

Mera Declaration of the Global Gathering of Women Pastoralists

We, the women pastoralists gathered in Mera, India, from November 21-26, 2010, representing 32 countries, have met to strengthen alliances and forward practical solutions to issues that affect us.

We are part of a world-wide community of pastoralist peoples that is 300 million strong. We pledge to continue to live in a way that is environmentally sustainable and protects biodiversity and common resources for generations to come. We will continue to network and share our best practices and lessons learned to build capacity amongst ourselves and the global community.

We experience firsthand the leading edge of climate change and its associated problems, and we have much to share with the world about adaptation, mitigation and living sustainably on planet earth. Recently, pastoralists have been increasingly vocal at the international level but, as women, our voices have yet to be fully heard. We have unique and equally valuable contributions to make to our own communities and the global community.

We will work with men to build strong and equitable pastoralist societies and we will contribute to greater social equality within our families, our communities, our countries and around the world.

We present this declaration as a guiding political document to inform and support the development of pastoralist policies.

We call on governments, governing agencies of the United Nations, other relevant international and regional organizations, research institutes and our own customary leaders to support us and to:

1. RECOGNISE the essential role of pastoralists in global environmental sustainability, including the conservation of biodiversity, mitigation of climate change and combating desertification.
2. ENSURE the equal rights of pastoralist women and recognize their key role in society. This includes the recognition of the work of women pastoralists as a valid profession and as a fundamental component of pastoralism.
3. RECOGNISE pastoralist mobility as a fundamental right.
4. ENSURE and defend pastoral access to resources, including our traditional grazing lands.
5. PROTECT the rights of pastoralists and provide security in nomadic areas including the enforcement of laws that guarantee the safety of women.
6. RECOGNISE pastoralists who identify as indigenous and respect the UN Declaration on Indigenous Rights.
7. MONITOR the development and implementation of policies affecting and protecting pastoralists.
8. SUPPORT the development of an international organization in charge of considering complaints about violations of pastoralist rights. This organization needs the ability to hold countries accountable and must include pastoralist women as members.
9. ADAPT existing legislation to take into account the specificities of pastoralist ways of life and differentiate nomadic and transhumant pastoralism from intensive livestock production.

10. PROMOTE regional policies and treaties that take into account trans-border pastoralism and respect traditional grazing territories and migratory patterns. These are to be negotiated in consultation with pastoralist women.
11. DEVELOP specific policies that promote the sustainability and welfare of pastoral ways of life and the ecosystems we rely on for survival. The policy-making process must include meaningful participation, and consultation, with pastoralist women.
12. DEVELOP legislation that restricts development that harms or threatens pastoralist livelihoods.
13. ALLOW year-round access to grazing lands, including some lands that are currently within wild life preserves and conservation areas. These grazing spaces are to be established in consultation with pastoralist women.
14. PROMOTE and recognize Indigenous Community Conservation Areas (ICCAs).
15. ENSURE proportionate representation of pastoralist women in all levels of governance.
16. RESPECT the right of pastoralist women to education, both formal and informal, and including secondary education. Provide support to shift perceptions around the full educational needs of girls.
17. DEVELOP accessible and appropriate programmes for pastoralist children to access education. Special emphasis is to be given to pastoralist girl children. These are to be developed in consultation with pastoralist women.
18. DEVELOP mobile facilities that respect pastoralist realities and are in line with the needs of pastoralist women.
19. DEVELOP and implement programmes that support women's health in pastoralist communities. Information and training on health, particularly reproductive health, should be given priority.
20. CREATE and support programmes that promote the economic development and diversify economic opportunities for pastoralist women, including micro-credit financing. These programmes must be developed in consultation with pastoralist women.
21. SUPPORT pastoralist women through capacity building, including direct access to markets and training to improve the quality and marketability of their work and managerial skills.
22. SUPPORT training programmes focused on leadership and communication to enable pastoralist women to effectively participate in negotiations in all issues affecting their ways of life.
23. SUPPORT and fund research into new technologies that further improve the efficiency and environmental sustainability of pastoralist ways of life. These technologies should be attuned to the needs and realities of pastoralism and should take advantage of renewable and easily accessible natural resources.

We women pastoralists want our children, and our children's children, to have the tools and opportunities they need to adapt to the realities and changing conditions of the modern world while retaining their traditional cultural legacies and lifestyles.

This is our right and it is by remaining pastoralists that we can be of greatest service to the entire human community.