

## Update on progress in designating an International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP)

*by Maryam Niamir, Vice-Chair of IYRP International Support Group, 21 May 2021*

To date, 18 national governments have sent formal letters of support to the Mongolian Government for its proposal to FAO to designate an International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) in 2026. In addition, another 15 countries plus the European Union (EU) showed support during the deliberations at the FAO Committee on Agriculture (COAG) meeting in October 2020.

We now have more than 200 non-governmental organizations and one State (Provincial) Government that are formally supporting the IYRP. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the latest UN agency to have joined in support.

We are hopeful that the FAO Conference (14–18 June 2021) will approve the motion. Thereafter, the proposal will be forwarded to the 76<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2021 – the final step. The IYRP International Support Group (ISG) stands ready to prepare any additional documentation needed by the Government of Mongolia and FAO to complete the submission of the proposal to the UNGA and help show the broad and worldwide support for this proposal.

The Mongolian Government requested the IYRP ISG to prepare a draft Action Plan for the IYRP, as a way to engage other countries to support it. This draft is a compilation of all the priorities and commitments that governments and organizations have included in their letters of support. More work will be done in the near future to refine the IYRP Action Plan on the basis of the regional action plans being developed.

In addition, the ISG has established a Global Communications Team. Among other things, the Team has:

- Worked on enhancing the website (<https://iyrp.info>), including providing links that show relevance of other UN Conventions and Processes to the IYRP, including the SDGs, the UN Decade on Family Farming (2019–28), the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–30) and more;
- Following a survey, created two Word Cloud graphics to help explain what we mean by ‘rangelands’ and ‘pastoralists’ and how so many different words are used around the world to mean more or less the same. These graphics are attached (see page of this update). Word Clouds in languages other than English are also being prepared.

Seeing the need for greater decentralization of efforts, a total of 11 Regional IYRP Support Groups (RISGs) were established with help from the ISG since December 2020 in the following regions: Australasia, East Asia, Central Asia & Mongolia, South Asia, Middle East & North Africa, Eastern & Southern Africa, West & Central Africa, Europe, Arctic, North America and South America. Below are highlights of some of their achievements to date:

- **Australasia:** Australia is among the countries that has sent written support for the IYRP. The RISG developed an additional stakeholder list of ~70 organizations and engaged in outreach to them.
- **Central Asia and Mongolia** organized stakeholder outreach meetings on local, regional and national levels in some countries, resulting in a signed Resolution; they have translated all key IYRP documents into Russian; and are preparing draft regional action plans for the IYRP.

- **Eastern and Southern Africa:** In addition to reaching out to national governments in the region to seek their support for the IYRP, this RISG is conducting a comprehensive mapping of policies in the region that affect pastoralists and rangelands, and is supporting the documentation of African indigenous knowledge for the International Rangeland Congress (October 2021).
- **Europe:** This RISG is ensuring the continuity of the support of the EU and EU Member States to the IYRP at the UNGA and is advocating for development of an EU Action Plan for promoting pastoralism. Yolda Initiative and Euromontana are organizing a high-level webinar on 14 June, hosted by the EU Committee of the Regions, to discuss the contribution of pastoralism in tackling various issues in the EU, including biodiversity, climate change, food security and resilient rural communities, and to review how the international policies of the EU have impacted pastoralism around the world. The RISG is also working on translating the IYRP Draft Action Plan into French, Hungarian and Italian.
- **North America:** In Canada, a joint support letter co-signed by 23 national and regional NGOs that collectively represent hundreds of thousands of Canadians was sent to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs Canada, International Development Canada and other government departments. Similarly, a joint statement is being prepared in Mexico (25 signatories so far) for the Ministry of Agriculture (SADER). The Canadian Minister of Agriculture and the Governor of the State of Durango, Mexico, have sent letters of support to Mongolia. In the USA, signatures are being sought for a group letter to be sent to several Government Departmental Secretaries. An information note has been drafted titled “Why the IYRP matters to the USA Government”. The North American RISG is also finding ways to engage on issues related to indigenous pastoralism (including through creating opportunities related to capacity-building via indigenous universities and technical schools) and building momentum among wildlife and Park agencies working on the ground throughout the central grasslands of North America.
- **South Asia:** In March 2021, India and Bhutan joined the other South Asian governments that are supporting the IYRP. In addition, this RISG is organizing an Award For Recognizing Pastoralists who conserve local breeds and use best practices in pastureland management in South Asia. The RISG is compiling traditional food recipes and value-added livestock products from pastoral communities and, provided the COVID situation allows, is planning events for 22 May International Biodiversity Day and 5 June World Environment Day.

Finally, several members of the ISG have engaged proactively with the UN Food Systems Summit, after seeing that pastoralism and rangelands were (once again) being left behind. Among these actions: a Pastoralist Champion (Mr Hijaba Ykhanbai of Mongolia) has been nominated and is engaging with the different processes; Game Changer Solution Ideas have been submitted for Action Tracks 1, 3 and 5; and at least three Independent Dialogues are in preparation (one by ILRI and GASL; one by the Mountain Partnership Secretariat; and one by CELEP partners in Eastern Africa).

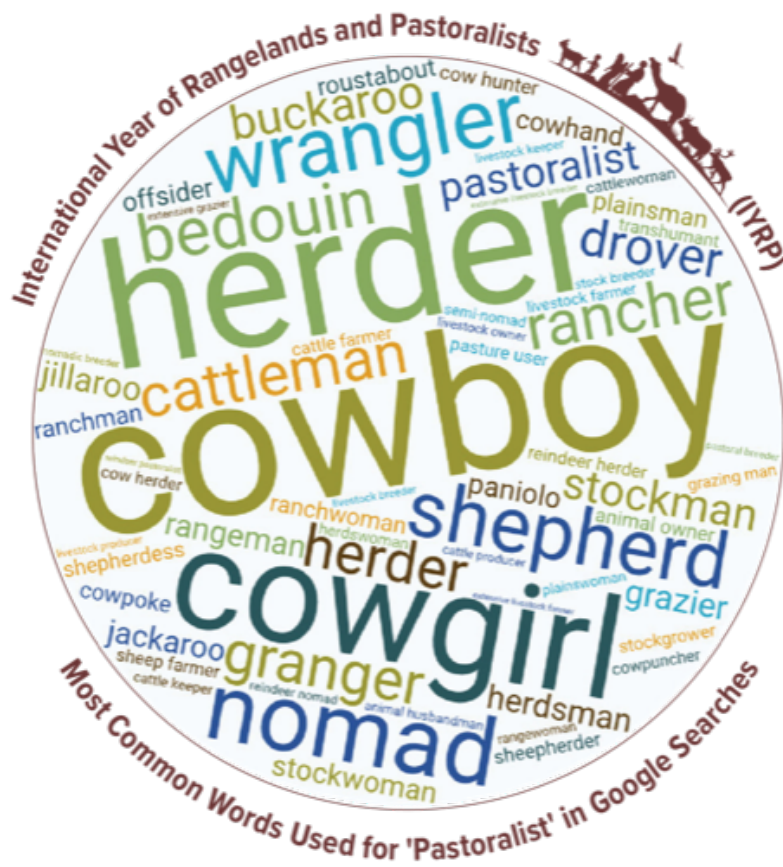
For more information on the IYRP, please visit: <https://iyrp.info>

Please continue to show your support for an IYRP! The next few months are crucial in raising awareness worldwide.

If you wish to get more involved, please contact me ([mniafull2@gmail.com](mailto:mniafull2@gmail.com)) or the Chair of the RISG in your region (for list of RISG chairs, see <https://www.iyrp.info/sites/iyrp.org/files/RISG%20co-chairs%20or%20facilitators%20%26%20emails%20with%20logo%2030.04.21.pdf>).

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Credit: M Niamir-Fuller, S Merrigan, B Hutchinson & A Waters-Bayer on behalf of IYRP ISG (April 2021)