



LIFE Network

PASTORALISM AND BIODIVERSITY

Statement by pastoralists and support organizations attending the ninth meeting of the Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity 19 May 2008 Bonn, Germany

Pastoralism is a way of life that protects biodiversity, including livestock breeds, landscapes, ecological systems, wild flora and fauna. It is a valid and sustainable form of land use. Common land tenure is crucial for the efficient functioning of pastoralism.

When land is taken away for crop cultivation or for “Protected Areas”, pastoralists are denied access to traditional grazing lands and pastures. There is no such thing as “wasteland.” Land that is considered “waste” by the state is used by pastoralists for grazing their animals and managing herds. Putting land under crop or biofuels often leads to the privatisation of common lands. This causes conflicts between communities, such as pastoralists versus settled farmers. Diverting land to game parks, mining, logging, unsustainable extraction of forest resources and military exercises creates further pressure on pastoralists and their mobility. With decreased mobility the effects of natural disasters like droughts become more severe. Mobility is critical to the conservation of biodiversity through pastoralists.

Pastoralists and their unique problems are seldom taken into account during the planning of development programmes and disaster management. While restocking animals after a calamity, pastoralists are usually not consulted and unsuitable animals are distributed, making them more vulnerable and diluting valuable genetic diversity. In the face of climate change this could have disastrous consequences. If pastoralism is lost, all the traditional knowledge and the biodiversity associated with it will also be lost.

We demand that the contribution of pastoralists to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity is recognised and rewarded in accordance with the commitments made by contracting parties in Articles 8j and 10 of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Pastoralists do not want food aid but the capacity to produce and market their speciality products as prescribed in Strategic Priority No. 6 of the Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources agreed upon in Interlaken (FAO 2007).

Signed by the following organisations and individuals

- LPP (League for Pastoral Peoples and Endogenous Livestock Development)
- WISP (World Initiative for Sustainable Pastoralism)
- LIFE Network (Local Livestock for Empowerment of Rural People)
- ANTHRA, India
- LPPS (Lokhit Pashu Palak Sansthan), India
- Raika Pastoralists, India
- Working Group of Professional Shepherds in Germany
- Günther Czerkus, Germany
- Elizabeth Katushabe, Bahima Community, Uganda
- Dr. Balaram Sahu, India
- Adam Kuliet Ole Mwarabu, Tanzania
- Walet Aboubacrine Fati, Mali
- Harouna Abarchi, Niger
- Ibrahim Njobdi, Cameroon
- Dr. Devinder Sadana, India
- Mary Simat, Maweed, Kenya