

CELEP Statement on the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists

We, the 24 member organisations and 7 partner organisations of the Coalition of European Lobbies on Eastern African Pastoralism (CELEP) join the global movement towards a United Nations International Year of the Rangelands and Pastoralists.

Pastoralism plays a critical role in the ecological, social and economic sustainability of drylands worldwide. In Africa, drylands make up about 40% of the land area, with pastoralism representing the main livelihood option for approximately 200 million people. As a European network aiming to recognise and support pastoralism in Eastern Africa, we strongly support the celebration of an International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists.

As CELEP, our main actions involve:

- 1) *Lobbying and informing* our national governments, EU bodies as well as other policy-formulating bodies and agencies on pastoral issues;
- 2) *Striving* for recognition of pastoralism as a valuable and viable livelihood system that contributes to national and regional economies, food security, employment and sustainable management of natural resources;
- 3) *Changing perceptions of policymakers to recognise mobility* as a crucial condition for sustainable pastoralism and for community security in (cross-border) conflict areas;
- 4) *Promoting* pastoralists' rights of access to and management of natural resources such as land, vegetation and water as well as to contribute to communities' security in conflict areas; and promoting pastoralism as a positive example of climate-change adaptation in the drylands.

Pastoralism exploits the climatic variability that is characteristic of drylands. Carefully planned livestock mobility and the breeding of animals to feed selectively on the best available pastures are two critical strategies that allow pastoralists to create economic value rather than merely to survive in difficult environments. Nevertheless, we recognise that the livelihoods of pastoralists in the Global South are increasingly being challenged by numerous factors such as conflicts, land grabbing, climate change etc. At the same time, local and international decision-makers do not always recognise the important economic value and environmental role of pastoralists and do not address their needs adequately. Pastoral communities are still too often considered as backwards and are encouraged to settle. Taking into account the many advantages and opportunities of pastoralism in the African arid and semi-arid areas, however, will significantly add to the global fight against hunger and poverty. Key to this is to give value to local knowledge and innovation that offer possibilities for pastoralists to develop sustainable solutions to cope with current and future challenges.

In conclusion, members and partners of CELEP

- *Affirm* the economic, ecological and social importance of pastoralism as a sustainable livelihood and production system;
- *Underline* the great potential of the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists to give recognition to pastoralism as a valuable and viable livelihood system contributing to national and regional economies, food security, gender equality, employment and sustainable management of natural resources.

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