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### **“The Cancun Statement” Promoting Sustainable Pastoralism and Livestock Production for the Conservation of Biodiversity in Grasslands and Rangelands**

CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity) COP 13  
14 December 2016 - Cancun, Mexico.

**We, the contributors to and participants of the COP 13 Convention on Biodiversity side event "World's Grasslands and Rangelands at Risk: the Role of Pastoralists and Livestock to Conserve Global Biodiversity", organised by Instituto Potosino de Investigación Científica y Tecnológica (IPICYT), Conservation International (CI), Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), Society for Range Management, International Land Coalition (ILC), International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), International Rangeland Congress (IRC), International Grassland Congress (IGC), Coalition of European Lobbies for Eastern African Pastoralism (CELEP), Yolda Initiative, DiversEarth, and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP):**

*Noting that* rangelands and natural grasslands cover nearly half of the Earth's surface, many are hotspots of biodiversity, and they provide wildlife habitat and a number of ecosystem services, including habitat, flood mitigation, soil retention, carbon capture, and water for rural and urban communities. In addition, these landscapes play a key role in local, national and global economies, producing livestock and being the origin of many of the world's medicines, feeds, foods and industrial products such as natural plant-based dyes;

*Concerned that* across the world natural grasslands, rangelands and associated ecosystems are imperiled, affected by invasive species and soil erosion, threatened by the undermining of common property systems, transformed by unsustainable land-use changes, including mining and inappropriate afforestation and energy generation, and unsustainable agricultural production methods;

*Aware that* pastoralism and other nature-based land use in rangelands and natural grasslands greatly contribute to conservation and sustainable use of natural and domestic biodiversity, but that these extensive systems are under threat from adverse policies and subsidies, including nationalisation and privatisation of lands, expansion of crop farming and unfair competition from highly subsidised commercial and intensive production systems, as well as other forms of encroachment, fragmentation and degradation of rangelands and migration routes from industrial development and other human activities;

*Recognising that* more than 500 million people across the globe identify themselves as pastoralists – such as nomads, transhumants, herders and ranchers. These communities, many of whom are mobile indigenous peoples, are historically marginalised, have limited access to health, education and other services, and in some countries have poverty indexes twice the national average;

*Also recognising that* small-scale livestock herders and their communities around the world struggle to obtain information, inputs and support relating to sustainable use, animal health, training opportunities, infrastructure, market access and adapted social services;

*Acknowledging that* the different users of natural grasslands and rangelands, including pastoralists, are the makers and custodians of the natural capital of these ecosystems, appropriate support is necessary to ensure that they can optimise production of multiple land values – food, biodiversity, ecological connectivity, hydrological cycles, carbon stores, soil conservation, etc.; – and to ensure responsible stewardship of these lands;

*Mindful that* systems of common property management and accompanying land rights are not well respected or legally protected; that this is a major barrier to protecting the biodiversity, ecosystem

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services, and climate resilience of the rangelands and natural grasslands; and that empowering pastoralists will contribute to employment and economic development while honouring culture, tradition and indigenous ways of life;

*Building upon* more than a decade of effort through the World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples (WAMIP) and the World Initiative for Sustainable Pastoralism (WISP), including the Dana Declaration on mobile people and conservation (2002), the Segovia Declaration on Mobile Peoples (2007), the Hohhot Declaration (2008), the Mera Declaration — the first and only declaration by pastoralist women (2012), the N'Djaména Declaration (2013), the Nuakchott Declaration (2013), and the Kiserian Statement (2013); and the statement issued during the Special Session of the Farmers' Forum with Pastoralists and Livestock Breeders jointly organised by the UN's International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Vétérinaires Sans Frontières International (VSF); all instances where pastoralists and extensive livestock breeder organisations worldwide have expressed their needs and priorities;

Further building upon the Resolution L.24 of the second United Nations Environment Assembly in May 2016 endorsed by 158 Member States calling for promotion of sustainable pastoralism and protection of rangelands;

*Stressing that* mainstreaming and collaboration across multilateral agreements (especially the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought (UNCCD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)), non-governmental organisations and sustainably managed businesses is essential for global change.

**Therefore, we the contributors to and participants of the "World's Grasslands and Rangelands at Risk: the Role of Pastoralists and Livestock to Conserve Global Biodiversity" from (28 countries, 46 organisations), declare that globally natural grasslands and rangelands are critically endangered and urgent action is required to protect and maintain the services they provide to sustain human life. We call upon all sectors of society to:**

1. Increase investment in pastoralism as a sustainable land-use and livestock-production system for the conservation of biodiversity, enhanced food security, drought and disaster risk management and restoration of rangelands, including services adapted to remote and mobile populations for energy, education, health, communication, civil rights, and finance and other public goods.
2. Respect, accommodate, encourage, better understand, and take into use the indigenous and local knowledge of pastoralists and their land rights, including their customary institutions of governance, common property and traditional food systems, and mobile livestock herding for multiple benefits. Stop or reverse all efforts to sedentarise mobile pastoralist communities, whether forced or induced.
3. Urgently adopt national and regional policies fostering enabling conditions for increased support and finance toward conservation and sustainable use of these ecosystems.
4. Take action toward achieving land degradation neutrality as highlighted in the Sustainable Development Goals, and improve participatory monitoring for evidence-based decision making on both land degradation and ecosystem health.
5. Improve technical support, conducive policies, access to markets, investment inputs and other economic resources, and enhance the unique value and fair trade of sustainable pastoral products in local, regional and international markets.
6. Support networks and associations of pastoralists in order to strengthen their voice and decision making; promote partnerships across multilateral agreements, and across sectors including

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- environment, agriculture, energy, economics and social services; encourage transboundary and regional cooperation among countries.
7. Enable pastoralists as key stakeholders and decision makers so as to achieve sustainable production in rangelands and landscapes that simultaneously allow for the un-impaired movement of thriving and healthy populations of migratory animals travelling through corridors of public, private and community lands and protected areas.
  8. Encourage science-based and participatory data collection, monitoring and research (including non-equilibrium ecosystem analysis) on climate resilience, sustainable management, rangeland stewardship and governance.
  9. Promote awareness of the present state of rangelands and pastoralist communities as well as the need to support and reintroduce sustainable management practices towards land restoration and biodiversity conservation.
  10. Provide education among technicians and policymakers on the benefits of sustainable pastoralism, including clean air, food and water security, and economic resilience in rangelands and natural grasslands.
  11. Consider a possible United Nations resolution designating 2021 as the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists.

**Signatories to the CANCUN STATEMENT, including pastoralists, non-governmental organisations, research institutions and governmental organisations, promoting sustainable pastoralism and rangelands for the conservation of biodiversity at the "World's Grasslands and Rangelands at Risk: the Role of Pastoralists and Livestock to Conserve Global Biodiversity" Event at CBD COP 13, on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016 in Cancun, Mexico.**

### Organisations

Alianza Regional para la Conservación de Pastizales del Desierto Chihuahuense (ARCPDCh), Mexico  
Asociacion Civil OIKOS, Peru  
Association of World Reindeer Herders (WRH)  
Bombay Natural History Society, India  
Coalition of European Lobbies for Eastern African Pastoralism (CELEP)  
CENESTA, Iran  
Coalition of Pastoralist Civil Society Organisations of Uganda (COPASCO)  
Colegio de Postgraduados, Mexico (COLPOS)  
Conservation International (CI)  
DiversEarth  
EcoHealth Alliance  
FAUNAM  
Fondo Mexicano para la Conservación de la Naturaleza, A.C. (FMCN)  
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)  
Forest Research Institute, Kenya (KFRI)  
Forest Research Institute, Poland  
Fundación Biosfera del Anahuac (FUNBA), Mexico  
GRID-Arendal, Norway  
International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA)  
International Centre for Reindeer Husbandry (ICR)  
International Grassland Congress  
International Land Coalition (ILC)  
International Leaf Crop Relief Initiative (ILCRI)  
International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)  
International Rangeland Congress

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International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)  
Instituto Potosino de Investigación Científica y Tecnológica (IPICYT)  
KKL-JNF Land Development Authority, Israel  
Meteorological Department, Kenya  
Mexican Society for Range Management  
Ministry of Climate and Environment, Norway  
Ministry of Environment, Gambia  
Ministry of Environment, Russia  
Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Kenya  
Ministry of Environment and Tourism of Mongolia  
Oikos, Peru  
Red Pastoramérica, Peru  
Red de Socioecosistemas y Sustentabilidad, Mexico  
Saami Council, Norway  
Saami Parliament, Norway  
Society for Range Management (SRM)  
Sociedad Mexicana para el Manejo de Pastizales (SOMMAP)  
The Rangelands Partnership (RP)  
Union of Indigenous Nomadic Tribes, Iran  
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)  
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Vétérinaires Sans Frontières International (VSF)  
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