

RANGELANDS AND PASTORALISM: HOW ARE THEY ADDRESSED IN INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS ON LAND?

Introduction

Rangelands cover 80 million square kilometers, or more than half (54%) of the world's land area and represent a major land-use type in drylands across various regions of the world (ILRI *et al.*, 2021). Seventy-eight percent of these rangelands (62 million square kilometers) are in arid zones¹.

They support the livelihoods of approximately 2 billion people worldwide by sustaining extensive livestock farming and pastoral production systems (Briske, 2017). From an economic perspective, livestock farming helps ensure food security and generate income for 1.2 billion people living below the poverty line in developing countries (UNCCD, 2024).

Furthermore, rangelands account for 16% of global food production and 70% of the feed for domestic herbivores, particularly in Africa and South America (UNCCD, 2024).

With the United Nations General Assembly's proclamation of 2026 as the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, and the official inclusion of this topic on the agenda of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), issues surrounding rangeland management and pastoralism have been brought to the forefront and are attracting the attention of the international community.

Definitions and Concepts

Extensive livestock farming: A farming system characterized by a low density of animals per hectare and based primarily on the use of available natural resources (water, forage, etc.). It requires few inputs and does not aim for high productivity (Horsin *et al.*, 2018). Extensive livestock farming encompasses several production systems, including pastoral systems (Landais and Balent, 1993).

Pastoralism: This is a set of livestock-raising practices based on the mobility of animals and/or people, enabling the use of natural resources (forage, water) to provide feed for livestock (Djenontin, 2010; Tshingomba, 2023). The mobility inherent in this form of livestock farming makes it possible to sustain fragile, low-productivity ecosystems where resource availability is highly variable (A. Ickowicz *et al.*, 2017). Beyond the economic aspects of livestock raising, pastoralism involves significant cultural and social dimensions encompassing knowledge, skills, traditions, values, and landscape heritage, which make it a unique way of life (Retaille, 2003; Lerin, 2010; UNCCD, 2024).

Rangelands are areas of natural and post-agricultural vegetation where livestock graze and which support various types of natural pastures determined by soil and terrain characteristics as well as human activities (Djenontin, 2010). These areas can also be defined as natural and semi-natural ecosystems traversed by livestock and/or wildlife (UNCCD, 2024).

¹ <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2024-09/2416051F.pdf>

Rangelands are complex socio-ecological systems in that the natural resources they contain can provide several goods, services, and values (UNCCD, 2024).

Grassland: The term “grassland” is defined strictly as an expanse of land dominated by grasses or herbaceous plants with little or no forest cover, depending on the type of area (wooded grasslands, savannas, sparse forests) (ILRI *et al.*, 2021; UNCCD, 2024).

Sustainable rangeland management: This concept can be defined as a knowledge-based process that integrates social, economic, and ecological dimensions into policies and practices related to rangeland management (UNCCD, 2024).

I. Incorporating rangelands and pastoralism into the UNCCD

1. Texts and Initiatives

a. The recent UNCCD decision on rangeland and pastoralism

In 2024, following the 16th Conference of the Parties (COP16) to the UNCCD, a decision regarding rangelands and pastoralists was adopted: [Decision 29/COP16 “Rangelands and Pastoralists.”](#) Through this decision, the UNCCD explicitly includes issues related to the management of rangelands and pastoralism on its agenda, recognizing their central role in combating desertification, land degradation, and droughts. This decision appears to aim to broaden the scope of the Convention by further involving pastoralists and the ministries responsible for agriculture and livestock in discussions and actions related to combating desertification, land degradation, and droughts.

The main areas of focus for the UNCCD are as follows:

- Strengthening policies and investments that support the sustainable management of rangelands, recognizing their importance in addressing challenges related to food security, biodiversity, climate resilience, and Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN). The goal is to support countries in integrating rangeland management into national policies.
- Promoting inclusive governance and land tenure security. Here, the challenge is to align with the [voluntary guidelines on responsible land governance](#).
- Develop “sustainable” financing mechanisms for extensive livestock systems to encourage engagement from the public and private sectors.
- Strengthen the knowledge and capacities of the Parties and other UNCCD stakeholders to promote evidence-based policy development, with a focus on leadership and the inclusion of women.
- Create synergies with the other two Rio Conventions and other global initiatives relevant to rangelands and pastoralism.

A note from the UNCCD Secretariat summarizing the discussions at the 16th session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST16)², notes that issues related to *grasslands and rangelands* are of “direct relevance” to the implementation of the Convention, as they are directly linked to land tenure, land-use planning, and land and water management practices.

² [ICCD/COP\(16\)/21 – ICCD/COP\(16\)/CST/9 “New emerging issues: grassland, rangeland and ecologically sustainable agrifood systems”](#)

Furthermore, this note calls on the Parties to jointly address issues related to grasslands and rangelands, as well as food systems.

This note also provides several recommendations for the COP:

- Request that the CST validate scientific data and evidence on the negative impacts on biodiversity, soil health, water resources, and carbon sequestration resulting from the conversion of pastures and rangelands to rainfed or irrigated crops, as well as from afforestation programs on pastures and rangelands in semi-arid and arid ecosystems.
- Establish a policy framework that enables the development of public policies respecting customary rights and practices related to extensive livestock systems, and that encourages the participation of local communities in the conservation, sustainable management, and restoration of pastures and rangelands.
- Develop, through the Global Mechanism, financing mechanisms and instruments, as well as risk management tools accessible to local communities, that contribute to the sustainable development of rangelands and encourage integrated land and water resource management practices. Public-private investments in pastoralism are also encouraged, provided they do not harm pastoralist communities that depend on pastures and rangelands.

b. Other official texts and documents in which pastoralism is explicitly mentioned

Resolutions of the United Nations Environment Assembly regarding pastoralism and rangelands

Interest in the international arena in pastoralism and rangelands, and recognition of their importance in combating desertification, land degradation, and droughts, dates back many years. The UNCCD decision on rangelands and pastoralists refers to Resolution 4/15 of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), adopted on March 15, 2019, titled “*Innovations in sustainable rangelands and pastoralism*”³, translated into French as “*Innovations concernant le pastoralisme et les pâturages durables*”⁴.

- *Point of note: In the english document, the term “rangelands” is used, not “grasslands.” However, the French translation uses the term “pâturages.”*

This resolution is based on resolution 2/24, “*Combating desertification, land degradation, and drought and promoting sustainable pastoralism and rangelands*”⁵, translated into French as “*Lutte contre la desertification, la degradation des terres et la sécheresse, et promotion d’un pastoralisme et de pâturages durables*”⁶, which shows that as early as 2016, the United Nations was already addressing the challenges of pastoralism and sustainable rangelands⁷, and highlighting their essential role in strategies to combat desertification, land degradation, and drought.

³ <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3982463?ln=en&v=pdf>

⁴ <https://wedocs.unep.org/rest/api/core/bitstreams/d9e3ab34-8b0e-4bcd-8168-5fdace3bafef/content>

⁵ <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3969838?v=pdf>

⁶ <https://wedocs.unep.org/rest/api/core/bitstreams/9c10bbd4-04f8-4fb0-bfd5-05d27cf600fc/content>

⁷ Sustainable rangeland management is defined as a knowledge-based process that integrates social, economic, and ecological principles into rangeland policies and practices. ([Global land outlook. Thematic report on rangelands and pastoralists](#))

The document, written in english, notes that “*Healthy grassland and rangeland ecosystems are vital for contributing to economic growth, resilient livelihoods, and the sustainable development of pastoralism; [...] and that they can play a significant role in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.*”⁸ (p.1) and urges member states to take action, including “investing more in programs” to address, among other things, the degradation of rangelands.” (p.2)

States are also called upon to “build capacity in the pastoral livestock sector and continue to increase investment in this sector” (p.3).

The document calls on the international community and all other stakeholders to promote “sustainable pastoralism” (p. 3) and requests that the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) contribute “[...] to raising global awareness of sustainable pastoralism and rangelands [...]” (p. 3)

UNEP must also contribute, in partnership with other stakeholders, to strengthening the Science-Policy Interface on sustainable pastoralism and rangelands (p. 3).

Resolution 4/15 of the United Nations Environment Assembly notes the non-implementation of Resolution 2/24 and observes that few measures have been taken at the national, regional, and global levels to “ensure the sustainability of pastoralism and rangelands.” Recalling the essential role of sustainable pastoralism and rangelands in addressing challenges related to the environment, food security, sustainable tourism, and socioeconomic development – particularly for indigenous peoples and local communities – Member States are urged to invest more in and raise awareness about sustainable pastoralism and rangelands.

Global Land Outlook on Rangelands and Pastoralists

In anticipation of the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, the UNCCD published a thematic report of *the Global Land Outlook (GLO)* in May 2024⁹ on rangelands and pastoralists. This flagship document of the convention helps raise awareness, guide policy, and promote concrete solutions for sustainable land management at the international level.

This edition of the GLO provides an overview of the challenges related to rangeland management and pastoralism, offers insights into the conceptual framework chosen to address the topic, and provides access to case studies and examples of concrete actions implemented across different regions of the world.

- ✓ The UNCCD recently produced and published a briefing note on the health of rangelands and drought resilience in the Eurasian steppes¹⁰.

c. Focus on recent UNCCD related initiatives supporting rangelands and pastoralism

The 17th Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the UNCCD

The Conference of the Parties (COP) is the Convention’s decision-making body, which meets every two years and brings together all signatory states, governmental organizations, and representatives of civil society organizations (CSOs) accredited to the Convention.

For this 17th session, which will take place from August 17 to 28, 2026, in Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia) issues surrounding rangelands and pastoralism will be highlighted. Beyond the official

⁸ file:///C:/Users/Aliss/Downloads/UNEP_EA.2_RES.24-EN-3.pdf

⁹ <https://www.unccd.int/resources/global-land-outlook/glo-thematic-report-rangelands-and-pastoralists>

¹⁰ <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2026-03/Eurasia%20rangelands%20Brief.pdf>

negotiations and other topics under discussion¹¹, COP17 is expected to serve as a catalyst for collective action in support of rangelands and pastoralism.

✓ For more information: <https://www.unccd.int/cop17>

The IYRP Global Alliance

The Global Alliance for the *International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists* (IYRP) is an international coalition dedicated to supporting the implementation of the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists in 2026. To date, this Alliance brings together 102 countries and more than 400 organizations committed to promoting the objectives of this International Year. A dedicated website provides access to various events and resources related to rangelands and pastoralism: <https://iyrp.info/>.

Proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly, the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026 aims to raise awareness, encourage responsible investment, and shape policies that protect rangelands and the livelihoods of pastoralist communities. It is also a means of placing rangelands and pastoralism at the center of international agendas.

Economics of Land Degradation

The Economics of Land Degradation (ELD) initiative is a global partnership launched in 2011 under the auspices of the UNCCD, in collaboration with the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the European Commission, and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). Its main objective is to demonstrate the economic value of sustainable land and water management by providing evidence-based analyses to guide both public and private investment decisions and to highlight the return on investment from land restoration and drought resilience.

In 2026, the ELD continues to support the preparation of comprehensive reports combining economic evidence, policy advocacy, and international collaboration – such as the 2025 report on the economics of pasture restoration¹² – and actively participates in raising awareness about the United Nations-declared International Year of Pastures and Pastoralists. Furthermore, together with the UNCCD, the ELD is actively involved in the IYRP Global Alliance.

Coalition of Rangeland States

At COP16 of the UNCCD (Riyadh, Dec. 2024), the Mongolian delegation called for the creation of a “Coalition of Rangeland States” to protect and promote these specific areas and the populations that depend on them. This Coalition also aims to establish international collaboration to strengthen efforts and mobilize funding to restore degraded rangelands and help pastoralist communities adopt sustainable livestock management practices. Poverty reduction and increased food security are objectives that this international initiative seeks to achieve.

The practical implementation of this Rangeland States Coalition has yet to be defined and will likely be further discussed at COP17.

¹¹ Other major themes at COP17 will include resilience and integrated water resource management, food systems and soil health.

¹² [The Business Case for Investment in Rangeland Restoration](#)

Rangeland Flagship Initiative

The *Rangelands Flagship Initiative* was established following the COP16 decision on “*Rangelands and pastoralists*.” This ten-year program stems from a global political commitment to meet the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets¹³ by providing an ambitious and coordinated response to reverse the trend of rangeland degradation in arid regions, supporting the resilience of rangeland ecosystems in the face of climate change, and promoting “sustainable pastoralism,” by combining finance, science, policy, and community participation.

This program has several objectives:

- Raising awareness and advocating to highlight the essential role of rangelands for biodiversity, climate regulation, food security, and the livelihoods of local communities.
- Mobilizing funding through climate funds such as the Green Climate Fund, public-private partnerships, and voluntary contributions from States, notably through the Coalition of States for Rangeland. The initiative aims to raise \$1 billion to finance rangeland restoration and sustainable management projects, with an initial portfolio of projects announced at COP17.
- Encourage states to integrate rangeland management into their national strategies, improve market access for pastoralists, and address knowledge and data gaps.
- Facilitate, through international cooperation, the sharing of knowledge among scientists, pastoralist communities, and decision-makers, and promote responsible investments.

The UNCCD, through its secretariat and the Global Mechanism, coordinates the program in collaboration with Mongolia, the host country of COP17, during which this global initiative will be officially launched.

Desertification and Drought Day

The 2026 Desertification and Drought Day will be directly linked to pastoralism and rangelands, in line with the dedicated International Year. The main theme will therefore be: “*Rangelands: Recognize. Respect. Restore.*”

Civil society organizations (CSOs) from countries around the world can contribute to this international day by organizing an event related to the main theme.

The official ceremony for the Desertification and Drought Day will be organized by the UNCCD in Kenya on June 17, 2026.

2. Interpretation and analysis

a. Translation considerations

In this note on pastoralism, we have chosen to use and translate the english term “rangelands” as “terres de parcours,” a term we have already defined in the introductory section.

The challenges of translating the texts and language used in the Convention’s official documents are crucial and raise linguistic, legal, political, and even diplomatic issues. It is important not to

¹³ Learn more about land degradation neutrality here: https://www.cariassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Da22_Note_Neutrality_EN.pdf

distort the text's underlying intent. There must be consensus on the definitions and meanings of the technical and legal terms used, so that the issues can be addressed in a coordinated manner. A translation error can alter the meaning of a commitment or a decision and, as a result, affect the implementation of the Convention.

The convention documents are initially drafted and then published in english. The translation of the english term “rangelands” remains somewhat ambiguous at this stage. The recent COP16 decision on “*Rangelands and pastoralists*” has not yet been translated into french, so we don't yet know whether the term “terres de parcours” will be used or “pâturage” (“*Grassland*” in english); depending on which term is used, the issues addressed will differ. The use of the word “pâturage” would steer discussions more toward issues of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem functioning, leaving aside the more social and cultural dimensions associated with “rangelands,” as these are also linked to pastoral livestock rearing, which represents a way of life rather than merely a livestock-rearing practice.

In other official documents, such as Resolutions 2/24 and 4/15 of the United Nations Environment Assembly, the term “rangelands” is translated as “pâturages” in the titles and throughout the french-language versions of the documents:

UNEA Resolution 4/15 : “*Innovations in sustainable **rangelands** and pastoralism*” → “Innovations concernant le pastoralisme et les **pâturages** durables”

UNPA Resolution 2/24 : “*Combating desertification, land degradation, and drought and promoting sustainable pastoralism and rangelands*” → “Lutte contre la désertification, la dégradation des terres et la sécheresse, et promotion d'un pastoralisme et de **pâturages** durables”

This translation does not seem consistent because in english, the french term “pâturage” is translated as “grassland” and not “rangeland”.

Translation therefore remains an important area of focus to ensure that issues related to rangelands and pastoralism are addressed consistently within the UNCCD by all stakeholders of the convention.

b. The environmental and sociocultural approaches to addressing issues related to rangeland and pastoralism within the UNCCD

The UNCCD addresses issues related to rangelands and pastoralism in two ways. First, from an environmental perspective, emphasizing the importance of preserving ecosystem services¹⁴, biodiversity, and soil health. The convention emphasizes that rangelands provide essential services such as organic carbon storage in soils, natural fertilization, regulation of water cycles, and preservation of soil structure. “Sustainable” pastoralism is thus viewed as a means of contributing to the continuity of these services, particularly through the maintenance of biodiversity and the limitation of land degradation.

The Convention also recognizes the essential role of rangelands in the livelihood strategies of pastoralist populations, to ensure their livelihoods and resilience in regions with high climate

¹⁴ This concept, which has been used in conservation science since the 1970s (Dufour *et al.*, 2016), refers to the goods and services provided by ecosystems that offer direct or indirect benefits to human populations (Costanza *et al.*, 1997).

variability. The cultural aspects related to the practice of pastoralism are not overlooked, as they are addressed in the decision on “*Rangelands and pastoralists*”¹⁵.

The official recognition, enshrined in a decision, of rangelands and pastoralism within the UNCCD is a recent development. The integration of these issues into the implementation of the Convention must still be operationalized through concrete actions taken by the Parties in collaboration with local communities, while ensuring a balance between an environmental approach that directly benefits biodiversity, soil conservation, and natural resources, and the sociocultural approach that helps preserve a way of life, knowledge, skills, and traditions.

II. Opportunities for Pastoralism

1. COP17 Agenda item on events directly related to pastoralism

COP17 will be organized around several thematic days:

- Finance Day
- Land and People Day
- Water Day
- Food System and Soil Health Day

Several events will focus on issues related to rangelands and pastoralism.

On Land and People Day, **a ministerial dialogue will focus on the restoration of rangelands and pastoralist communities**. CSOs accredited to the convention will be able to follow the debates, contribute to the discussions, and share their expertise on the subject.

A special event dedicated to rangelands will also take place. At this point, we do not yet know what form this event will take.

A plenary session will be dedicated to the topic of rangelands and pastoralism. During these plenary sessions, country delegates will take the floor to present their positions, as well as the policies and initiatives implemented at the national level to advance issues related to the topic under discussion. CSOs will also be able to express their views through a joint statement coordinated by the elected CSO Panel.

On the day dedicated to financing, **the *Rangelands Flagship Initiative*** will be launched.

Since rangelands and pastoralism are among the priority topics at COP17, an open dialogue session may be dedicated to these issues. Open dialogue sessions are organized by the CSO Panel with the aim of fostering an interactive exchange with country delegates and sharing examples of initiatives implemented by various civil society actors with the Parties.

Several side events focused on rangeland and pastoralism issues may be organized by various UNCCD stakeholders.

The topic of rangelands and pastoralism is also linked to issues related to food systems and water resource management.

¹⁵ [Decision 29/COP.16](#)

2. The contribution of pastoralism and sustainable rangeland management to achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)

Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) means striking a balance between the quality and quantity of land resources so that they remain stable or improve and continue to provide ecosystem services and enhance food security¹⁶. LDN aims to contribute to Sustainable Development Goal 15 on the conservation and restoration of terrestrial ecosystems, and specifically to achieve Target 15.3 of this goal: *“By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought, and floods, and strive to achieve a world free from land degradation.”*

The three main goals of the NDT are:

- Prevent land degradation by preserving land that is still in good condition;
- To reduce existing degradation by adopting sustainable land management practices capable of slowing the degradation process while enhancing biodiversity, soil health, and food production;
- Restore degraded land by intensifying efforts to return it to a natural or more productive state.

Pastoral practices and the sustainable management of rangelands can play an important role in achieving the NDT and thus contribute to maintaining or improving the world’s terrestrial natural capital¹⁷ in several ways:

- Preservation of vegetation cover

Proper management of rangelands helps prevent overgrazing, soil erosion, and the loss of useful grasses and shrubs. Pasture rotation and herd mobility are examples of practices that support the natural regeneration of vegetation.

- Restoring soil fertility

Herds play a major role in the soil nutrient cycle, particularly through their manure, moderate trampling that incorporates organic matter, and seed dispersal. These factors can improve soil structure, water retention capacity, and carbon storage.

- Limiting the effects of Desertification

Pastoral practices are often adapted to climatic constraints and high variability, particularly in arid and semi-arid areas. Pastoral mobility, for example, helps prevent excessive pressure on a single area, allows for the seasonal use of available resources, and enhances resilience to drought conditions.

¹⁶ [Decision 3/COP12, UNCCD, 2015.](#)

¹⁷ Natural capital encompasses all the natural resources that nature provides us through soil, air, water, and all living organisms. These resources are not unlimited and require sound management.

- Preserving biodiversity

Pastoral landscapes can support a diversity of habitats and plant species. For example, certain wildlife species depend on open habitats. Balanced rangeland management can prevent these habitats from becoming overgrown with brush or invasive species.

- Support for Local Communities

Achieving land degradation neutrality also depends on the involvement of local communities in land and natural resource management. All aspects, such as securing access to land and water resources, preserving traditional pastoral knowledge and skills, participatory governance of natural resources, and income diversification, are considered in achieving LDN. Pastoralists are key stewards of rangelands, fragile and often neglected ecosystems. It is important to remember that pastoral mobility is a crucial strategic element enabling the sustainable use of natural resources available in these unique ecosystems.

- ✓ The restoration of rangelands by pastoralists themselves (pastoral HIMO) could be incorporated into efforts related to the LDN so that Parties include elements on the preservation and restoration of rangelands, as well as the promotion of sustainable pastoralism, in their national LDN objectives.

3. The contribution of pastoralism and sustainable rangelands management to drought resilience

Pastoralism is one of the major climate adaptation strategies in contexts subject to high climate variability and extreme weather events such as droughts. This is particularly true in drylands. In these uncertain contexts, several pastoral practices help limit livestock losses and reduce pressure on fragile ecosystems. Mobility is a key strategic element for securing pastoral livelihoods and production systems, as it allows for the use of geographically dispersed resources, the movement of animals to areas where water and forage remain available, and the avoidance of overgrazing in a single area.

In addition to its benefits for maintaining biodiversity and soil health, which enhance ecosystems' resilience to drought, pastoralism offers a flexible economic system that allows economic activities to be adjusted according to the severity of difficult periods. For example, selling part of the herd, trading livestock products, and engaging in seasonal work. This flexibility allows pastoralist households to diversify their income and more easily absorb climate shocks.

Pastoral communities also possess traditional knowledge that enables them to anticipate drought-related risks by organizing their movements and managing water and forage resources, for example.

4. How can the UNCCD advance key issues related to pastoralism?

In this section, we will focus specifically on the key points highlighted in the Nouakchott +10 Declaration. Adopted at a high-level forum (November 6–8, 2024), this declaration follows up on the [2013 Nouakchott Declaration](#) and reaffirms the commitment of the countries of West Africa and the Sahel, as well as pastoral, agro-pastoral and agricultural organizations in these regions, to join forces to build peace and foster development in rural, pastoral, and agro-pastoral areas by promoting diverse livestock systems and strengthening the synergies between agriculture and livestock farming. It emphasizes :

- ➔ Securing the rights of pastoral herders and the collaborative governance of natural resources.
- ➔ Ensuring regulated pastoral mobility, considered an economic and ecological necessity.
- ➔ The central importance of security, conflict prevention, and multi-stakeholder dialogue in rural and border areas.
- ➔ Improving the sustainable management of rangelands and natural resources.
- ➔ The inclusion of pastoral herders in decision-making and public policy
- ➔ Strengthening livestock value chains and market access.
- ➔ Greater private-sector involvement and reduced dependence on imports, with a view to achieving food sovereignty
- ➔ Implementation of a regional strategy for livestock development and the stabilization of pastoral systems, adopted in 2024.
- ➔ Social protection for herders, and employment for youth and women.
- ➔ The “One Health” approach and adaptation to climate change.

On several points, the Nouakchott+10 Declaration and recent actions by the UNCCD reinforce one another to address the challenges of rangelands and pastoralism.

The UNCCD proposes a “sustainability framework” to achieve sustainable management of rangelands and support the livelihoods of pastoralist communities, with one complementing the other. Drawing on elements from the report titled *Global Territorial Perspectives on Rangelands and Pastoralists*, this framework’s overall objective is to assist States in **implementing national and subnational policies consistent with rangeland management and the livelihoods of pastoralists**. To this end, it is essential to consider various dimensions:

- ✓ The environmental dimension, **by supporting the conservation and restoration of rangelands, their health, and their capacity to provide ecosystem services.**

Proposed measures :

- *Restrict and prevent the conversion of rangelands to other uses.*
- *Encourage pastoral practices that help combat the factors contributing to land degradation.*
- *Harness the carbon storage potential of rangelands while strengthening the adaptive capacities of ecosystems and communities.*

- ✓ The social dimension **by strengthening the social capital¹⁸ of pastoralist communities through participatory governance, gender equality, and strong institutions to foster collective action.**

Proposed measures :

- *Capacity building, access to training and technical information.*
- *Promotion of associations and networks focused on promoting pastoralism and fostering peer-to-peer knowledge sharing.*
- *Supporting initiatives, groups, and institutions led by women*

¹⁸ The set of relationships, networks, and norms of trust among individuals and groups within a community. It enables effective cooperation, facilitates the exchange of information, and strengthens the capacity to act together to achieve common goals.

- *Establishment of institutions and mechanisms to resolve conflicts over land use and ownership¹⁹.*

➔ The economic dimension, **by promoting the economic viability of extensive livestock farming and the livelihoods of the communities that depend on it.**

Proposed measures:

- *Creating innovative economic and financial mechanisms accessible to “stakeholders in rangelands.”*
- *Increasing public-private investments in “sustainable pastoralism” without harming pastoralist communities.*
- *Support the economic livelihoods and income diversification of pastoralist communities.*
- *Promote adaptive investment (adjusting investments based on market conditions, yields, etc.) and risk management tools (insurance, resource pooling, community credit, etc.).*
- *Conduct an economic assessment of the benefits that sustainable management and restoration of rangelands provide to people, biodiversity, and the climate.*

In the Nouakchott+10 Declaration and within the framework proposed by the UNCCD, the objective for ensuring the sustainability of pastoral systems, which are essential to food security, biodiversity, and the adaptation strategies of pastoralist communities, is to develop and implement public policies that support pastoralism and pastoralist herders. These policies must be designed in an integrated, inclusive, and cross-border manner. This involves securing land rights and mobility, strengthening the rights and services for pastoral herders, and integrating pastoralism into climate, land, and economic policies.

At [the 6th edition of the Désertif’actions Summit](#) (Djerba, March 2026), pastoralism, as a mobile production system, demonstrated its full relevance in the context of resilience to crises caused by droughts. Several recommendations were developed following collective discussions and propose several avenues for operationalizing support for pastoralism and pastoralist communities:

- ➔ **Collect data on pastoralism:** Measure the positive impacts and sustainability of pastoral systems, using existing indicators such as those developed by the International Land Coalition to measure land security for pastoral herders.
- ➔ **Adapt public policies:** Implement public policies that respect and safeguard the social agreements and local arrangements established by pastoral herders.
- ➔ **Strengthen land governance:** Recognize and secure access to rangelands and strengthen local consultation forums to facilitate coexistence between pastoralists and farmers.
- ➔ **Facilitate cross-border mobility:** Encourage cross-border cooperation initiatives to support regulated transhumance, which is essential to pastoralists’ resilience strategies.

¹⁹ On land issues, the UNCCD, in partnership with the FAO, is developing a “Compendium of Mechanisms for Establishing Responsibilities and Filing Claims Regarding Land Tenure,” an initiative based primarily on the [“Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure” \(VGGT\)](#), adopted in 2012 and published in 2023.

- ➔ **Improve knowledge sharing and information dissemination:** Develop observatories, early warning systems, and accessible climate and pastoral data to facilitate mobility, a fundamental element in anticipating and adapting to crises.
- ✓ Find the full set of recommendations here: https://desertif-actions.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/DA26-Recommendations_Pastoralism.pdf

Conclusion

Pastoralism is a unique way of life and a vital production system that today faces major environmental challenges. Desertification, land degradation, and increasingly severe droughts exacerbated by climate change, directly threaten the sustainability of pastoral ecosystems. These phenomena reduce forage resources, intensify competition for access to water and pastures, and undermine the livelihoods of pastoral communities. Pastoralism, in its traditional form, can also play a key role in combating land degradation, particularly through mobility, which enables dynamic management of forage resources, preventing overgrazing and promoting the natural regeneration of pastures. By moving with the seasons and according to resource availability, herders help maintain biodiversity and limit soil erosion.

Against a backdrop of dwindling resources and soil degradation, the recognition and support of traditional pastoral systems, as well as their integration into land management and desertification control policies, are essential levers for progress. The future of pastoralism will depend on the ability of local, national, and international stakeholders to innovate, cooperate, and adapt practices to address these global challenges. The effectiveness of these actions relies on a collaborative approach, bringing together pastoralist communities, researchers, and policymakers to reconcile ecosystem conservation with the economic viability of livestock systems.

The UNCCD, along with its upcoming 17th Conference of the Parties (COP17), offers opportunities to make progress and to demonstrate that pastoralism is not merely a livestock-raising practice but an essential driver of food security, biodiversity conservation, and adaptation to climate change.

The implementation of appropriate public policies, secure land tenure, the inclusion of pastoralists in land and natural resource governance, and the collection and dissemination of data on pastoralism chart a clear path toward operational solutions for the sustainable management of rangelands and pastoralism.

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