditional – and often collective – systems of land rights or seed saving, for example.

RESOLVING TENSIONS BETWEEN INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND THE RIGHT TO SEEDS

31. In voting for the adoption of the UNDROP, Switzerland confirmed its commitment to the right to seeds. This commitment had already been expressed through its ratification of many international treaties that directly or indirectly protect this right, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and its protocols, and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA).

The right to seeds in the UNDROP

32. The UNDROP provides that States should respect, protect and fulfil the key elements of the right to seeds, including peasants' right to the protection of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices relating to seeds; their right to equitably participate in sharing the benefits arising from the use of seeds; and their right to maintain, control, protect and develop their own seeds and traditional knowledge (Art. 19). The UNDROP also provides that States should support peasants' seed systems and agrobiodiversity (Art. 19.6) and promote a system for the evaluation and certification of peasants' seeds, with the participation of peasants (Art. 11.3).

33. According to the UNDROP, other international instruments, including those relating to intellectual property, should not restrict but rather facilitate the realization of the right to seeds (Art. 2.4). At the national level, States should ensure the coherence of their agricultural, economic and development policies with the right to seeds, and ensure that seed policies, plant variety protection and other intellectual property laws, certification schemes and seed marketing laws respect and take into account peasants' rights, needs and realities (Arts. 15.5 and 19.8).

Intellectual property and seeds

34. Switzerland has ratified several intellectual property treaties, including the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and the International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV Convention). The TRIPS Agreement requires WTO members – including Switzerland – to recognize intellectual property relating to plant varieties, either through patents or through an effective sui generis system, or a combination of both.

35. A few States, such as Ethiopia, Malaysia, the Philippines or India, have chosen to develop their own sui generis systems, which enables them to protect both plant breeders' rights and peasants' rights. Some States have chosen patents. A number of countries have adopted the UPOV model of plant breeders' rights protection. Developing countries that have adopted this model have usually done so as part of a trade agreement with countries from the Global North.

36. The UPOV Convention was first negotiated in 1961 by six Western European countries. It protects the rights of breeders who have created new, distinct, uniform and stable plant varieties. The criterion of novelty here does not mean that the varieties were not already known or used (e.g., by peasants); rather it means that the varieties had not previously been commercialized or registered in an official catalogue. The requirements of uniformity and stability mean that peasants are excluded from seeking UPOV protection for their varieties, as peasant varieties are by nature unstable and constantly evolving.

37. UPOV grants intellectual property rights to breeders for periods of up to 20 years or more. The UPOV system prohibits peasants from selling protected seeds, and a 1991 revision of the Convention, which already applies to some 30 developing countries, also prohibits them from exchanging such seeds. Peasants in member countries of UPOV 1991 can now not save or reuse seeds of protected varieties, except on their own farms, in a limited fashion and with due regard for the “legitimate interests of the breeder”, and only provided their government has adopted an optional exception to this effect.

Tensions between intellectual property and the right to seeds

38. Intellectual property poses serious challenges to the protection of peasants' right to seeds. While there is no tension when peasants use only peasants' seed, there is tension when they use farm-saved seed from varieties or plants protected by intellectual property. In some countries that have adopted laws conforming to UPOV 1991, peasants face civil and, in some cases, even criminal penalties for saving, reusing and exchanging farm-saved seed from commercial varieties.

39. These tensions are exacerbated in developing countries where peasants make up a majority of the agricultural population. In such countries, sui generis systems of plant variety protection adapted to local specificities are better suited to protecting the right to seeds as established in the UNDROP. Yet

Switzerland and other States continue to put the UPOV 1991 model forward as if it were the only model for the protection of intellectual property relating to seeds.

40. After voting in favour of the adoption of the UNDROP, Switzerland stated in an explanation of vote that it found certain provisions of the UNDROP which relate to the right to seeds (Art. 19, paras. 1(a), 1(d), 4 and 8) problematic, particularly in relation to intellectual property, and that it would interpret these provisions in accordance with national and international law.

41. This explanation of vote is problematic, since the provisions in question protect central elements of peasants' rights to food and seeds. Switzerland's explanation therefore runs counter to its human rights commitments. Switzerland's interpretation also appears to disregard the international law principle under which it can, and must, formulate and implement its policy on intellectual property in a manner consistent with its commitments under human rights law, and not the opposite.

Recommendations

42. Switzerland should support the protection of the right to seeds at the UN and in the implementation of the ITPGRFA, and ensure that the negotiation, interpretation and implementation of WTO, WIPO and UPOV instruments support the realization of the right to seeds. It should also stop promoting the 1991 Act of the UPOV Convention as if it were the only model for the protection of intellectual property on plant varieties.

43. Instead, Switzerland should encourage developing countries to use the possibilities offered by TRIPS to design sui generis systems of plant variety protection adapted to the agricultural and social specificities of each country, and which enable them to protect the rights of both plant breeders and peasants.

44. Through its international development cooperation, Switzerland should promote agrobiodiversity and the use of peasants' seeds. It should also support the strengthening of peasants' seed systems and ensure peasants' full participation in the design of these as well as in the design of sui generis systems.

45. When a new resolution on the implementation of the UNDROP comes before the Human Rights Council or the UN General Assembly, Switzerland should withdraw or amend its 2018 explanation of vote, in which it said that it will interpret the UNDROP's provisions on the right to seeds in accordance with national and international law, in particular as it relates to intellectual property.

PROTECTING PEASANTS' RIGHTS IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

46. Through its development assistance, Switzerland can promote and support the creation of conditions conducive to the realization of the rights recognized in the UNDROP in other countries, and thus make a significant contribution to its implementation.

47. The Federal Council's Dispatch on Switzerland's international cooperation strategy (IC Strategy 2021-2024) defines its development cooperation priorities, stating that the *raison d'être* of international cooperation is poverty reduction. The Dispatch includes positive points for peasants, in particular as it gives an explicit mandate to the SDC's Global Food Security Programme to integrate the right to food and peasants' rights in. However, peasants are not mentioned in other parts of the Dispatch. Greater attention should be paid to peasants' rights and on the sustainable development of rural areas in all of Switzerland's development cooperation activities, both within the Federal

Administration and in the context of bilateral cooperation and the multilateral development agencies in which Switzerland is involved.

48. Development cooperation activities can affect peasants, either directly or indirectly. Even activities directly aimed at reducing poverty in rural areas do not in and of themselves protect the interests of marginalized groups. Inclusive rural transformation is far from automatic; it must be made to happen. Peasants can be affected by development activities in a wide range of areas, not just by programmes relating to food security and agriculture. Activities in areas as diverse as trade, migration, water, climate change, emergency aid, or infrastructure have an impact on peasants and others in rural areas.

Market-based approaches: at the expense of local markets?

49. Swiss current development cooperation priorities emphasize a market-based approach and private sector involvement, with the risk that peasants' traditional farming methods and practices may be ignored or even undermined. For example, the desire expressed in the Dispatch to promote integration into regional and global value chains (GVCs) in several regions could preclude the realization of the rights to food and food sovereignty. This would weaken local markets whilst also exposing peasants to market instabilities and rendering them dependent on the players that dominate the GVCs.

50. "Conventional" approaches to value chain development have been found to produce unsatisfactory results for peasants' rights and sustainability, due in part to weak linkages between the most marginalized peasants and other players in the value chain. For instance, the need to be certified as meeting product standards excludes many peasants. Moreover, there is a close alignment between agroecology, peasants' rights and territorial markets. Swiss development cooperation should promote and strengthen agroecological food systems and territorial markets rather than conventional farming and GVCs.

51. The coronavirus pandemic in 2020-2022 and the war in Ukraine in 2022 have brought to light what peasants have long known: an approach based on GVCs rather than on local markets is highly fragile if events occur that constrict international trade. These crises have also shown that free production, storage and exchange of peasant seeds is fundamental to food security and functioning local markets.

Private sector

52. The Dispatch gives the private sector a major role in the implementation of the international cooperation strategy. Swiss development cooperation has worked in partnership with private entities for many years. This kind of collaboration, also known as "public-private partnership" (PPP) is in line with the philosophy of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which calls for cooperation with the private sector to achieve the SDGs.

53. PPPs offer benefits but also bring risks, not least for peasants. Recurring criticisms include the inadequacy of PPP governance mechanisms, the fact that governments often end up shouldering unexpected costs, and the lack of consultation with local communities. In addition, large companies and multinationals are often the partners of choice, especially for PPPs that involve collaborating with established private sector actors to achieve development goals. Local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are less often involved in PPPs, despite the fact that it is they that offer the greatest potential for job creation in rural areas.

54. Private companies often ignore the rural world, except to extract resources of monetary value. It is therefore essential for the protection of peasants' rights that collaboration with the private sector be in line with Switzerland's human rights commitments, and in particular with Article 2.5 of the UNDROP, whereby States should ensure that non-State actors respect and strengthen the rights of peasants.

55. Since 2021, SDC specifies how it uses PPPs and has guidelines that PPPs should follow through its [Handbook on Private Sector Engagement](#). This handbook spells out criteria and basic principles for private sector engagement in development cooperation. However, these remain too general and unspecific. For instance, the current general criteria for private sector engagement includes only a vague reference to human rights, and lacks any specific reference to UNDROP. To be consistent with Switzerland's human rights obligations, UNDROP needs to be explicitly integrated into the private sector engagement guidelines as a basic principle that must be observed in each specific private sector collaboration. Furthermore, UNDROP needs to become an integral part of the joint project risk assessment performed upfront and regularly reviewed throughout all collaboration, to ensure that all private sector engagement improves the situation and rights of peasants and people working in rural areas, and that there are no programmatic risks, so as to contribute to the implementation of UNDROP.

Land tenure systems

56. Swiss development cooperation projects do not always take into account the importance of customary land tenure in many countries. Indeed, they often find it expedient to foster individual rather than collective land titles, to the detriment of other, traditional forms of tenure of use of land. This is contrary to UNDROP's Article 17, which requires States to provide legal recognition for different models and systems of land tenure rights. Failure to respect these systems affects other rights of local communities, such as the rights to food and to health. It also increases poverty among already marginalized people, and conflicts due to overlapping or unclear land tenure regimes. Free land markets can increase pressure on land, thereby paving the way for peasants to lose their rights, and for land grabbing. Rural communities whose land rights are secure tend to experience lower rates of deforestation and soil degradation and are better able to manage the resource systems on which they depend, as well as maintain the biodiversity and the ecosystem services their lands provide.

Recommendations

57. Swiss development cooperation should support institutional capacities of governments, peasants' organizations and civil society in partner countries, as well as the generation of knowledge necessary for the respect of the rights protected by the UNDROP.

58. Swiss development cooperation should encourage and support the formation and development of strong, independent peasants' organizations. It could support the creation of national councils on peasants' rights, with representation equitably shared among peasants' organizations (including women peasants' and indigenous peasants' organizations), workers' representatives and government departments, with a mandate to implement the UNDROP.

59. It is important to raise the awareness of all those involved in Swiss development cooperation, both in the SDC and in SECO, of the potential impact of their activities on peasants' rights, as well as on the content of the UNDROP. To successfully implement the Declaration, SDC, its partners and peasant networks all together should jointly develop strategies towards putting the UNDROP into practice, adapted to different contexts. Moreover, a tool to assess the impact of SDC's and SECO's activities on peasants' rights should be developed.

60. In line with Switzerland's commitment to support agroecological production and agroecological food systems, the higher resilience and adaptation of agroecological farming and food systems to climate change, the contribution of collective natural resource management to maintain biodiversity and mitigate climate change as well as to shocks like Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine, Swiss development cooperation should promote and strengthen agroecological production, agroecological food systems and territorial markets. It should also prioritize securing customary land tenure through collective land rights and peasants' seed systems, rather than conventional production and GVCs.

61. Swiss cooperation should integrate UNDROP as a criterion and a basic principle for private sector engagement, in place of the current general and vague reference to human rights. UNDROP should become a basic principle for private sector engagement that must be observed in each specific private sector collaboration. To this end, UNDROP should be an integral part of the joint project risk assessment that is performed upfront and regularly during the collaboration, for instance, by integrating UNDROP obligations amongst indicators of programmatic risks.

CONCLUSION

62. Switzerland's role during the negotiation and adoption of the UNDROP was decisive in the adoption of an instrument that is so highly relevant to the realities of today's world. The UNDROP is a robust tool for addressing the discrimination and vulnerabilities faced by peasants in all regions of the world. It is also important because peasants are vital custodians of the biological and food diversity on which humanity depends for the future of its food supply.

63. Experience with other international instruments shows that they are most effective when efforts are undertaken to promote information and awareness-raising of their objectives. Switzerland can and should now play a leading role in such efforts. An important step in the operationalization and implementation of the UNDROP will be to ensure that all those involved in Swiss foreign policy are made aware of the content of the UNDROP, as well as of the potential impact of their policies and activities on the rights of peasants. Another step will be to reiterate initiatives that Switzerland has already taken in various international fora, such as the Human Rights Council and the FAO, with a view to drawing attention to the best ways of implementing the UNDROP.

64. Greater participation by peasants in the design and implementation of projects and programmes affecting them is needed, along with impact assessments. Switzerland should support such initiatives and thus bring the UNDROP to life, and contribute to the sustainable realization of the rights it protects.

Annexe 1

This joint contribution has been prepared by the following organizations and persons (by alphabetical order):

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