

The Global Pastoralist Gathering, Turmi, Ethiopia February 2005

Pastoralists and Pastoralism – Looking ahead to 2015

The Global Pastoralist Gathering brought together 120 pastoralists leaders from 25 countries from both South and North, and 100 members of government, international organisations, NGOs and other bodies. The purpose was to promote the sharing of information and ideas between pastoralists in their search for appropriate development and a sustainable environment. In addition the meeting aimed to provide a new perspective to government, NGOs and international agencies, offering understanding of the value of pastoralism, and new approaches to securing and enhancing pastoralist contributions to society, economy and the environment.

The meeting noted that unless change comes, by 2015 access to education, health, clean water, economic progress and legal protection will have declined in pastoralist areas. Not only will pastoralist people and their animals suffer, but the environment in which they live will have degraded and the markets which they serve will have declined. This situation will affect not only herders and their children, but all those who live around and among them, and it will affect national economies and societies in their entirety. Increasing gaps between poor pastoralists and rich others, increasing frustration at erosion of rights and loss of land, and increasing destitution will lead to conflict and migration.

The Millenium Development Goals, ratified by governments all over the world, have set targets for access to education, health and social development to be achieved by 2015. While many countries are moving towards these goals, there remains a worrying gap. In pastoralist areas of the world, these goals will not be met, unless new attitudes are adopted and substantial new investments are made. Countries with pastoralist populations will not be able to claim achievement of the goals unless a new emphasis is placed on providing the services, markets, mobility and representation that the people need.

The meeting recognised that there were numerous examples of small scale improvements, almost all of them being the result of pastoralists' own efforts to organise and act for the benefit of their communities. These efforts had then led to recognition and co-operation from government and international bodies. There are variations in the degree to which national governments recognise pastoralism and provide appropriate laws, policies and services. In West Africa there are pastoralist codes and recognition of pastoralist need to cross borders freely. In Spain and India there is economic support for pastoralist production. In South America there are strong pastoralist organisations. In every country the biggest concern is the loss of rights to grazing land.

Women, as the hidden advisors behind the men, guardians of cultural and traditional norms, decision makers about community and household economies and holders of

knowledge about natural resources, remain a vital group, whose rights are little respected in most countries and whose access to education is almost universally low.

The global gathering concluded that through increasing pastoralist men and women's own organisation from local to global levels, through increasing and enhancing engagement with local and national governments, and through due recognition and support from the international community, pastoralists will contribute substantially to achieving a better situation. Looking forward to 2015, the pastoralist members of the gathering could foresee environmental, economic and social harmony within and around pastoralist areas, complemented by good services that do not alienate the culture or production systems. Pastoralists would, like other citizens, see their rights respected and would have access to national decision-making. They would have well-functioning organisations conducting negotiations and increasing the value of their products. Their mobility would be recognised as a necessary part of their production system that results in benefits to national and regional economies, and they would move freely and responsibly across borders to markets and grazing. Their routes would be respected and their land rights clarified and secured. Pastoralists, government and international bodies alike would respect and upgrade their guardianship of the environment. Pastoralism would have international recognition as an economic, social and cultural system of considerable value and its products would command value in the market.

The meeting, the first of its kind, called for further opportunities for pastoralists to meet one another at global and regional levels. Pastoralist leaders wish to continue sharing knowledge and developing collaboration among themselves and with governments, NGOs and international agencies. Pastoralists themselves will go on to explore the means by which they can continue to communicate and collaborate, negotiate and advocate; calling governments to account in their treatment of pastoralism and holding international agencies to their promises.

Turmi, 2 February, 2005