

Final report on Stockholm+50 Side Event: 2 June 2022

Side-Event Title: *Nature-based restoration and multipurpose use of rangelands: promising solutions to benefit our planet and people*

Organizers: Government of Mongolia, WWF, IUCN, ILRI, FAO, IYRP International Support Group (ISG)

1. Introductory / Opening remarks:

The Government of Mongolia, represented by its Ambassador to Sweden H.E. Janabazar Tuvdendorj and Director General Enkhbat Altangerel, stressed the importance of rangelands including grasslands – which cover 54% of the Earth’s land mass – for climate, biodiversity, aquifer and water security, cultural and economic significance, and pastoral livelihoods. Pastoral mobility has evolved over millennia with nature and is adapted to and gives value to variability, which is now increasing because of climate change. Political momentum has been growing in the past few years to recognize the importance of this – the most neglected – ecosystem, culminating in the designation of the International Year of Rangelands & Pastoralists (IYRP) in 2026 by the United Nations (UN) through the leadership of the Government of Mongolia and supported by 102 co-sponsoring countries. Side-Event Moderator Joao Campari (WWF) said that we have a future marker in the sand for restoring and sustainably managing these ecosystems and elevating the voices of the pastoralists, who are stewards of these lands.

2. Exchange of views: panel discussion

Several pastoralist voices from around the world were heard: Sámi in the Arctic (Anders Oskal), Fulani in West Africa (Harouna Abarchi), pastoralists in Italy (film), Mongolian pastoralist (Maamankhu Sodnom) and Borana in Kenya (Hussein Tadicha Wario). Also heard were views of scientists (Fiona Flintan), Government of Spain (Dep. Dir. Gen. Fernando Mas), the UN (FAO Maria Helena Semedo and UNDP Pradeep Kurukulasuriya), and Civil Society (IUCN Bruno Oberle and WWF Joao Campari).

Rangelands can sequester a third of the world’s carbon sink and harbor significant biodiversity. Pastoralists are its stewards: “We are so connected to our animals and lands that it does not make sense to look at them separately”. Their knowledge is the foundation for not just surviving but also thriving. This is a civilization based on mobility, of following the animals. Pastoralism is the future, not just the past.

But today we are faced with fragmentation of rangelands, of migration routes, of calving grounds, etc. Crop farmers are nibbling at the rangelands, with the justification that there is a need to increase food security – but they ignore that livestock are also very important for this. Large corporations are expropriating rangelands. Laws protecting transhumance and mobility of pastoralists are not enforced. Conservation efforts continue to shun the involvement of pastoralists – “no one asked us how to preserve rangelands, but we know how”.

Several examples of best practices were highlighted, such as how to improve and secure transhumance routes for enhanced mobility of animals, the importance of pastoralist

cooperatives, and co-benefits from renewable energy installations in rangelands. In Spain and Portugal, rangelands are the best managed and protected lands, providing multiple services. Scaling up investment in sustainable management of rangelands and restoring them is possible with the tools and mechanisms we have at hand – what is needed is to end the political marginalization and neglect of these ecosystems. “Pastoralists can bring positive contributions to the climate agenda, but they are not being heard.” The IYRP 2026 can help bring rangelands to the forefront of the global land-restoration agenda.

3. Main conclusions

The Side Event elevated the profile of rangelands and pastoralists. Pastoralism is nature-positive and people-positive, and this is true all over the world. Pastoralists specialize in making use of highly variable environments to produce food, by moving their animals to the right place at the time. But this sustainable practice faces the shrinking and fragmentation of rangeland areas because of conversion to other uses and the degradation of the remaining rangelands, where livestock have had to be concentrated in less mobile systems of management.

Environmentally friendly pastoralism and nature-based restoration are feasible and will have immediate results in increasing ecosystem services and combatting climate change. Good practices can be encouraged through enforcement of laws, through scaling up investments by tapping into existing mechanisms, and through free and prior informed consent and full participation from pastoralists. We must guard against negative externalities from environmental initiatives. Political momentum must continue to be nurtured and expanded to make sustainable management of rangelands a key element of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Three Urgent Actions were recommended:

Action 1: Stockholm+50 to call on countries to urgently stop conversion of rangelands, including grasslands and savannahs, and to restore 50% by 2030 through pastoralist community participation in nature-based sustainable solutions.

Action 2: Stockholm+50 to call on countries and the private sector to ensure that deployment of large-scale renewable energy schemes in rangelands, including grasslands and savannahs, are mutually beneficial for pastoralists and ecosystems without unintended negative social and environmental impacts.

Action 3: To strengthen a global coalition/platform for the sustainable stewardship and nature-based restoration of rangelands, including grasslands and savannahs (recently launched at UNCCD COP 15), securing sustainable livelihoods for all pastoralists and benefiting the planet.

Archived recording of the event can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8OSXVsBEqw> [report prepared by Maryam Niamir-Fuller, IYRP 2026].