

CELEP Statement on the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists

We, the 25 member organisations and 7 partner organisations of the Coalition of European Lobbies for 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 declaration of an International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists.

As CELEP, our main actions involve:

- 1) *Lobbying and informing* our national governments, European Union (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;
- 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; pastoralist communities' security in conflict areas; and 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 husbandry of animals to feed selectively on the best available pastures are two critical strategies in the production system 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 and climate change. At the same time, local and international decision-makers do not always recognise the important economic value and environmental role of pastoralism, and seldom provide policy and institutional frameworks that address pastoralists' needs adequately. Rather, permanent settlement has continued to be the policy of government technocrats at the expense of a mobile livelihood system that has lasted for centuries. This policy is driven by the conviction that pastoralism is a backward practice. If the many advantages and opportunities of pastoralism in arid and semi-arid areas are recognised and supported, however, global food security and wellbeing will be strengthened. 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 (IYRP) 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;
- *Acknowledge* that the IYRP will provide a more structured way for policy dialogue, engagement and inclusion of pastoral issues into the United Nations agenda.

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