

Oral Statement on behalf of Aktion GEN-Klage Germany
to the Committee on economic, social and cultural Rights

54th session, 23. february 2015

Parallel Report to the Fourth State Report of Paraguay on the Implementation of the International
Pact on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Social Human Rights in Paraguay

Violations of Human Rights as a result of the Genetic-Modified Soya-Monocultures - - the Right to Food and Health - for Small Farmers and the Paraguayan Population

Honourable members of the Committee,

First of all I have to thank for the possibility to be here reporting personally about our parallel-report .

I'm Christiane Lüst from international network Aktion GEN-Klage, having been here just in 2013 to present an parallelreport against Austria and with further different reports in past – India, Canada, Austria, Colombia, Brazil, Germany, Argentine – together with different NGOs from this countries. My job is helping them to give an report about the consequences of a highly alarming global development: the use of genetically modified organism (GMO) in agriculture in the world, and making visible the fatal consequences for consumers, farmers and bee-keepers in this countries.

Paraguay in particular is one of the most affected countries worldwide by this development.

From a total of six million inhabitants of Paraguay two million people represent the rural population.

„About 43% of the population lives in rural areas, about half of the population lives in poverty. 19% even in extreme poverty. They have a day less than 1,25 US dollars at disposal.“ (*Films for one world: Raising Resistance* p. 3).

„Paraguay has one of the most unequal distribution of land throughout Latin America: 77% of the arable land is concentrated in the hands of only one percent of the population“ (*Upside Down World / IPS, 18.3.08*).

„Thus, Paraguay is in terms of unfair land distribution in the first place worldwide“ (*Steffi Holz, Paraguay, p. 225 2009*)

"Paraguay is one of the most corrupt countries in the world ... In contrast, 44 percent of small-scale farmers have only one percent of the soils. The number of landless, small farmers and their families is estimated at 300.000. Either they have never owned land, were forcibly evicted from their soil or had to sell their land to expanding soybean farmers because of their precarious financial situation. Other small producers, who have been situated near industrially farmed gm-soy-plantations, gave up their plots because of the health impact of pesticide use. Organized landless people have been fighting for years for agrarian reform ... and request the return of illegally acquired lands. They also reject the monocultures off because they displace smallholder agriculture. "(films for a world: Raising Resistance p.3 / 4).

A large part of the country - namely 70% - belongs to foreign, primarily Brazilian landowners.

Since the mid-1960s the country was hit by a massive expansion of soy cultivation, which boomed in the late 1990s. In this case, genetically modified seeds were introduced by corporations such as Monsanto. Boosted by the demand for livestock feed and bio fuels, Paraguay developed for today's fourth largest exporter of soybeans, behind the USA, Brazil and Argentina. According to the Agriculture Ministry soy is grown on 2.4 million hectares, what minds 38% of the agricultural production of the country (IPS, 08/11/07). 80% of soy plantations are genetically manipulated. (*Latin America News* 393 March 07).

(<http://www.oneworld.at/start.asp?ID=225336>)

For the country in the heart of the South American continent, the soybean is the number one export product ... No agricultural product claimed in further increasingly more area. It have been even 2,6 million hectares in the recent growing season - and this with only 4.2 million hectares of arable agricultural land designated. And the soy front of the large landowners continues apace massive. This massive expansion of soy monocultures in Paraguay is often associated with land conflicts, human rights abuses, expulsions - and with agricultural poisons that are extensively sprayed onto the soy fields.(<http://fdcl-berlin.de/aktuelles/2008/november-2008-sojarepublik-paraguay-der-widerstand-der-kleinbauern-gegen-die-sozialen-und-oekologischen-folgen-der-sojamonokulturen-in-paraguay/#c3600>)

"... that people give up on the rural areas and move away. Since years tens of thousands continuously migrated to the big cities of Paraguay..... Many of them live in the slums on the peripheral city, which have grown in the past 15 years by about 75%."The district... is now growing rapidly by campesinos, which are distributed by the soy." More than 60,000 people live here now ..."(Steffi Holz, *Paraguay* p. 244/245; 2009)

"... 78% of the soy animal feed in Europe is imported from Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay.By the great demand within Europe - particularly from Germany - the climbing of soy production continues. For this, the companies would also cut down rainforests - with catastrophic consequences for the climate and the environment. "(*"A crime against humanity"*, *Miesbacher Merkur* 3.6.11 page 4)

The price of the soy monocultures in South America – Expulsion and hunger in Paraguay – full troughs and tanks in Europe

„The soy farmers destroy the nature and the life of the people namely not only here in Paraguay, but worldwide. We know that soy is exported to Europe. But nobody knows in Europe how soy is produced.“ *Small farmer Gerónimo Arévalo, Alto Paraná, Paraguay*

„, European stockbreeding companies and fattening farms feed yearly 40 million tons of soybean meal. Besides, the protein containing bean becomes more and more important for the production of agrarian fuels..... However, the industrial soy cultivation in monoculture threatens the small farming agriculture, destroys the environment and poisons the rural population. The application of genetically modified soybean varieties walks along with massive pesticide application, poisoning persons and environment.

The rapid soy-expansion aggravates the land conflict, anyway the most burning social problem in Paraguay, where 4% of the population dispose of 86% of the arable land. Even 90.000 families were forced to leave there country during the last decade, because they cannot compete with the soy farmers and do not bear the pesticide load any more.

.... The more the worldwide demand in soy rises, the more intensifies the situation also in Paraguay....

..... reports the little farmer and activist Esther Leiva from Paraguay (Organización Lucha por la Tierra (OLT), Espacio Unitario, Via Campesina) about the results of the soy cultivation in her country. Based on the current political situation in Paraguay ... the land conflict, the subject Genetic engineering in the agriculture, the results of the pesticide use, the threat of the little-farmers- life-style and questions of the food sovereignty move in the focus. Also closely related to this are the struggles of the social movements in Paraguay, which are very engaged, particularly in rural areas...“ (<http://www.asta.uni-potsdam.de/2011/05/der-preis-der-sojamonokulturen-in-suedamerika/>)

This means a massive violation of the economic, social and cultural human rights of the Paraguayan population!

Therefore, we urge the government of Paraguay:

- to end of the use of pesticides / stop sprays / maintenance of protective measures

- **to introduce an agrarian reform** is required to expropriate large land holdings and to transfer the ground to the Campesinos legally.

- the **Override of land titles**, so the farmers get access to credit, seeds and technical assistance.

- **Introduction of organic farming on a small scale**, the possibility of a variety of cultivated crops for self-sufficiency

- Access to appropriate medical care

- **National programs for Food Security and sovereignty over the resources**, that promotes sustainable agriculture with the goal of ending hunger.

- Implementation of government promises:

a) prohibition of GM soya cultivation on public land

b) Taxation of soy exports

(*Resistance to soybean cultivation / Paraguay: small farmers vs. soybean industry sentences 2 and 3*).

- **Observance of at least 2-year experimental- and study-phase about possible effects**, before seed is new admitted. No exceptions for GM-Seed of Monsanto and Co.

In summary, it is absolutely clear that the Paraguayan government fails to meet its obligations by signing the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

We are very concerned about this development, which continues to grow by further steps envisaged by the government to step up the GMO-growing in the face of rising profits.

We ask the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to express their concern – like just done to this theme to the governments of Germany, India, Colombia, Brazil, Austria, Argentine - over the violations of the right to food, the dramatic poverty increase because of GM soya cultivation - and the right to health, integrity and self determination, which are dramatically violated through the use of GM soya in Paraguay and to make also recommendations to the paraguay government on how to stop these violations to our most basic Human Rights immediately.

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