

Message of the representatives of pastoralists attending the World Gathering of Nomadic & Transhumant Pastoralists to the delegates to the Eighth Session of the Convention of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (Madrid, 3- 14 Sept.)

La Granja, Segovia, 9 September 2007

We, over hundred representatives of pastoralists from 38 countries in Africa, America, Asia and Europe, call the attention of the delegates to the 8th Convention of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification to recognize the important role of pastoralism as a sustainable way to use the natural resources in the arid and semi-arid eco-systems of the world. There is a growing body of scientific evidence showing that the mobile people's use of natural resources is in harmony with nature, and promotes environmental integrity and conservation of both wild and domestic biodiversity. This has been confirmed by environmental experts in international meetings resulting in the DANA Declaration (Jordan, 3-7 April 2002) and Recommendation V.27 on "Mobile Indigenous Peoples and Conservation" (Vth IUCN World Park Congress, 2003, Durban, South Africa).

Pastoralism is both an adaptive production strategy assuring the economic survival of hundreds of millions of peoples, and a way of life contributing to the sustainable management of natural resources. Pastoral livelihoods are based on mobility, on common property of natural resources, regulated by customary law and practices, customary institutions and leadership making use of local and indigenous knowledge. In order to maintain its positive environmental impact, pastoralism as a way of life and as an integrated system needs to be recognized and sustained, by simultaneously developing new economic opportunities, securing access to services, education, technology, information and knowledge and building capacities that are specifically designed for pastoralists.

Despite a growing international awareness of the contribution of pastoral systems to drylands development, pastoralism is still in many countries not receiving the necessary attention and support. Policies and legislation are often formulated without the full and informed participation and empowerment of pastoralists, both men and women, leading to processes of land and resource alienation, forced or inappropriate sedentarization of the pastoralists and ultimately to a change of land use, often leading to land degradation and desertification. Pastoral systems are best adapted to climate change. Despite this fact more and more grazing lands are being allocated to the growing of crops or agrofuels.

Building on the outcomes and statements of the 4th meeting of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 4, Bonn, 2004), of the "Manyatta" side event of the COP 7 of the UNCCD (Nairobi 2005), and of the "Pastoralist Dialogue" side event of the CRIP 4 (Buenos Aires 2007); the participants in the World Gathering of Nomadic & Transhumant Pastoralists invite the delegates to the 8th Convention of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, officers of the international organizations, NGOs and other attending experts to:

1. GIVE due recognition to rights of pastoralists, their special capacities and needs, by referring to the principles contained in the Dana Declaration, in WPC Recommendation V.27 on "Mobile Indigenous Peoples and Conservation", in the Karen Commitment on Livestock Keeper Rights Referring to Animal Genetic Resources, in the ILO Convention 169, and in the UN Declaration

on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

2. URGE governments to approve the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
3. ADOPT in the National Action Programmes measures to achieve:
 - i. RECOGNITION of common property rights and customary use of natural resources, even if occasionally or seasonally utilized, and RESPECT the integrity of the mobile indigenous peoples' resource management systems;
 - ii. RECOGNITION and RESPECT of customary laws, customary institutions and leadership;
 - iii. RESPECT of pastoralism and mobility as a distinctive source of cultural identity;
 - iv. Full and informed participation of pastoralists in policy making and legislation affecting access to natural resources and their economic and social development;
 - v. RATIFICATION and EFFECTIVE implementation of International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, where the relevant peoples wish;
 - vi. DELIVERY of health, education, veterinary services which are adapted to the mobility of pastoral people;
4. DEVELOP educational curricula in schools and universities promoting a better understanding of pastoralism and other mobile livelihoods, develop specific educational programs on pastoralism and pastoral related subjects,
5. FACILITATE access of pastoralists to focused research and educational opportunities;
6. DEVELOP strategies and mechanisms to support pastoralists to reduce the impact of droughts and climatic change;
7. DEVELOP adequate mechanisms of restitution and compensation in case pastoral communities loose access to their customary resources;
8. Introduce all possible measures to facilitate flexible mobility of herds according to their needs;
9. PROMOTE the development of new economic opportunities for pastoralists and ASSURE the enabling conditions are in place;
10. SUPPORT pastoralists' access to markets and create conditions of fair trade;
11. PROMOTE policies and international legislation to facilitate cross-border mobility and trade by pastoral peoples who have traditionally lived in more than one country;
12. PROMOTE the integration on a complementary basis of traditional knowledge and practices related to resources management with mainstream science.