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**United Nations
Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment Programme**

**United Nations Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment Programme
Second session
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**Combating desertification, land degradation and drought and
promoting sustainable pastoralism and rangelands**

The United Nations Environment Assembly,

Welcoming the adoption of United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/70/1, "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", including its Sustainable Development Goal 15; the Addis Ababa Action Agenda adopted at the third International Conference on Financing for Development, in particular paragraph 17; and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction,

Reaffirming its commitment to implementing United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/70/206 on implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, which acknowledges that desertification and drought are problems of global dimension and that joint action by the international community is needed to combat desertification and/or mitigate the effects of drought,

Recalling decision 3/COP.12 adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification, which defined land degradation neutrality as "a state whereby the amount and quality of land resources necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security remain stable or increase within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems",

Taking note of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, a shared strategic framework for inclusive and sustainable development for Africa; and of the African Union Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa: Securing, Protecting and Improving the Lives, Livelihoods and Rights of Pastoralist Communities,

Noting the outcomes of the sixth special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, held in April 2016 in Cairo, including on action for combating desertification, drought and floods and restoring degraded land to achieve land degradation neutrality (decision 4/SS6),

Stressing the importance of cooperation and collaboration among the United Nations Environment Programme, the Convention to Combat Desertification and other multilateral environmental agreements in combating desertification and land degradation,

Recognizing that healthy grassland and rangeland ecosystems are vital for contributing to economic growth, resilient livelihoods and the sustainable development of pastoralism; regulating the flow of water; maintaining soil stability and biodiversity; and supporting carbon sequestration, tourism, and other ecosystem goods and services, as well as distinct lifestyles and cultures, and that they can play a significant role in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda,

Aware that a significant proportion of the earth's terrestrial surface is classified as rangeland and grassland, that these biomes dominate land cover in dryland countries and countries affected by desertification, that a significant number of pastoralists in the world inhabit rangelands and grasslands, and that pastoralism is globally practiced in many different forms,

Recognizing that pastoralism is a historical practice that in many countries is very much linked to the distinct cultures, identities, traditional knowledge and way of life of indigenous peoples and local communities across the globe that have often contributed to enhancing and maintaining biodiversity, food security and sustainable management of rangelands,

Also recognizing that pastoralism, as a dynamic and transformative system based on indigenous and local knowledge and historical experience of coexisting with nature, faces different challenges around the world, including land tenure insecurity; insufficient investment; inequitable development; inadequate levels of literacy; lack of adequate technology, infrastructure and access to markets; unsustainable changes in the use of land and natural resources; limited access to social and extension services; security of the pastoralists and the communities through which they traverse; and increasing vulnerability to climate change,

Observing that drought has major implications in terms of loss of human lives, food insecurity, degradation of natural resources, negative consequences on flora and fauna, poverty and social unrest, and that there are increasingly immediate short-term and long-term economic losses in a number of economic sectors including, inter alia, agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, water supply, industry, energy production and tourism,

Also recognizing that the benefits of taking action against land degradation by implementing sustainable land management activities are much higher than the costs of preventing land degradation, and that actions to combat land degradation and promote land restoration can help address forced displacement and global instability and therefore should be integrated with poverty reduction measures in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals focusing on enhancing food security and nutrition,

Further recognizing the relevance of sustainable pastoralism to several subprogrammes and thematic areas of the United Nations Environment Programme, and acknowledging the collaborative efforts of many United Nations agencies, in particular the Food and Agriculture Organization and intergovernmental and civil-society partners,

1. *Calls* upon the United Nations Environment Programme to contribute to strengthening existing global partnerships that promote a shared vision of resilient landscapes for resilient people and strengthen coordination in the fight against desertification and land degradation;
2. *Encourages* Member States to increase efforts to invest in programmes that address problems of desertification, deforestation, drought, biodiversity loss, degradation of rangelands, invasion of alien species, and water scarcity, in order to maintain and improve the productivity and sustainable management of land, through national development policies, strategies and programmes developed in consultation and/or in cooperation, with key stakeholders, as appropriate;
3. *Requests* the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, to provide support to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification to facilitate the sharing of best practices for the development and implementation of strategic frameworks and early warning systems for enhanced disaster risk management, sustainable land management, land restoration and resilience to drought;
4. *Encourages* Member States to invest in disaster risk management, early warning systems and safety-net programmes, as appropriate, in order to help communities cope with drought, flooding and disease;
5. *Strongly encourages* Member States to recognize and include in national policies, strategies and plans, as appropriate and in accordance with national legislation, references to relevant Sustainable Development Goal targets, including on improved livelihood security, social services, and natural resources for pastoralists and indigenous peoples;
6. *Invites* the United Nations Environment Programme to collaborate with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and other partners to mobilize resources to help Member States affected by desertification, upon request, to develop, implement and review National Action Programmes;

7. *Calls upon* Member States to take action towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and reaching voluntary targets regarding land degradation neutrality, in accordance with specific national circumstances and development priorities, in line with decision 3/COP.12 adopted at the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and encourages the United Nations Environment Programme, in collaboration with other United Nations agencies, to provide required technical support to countries in this regard;
 8. *Urges* Member States to build the capacity of and continue or increase investment in the pastoral livestock sector, including for sustainable land management practices, improved and/or restored ecosystems, access to markets, and livestock health and breeding, and enhanced livestock extension services, in order to improve productivity, contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and maintain and enhance biodiversity;
 9. *Requests* the United Nations Environment Programme, within its mandate and subject to available resources, in partnership with Member States and United Nations agencies and programmes and other relevant stakeholders, including civil-society organizations, to explore whether there are gaps in the current provision of technical support and environmental and socioeconomic assessments of grasslands, rangelands, soil erosion, land degradation, land tenure security and water security in drylands, including the ongoing assessments of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, conversion of rangelands to other uses, in order to better understand the implications for sustainable livelihoods, while taking into consideration local and indigenous knowledge and technologies;
 10. *Encourages* continental and regional intergovernmental bodies to support joint and cross-border development programmes for neighbouring pastoralist and other communities in order to increase the level of mutual trust and confidence, as well as to mitigate conflicts;
 11. *Requests* the United Nations Environment Programme, in partnership with Governments, scientific institutions, United Nations agencies, civil society, pastoralists, communities and other relevant stakeholders, to contribute to the strengthening of the science-policy interface on sustainable pastoralism and rangelands;
 12. *Calls upon* the international community and other stakeholders to continue supporting the implementation of national, regional and global initiatives to combat desertification and land degradation and promote sustainable pastoralism, such as the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative in Africa, the New York Declaration on Forests and the Bonn Challenge;
 13. *Calls upon* the United Nations Environment Programme to contribute to raising global awareness of sustainable pastoralism and rangelands, in collaboration with other United Nations agencies, relevant conventions and partners;
 14. *Requests* the United Nations Environment Programme to consider hosting the Regional Coordination Unit for Africa in order to strengthen the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification on the African continent, subject to available funding from the Convention;
 15. *Requests* the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to report to the United Nations Environment Assembly on progress in implementing the present resolution.
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