



# LEAGUE FOR PASTORAL PEOPLES

AND ENDOGENOUS LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT  
LIGA FÜR HIRTENVÖLKER UND NACHHALTIGE VIEHWIRTSCHAFT E.V.

## Statement made at the 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee on Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore

World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), Geneva, April 25, 2006

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Thank you, Chair.

First of all, please allow me to congratulate you for your election as Chair of this session. Your words to encourage the IGC to make a breakthrough at this session give us confidence. I would also like to thank the Committee for our new accreditation.

I'm speaking on behalf of the League for Pastoral Peoples and Endogenous Livestock Development. My statement is also on behalf of the Call of the Earth Group.

We work in the fields of capacity building, consulting and advocacy. One of the highlights of our work is the definition of Livestock Keepers' Rights by an international gathering of pastoralists and NGOs in a place in Kenya near Nairobi, according to which this definition is called the Karen Commitment. Since I myself am not from a pastoralist community, please allow me to cite a few sentences from the statement recently made at CBD COP8 in Brazil, by one of the members of our global network, Vivekanandan from a livestock keeping community in Tamil Nadu, India. We plan to make a presentation, probably a side event during the next session of the IGC.

Pastoralists make use of arid and semi-arid areas that mostly are unsuitable for cropping. They supply not only milk and meat, wool, hides and skins, but also draught power and manure, and are therefore crucial not only to rural but also national economies. In the SADC region, the livestock sector contributes 38% of the Gross Domestic Product – and this does not yet include the subsistence economy, draught power and manure. Almost 100 % of the sheep, goat, pig and poultry are indigenous; cattle is indigenous to between 50 and 99% in the SADC region, depending on the country.

Pastoralists and other livestock keeping communities have developed a large range of local breeds with very specific features. These breeds are very productive in their environments and these production systems can be sustainable, as will be shown by an IUCN study which is underway.

Some of these breeds have been transported around half of the world already centuries ago. An Indian Zebu breed is the genetic basis of almost all South American and a good part of the North American cattle. The Australian sheep industry has greatly benefited from the Namibian Damara breed and the Garole sheep brought from West Bengal as far back as 1792, and more recently, Australia took the Awassi sheep from the Near East to conquer the meat market of the Gulf states. All this may not have been possible if the breeds had been monopolized by patents. We believe that it is right to pay a good price for a good breeding animal, but it is wrong to monopolize the genes. We also believe it would be wrong to grant patents on breeding methods that are applied by most pig breeders around the globe. Patent applications on such pig breeding methods have been submitted last year in 160 countries.

Once patents are granted, it is very costly to challenge them. In the case of the Enola Bean from Latin America, which was patented in the United States, the patent was challenged by a very renowned International Agricultural Research Center, that unlike many others involved in Traditional Knowledge, has access to excellent lawyers. Six years after the grant, even this challenge is not decided upon. One third of the time granted is over. Practical measures need to be taken very soon to prevent such delays, with the increasing patent activities involving traditional knowledge. I'm sure this Committee could at least promote the issue. I have copies available here of a Press Release of four months ago issued on the shortest day in the North of 2005 on one of the longest running patent challenges. Some aspects of this case are described in document WIPO/GRTK/IC/9/8.

The Livestock Keepers' Rights formulated by pastoralists and NGOs from around the world address Intellectual Property Rights, Access and Benefit-Sharing, and Participation in Decision-making. They were inspired by Farmers' Rights. I would like to add those two concepts to the excellent points made by the indigenous panellists yesterday morning, and recommend that this Commission looks more deeply into Livestock Keepers' Rights, livestock genetic resources and related traditional knowledge. It would be helpful if pastoralists from different communities could be invited.

Traditional Knowledge and Domestic Animal Genetic Resources have been largely neglected as compared to crops, not only by the relevant UN organisations. Therefore we warmly welcome the invitation of the Swiss Government to FAO's Technical Conference on Animal Genetic Resources. This conference is expected to address issues like Traditional Knowledge and Genetic Resources, and also to attract much public and media attention. It will be held in Interlaken in September 2007. It comes ten years after the Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources held during 1996 in my own country, Germany.

We are keenly waiting for results of the work of this Committee. Traditional Knowledge and Genetic Resources need to be protected - from monopolization - without any further delay.

Finally, I would like to address an issue that needs urgent attention, nanotechnology. The ETCGroup, a civil society organisation that works on issues essential to world food sovereignty, has recently pointed out that the largest single holder of nanotech patents in the world is a Chinese researcher, Yang Mengjun, who is taking ancient Chinese medicinal herbs, reducing them to nano-scale formulations, and claiming exclusive monopoly over the herbs, or the process used to nano-size them. He holds over 900 patents on nano-scale versions of traditional Chinese medicinal plants. Similar patents are being granted in the US and Europe. For example, the Pacific Corporation (Korea) has won a European patent on nano-scale ginseng for use in cosmetic products.

Patent claims on nano-scale formulations of traditional herbal plants are providing new pathways to monopolize traditional knowledge – one more reason why the United Nations organisations dealing with Traditional Knowledge should address the implications of nanotechnology and other emerging technologies.

It is not my way to make a statement and run away. Today, circumstances beyond my control make me do so. But you can find information on our work on our website: [www.pastoralpeoples.org](http://www.pastoralpeoples.org), including this statement and my coordinates

Thank you, Chair.