

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights opens fifty-fourth session

23 February 2015

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Meeting with Stakeholders on Paraguay

Aktion GEN-Klage said that Paraguay was very affected by the use of genetically modified organisms (GMO) in agriculture, and it also had one of the most unequal distributions of land throughout Latin America: 77 per cent of the arable land was concentrated in the hands of only one per cent of the population. Organized landless people had been fighting for agrarian reform, and they rejected the monocultures, such as soybeans. Soybeans was the number one export crop, whose massive expansion was often associated with land conflicts, human rights abuses, expulsions and extensive use of agricultural poisons. The rapid soy-expansion aggravated the land conflict, which was the most burning social problem in the country. Aktion GEN-Klage urged the Government of Paraguay to introduce an agrarian reform, override land titles, introduce organic farming on a small scale, end the use of pesticides, and also to implement promises it had already made to prohibit the cultivation of genetically modified soya on public land and to introduce taxation of soy exports.

A Committee Expert recognized the serious impact of soy monoculture on poverty in Paraguay, and asked for concrete examples of the negative impact of soy GMO on smallholder farmers.

Aktion GEN-Klage said that they had heard from people from Paraguay of a situation in a town where families were unable to obtain land to grow their own food, because all the land had already been purchased by large corporations and Brazilians. Soy mono-cultivation had a negative impact on the fruit and vegetable production, and had also damaged the health of livestock.

The Committee Chairperson asked whether it was the opinion of the non-governmental organization that most of the problems with economic, social and cultural rights in Paraguay stemmed from the problem of most people living in the rural areas and having no access to the land.

Aktion GEN-Klage said that lack of access to land was the main problem and that land title review and land re-distribution would be solutions.

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