



**MINISTRY OF FOOD,  
AGRICULTURE AND LIGHT INDUSTRY**

**DRAFT OPENING REMARKS BY**

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Distinguished representatives, Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to welcome all of you to the Joint International Grassland and Rangeland Congress and specifically to this virtual and live Concurrent Session about the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, a proposal initiated by the Mongolian Government.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the team who is hosting this important conference virtually at this difficult time when every country is struggling with the pandemic.

As other countries, we are working hard to overcome the pandemic with minimal damage to our economy, and to recover the post-pandemic economy in an environmentally friendly manner, while also fulfilling our obligations to the International Community.

An example of this is the Government of Mongolia's long-term development policy of “preserving traditional nomadic heritage, ecologically friendly, sustainable and organic animal husbandry, and promoting nomadic animal heritage to the world”. This is reflected in its national programs and government policy papers.

In addition, we are working to make the initiative to declare the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) for 2026 a reality. We believe that Mongolia's initiative will raise awareness of the importance of rangelands and enhance the natural and cultural value of pastoralism. It will not only increase pastoralists' pride in their traditions, especially among young generations, but also play a significant role in global sustainable development and poverty reduction efforts in both developed and developing countries.

Currently, rangeland degradation has become a crucial environmental issue in Mongolia, with the area of degraded rangelands increasing owing to socio-economic factors and climate change that are affecting pastoralists throughout the country.

Pastoralists are explicitly recognized in the 2030 Agenda as a group of peoples who should benefit from achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, there are serious knowledge gaps and misunderstandings that need to be addressed. An International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists could provide the impetus and momentum necessary for a worldwide understanding of the importance of these lands to global food security and environmental services, and also enhance governments' awareness and capacities to deliver on the SDGs and other global development and environmental goals in such areas that have not benefited from development as much as expected.

The Government of Mongolia, as the initiating country, has been deeply impressed to see the high level of support for the IYRP expressed by many governments during the FAO Conference this year, as well as the letters of support that have arrived from almost 300 organizations worldwide through the efforts of the International Support Group and the Regional Support Groups for the IYRP. We are indeed very honored to be leading such an exciting and important initiative.

The Government of Mongolia has begun to develop an action plan for the implementation of the IYRP 2026 in cooperation with relevant international organizations and civil society. A certain amount of financial support will be approved in the budget law of Mongolia for the implementation of this International Year.

We invite your participation and close cooperation. This IYRP Concurrent Session is an excellent avenue to discuss the priority actions needed to raise awareness and fill knowledge gaps worldwide about rangelands and pastoralism – activities that would be carried out in the years leading up to and including 2026. This Joint Congress brings together the most eminent scientists in this field of work, whom we encourage to be part of the IYRP process.

Esteemed delegates,

We are confident that the IYRP will have a positive impact on increasing the world's food supply, reducing hunger and poverty, and providing the world's population with high-quality and ecofriendly food through the sustainable use of rangelands.

I invite all of you to engage with this initiative and do your part to help secure its approval by the United Nations General Assembly this year.

Thank you for your attention and I wish you excellent, fruitful discussions.