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Joint Call to Action: Securing Land Tenure, Gender Equality and Rangelands

UNCCD COP17
August 17–28, 2026, in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Land degradation now affects up to 40% of the world's land and half of humanity, and the G7 has recognised land degradation and drought as drivers of global instability. Land governance is no longer only an environmental question; it is a matter of resilience and security. **COP17 in Ulaanbaatar, the first of the three Rio Convention COPs in 2026 and taking place during both the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists and the International Year of the Woman Farmer, is a pivotal moment** to engage with UNCCD Parties.

A decade of UNCCD decisions (26/COP.14, 27/COP.15, 28/COP.16 and 29/COP.16), has built a strong framework on land tenure, gender and inclusive governance. This framework is now complemented by civil society, private sector, and funder initiatives, including the Riyadh Action Agenda and the Intergovernmental Land Tenure Commitment. The evidence for land rights and government as enabling functions is robust: land tenure reform is linked to major productivity gains in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia; land titling reduced forest clearing by over 75% in the Peruvian Amazon; and realising women's land rights at scale could lift up to 150 million people out of hunger. Yet the gap between what is agreed and what is delivered remains wide. The constraint is rarely a lack of commitment, but a gap in implementation.

We call on Parties and partners to close this gap by taking concrete action across five priorities.

1. Embed Land Tenure in the Future Strategic Framework (FSF)

The final report of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the FSF recognises secure land tenure as an enabling condition for achieving Convention targets, and names vulnerable populations explicitly, including Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and youth. **This language must be retained and strengthened in the FSF.** If land tenure is not embedded now, with dedicated indicators, a clear theory of change and budget commitments, it risks remaining an underfunded add-on for another decade.

We call on Parties to:

- 1. Retain and extend the IWG mandate (2026–2028) with land tenure expertise**, ensuring rights-holders are engaged regularly and inclusively, and that specific language recognising pastoralist tenure rights is added.
- 2. Treat land tenure, inclusion and gender equality as interconnected** in the continued development of the FSF, with meaningful civil society participation in shaping it.
- 3. Build the FSF monitoring framework on existing indicators.** SDG sex-disaggregated land-tenure indicators (1.4.2, 5.a.1, 5.a.2) and KMGBF indicator 22.1 (targets 1, 3, 22, 23), to harmonise reporting across the three Rio Conventions and reduce reporting burdens.

2. Make Land Tenure Central to National Implementation

Decisions 26/COP.14 through 28/COP.16 and 29/COP.16 established the mandate for tenure integration. COP17 must build on this by creating practical enabling conditions, clear coordination, cross-ministerial dialogue and donor alignment, so Parties can deliver on land tenure targets.

We call on Parties to:

1. **Nominate and resource Land Tenure Focal Points at national level** (per Decision 28/COP.16), with a clear mandate to coordinate across ministries (agriculture, land, water, environment), promote Rio Convention synergies, and consult the Gender, Youth and IPLC Caucuses.
2. **Develop structured NFP–CSO collaboration models** as a clear, replicable framework for the structural inclusion of civil society in UNCCD implementation, rather than ad hoc engagement.
3. **Integrate community-collected, CSO-validated and participatory tenure data** into national reporting (PRAIS), reflecting the lived reality of customary, communal and mobile tenure holders, especially women and pastoralists, and disaggregate area-based indicators by tenure type where relevant.

3. Implement Women's Land Rights and Resource Gender Equality

We welcome the draft decision's recognition that securing women's legitimate tenure rights and access to natural resources is critical to the Convention, and its call for women's active participation in delegations and processes. But the decision must go further: governments need to ensure women's land rights are fully enforced on the national level. When women lack tenure security, investment in sustainable land management and long-term restoration is constrained. Women pastoralists in particular face a compounded "double burden" as both women and pastoralists, often lacking recognized, documented rights to the rangeland and resources they depend on.

We call on Parties to:

1. **Make women's equal land rights a prerequisite and safeguard** for all investment in land restoration, and integrate them into LDN targets, National Action Plans and restoration frameworks as core commitments.
2. **Establish a permanent, core-budget gender staff position** within the UNCCD Secretariat, and a follow-up mechanism for the Gender Action Plan (per Activity 4.2 of its Roadmap and Recommendation 1 of the 2024 GAP evaluation).
3. **Address the intersection of gender, youth, and pastoral and other forms of communal land tenure explicitly**, including addressing barriers young women face in accessing and inheriting land, and supporting women's equal rights within customary governance systems.
4. **Integrate gender-disaggregated land-tenure indicators into PRAIS**, drawing on SDG indicators (1.4.2, 5.a.1, 5.a.2) as included in the KMGBF, CBMIS and citizen science, and aligned with rightsholder language in the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan.

4. Recognise Rangelands, Pastoralists and Mobility

Pastoralists steward at least 80% of the world's rangelands, nearly half the terrestrial surface, yet mobility, the very essence of their stewardship, remains unrecognised. **Mobility is adaptive capacity, not fixed behaviour, and pastoralists are rights-holders, not stakeholders.**

We call on Parties to:

1. **Secure rights to land, territory and mobility for pastoralists**, including cross-border mobility, along the VGGTs and Decision 29/COP.16, recognising collective, overlapping, seasonal and mobile use of shared lands.
2. **Develop appropriate, community-validated land tenure data**, incorporating pastoralist-specific indicators (ILC, ODI, SPARC, Prindex) into global land, restoration and climate monitoring frameworks.
3. **Link restoration projects to land tenure security**, in line with KMGBF Targets 2, 3, 22, 23 and SDG 15.3, channelling accessible finance directly to pastoralist organisations, including those led by Indigenous Peoples and local communities.
4. **Set standards for equitable decision-making with pastoralist communities, ensuring women and youth** hold recognised rights-holder status, aligned with the Coalition of Rangeland States through inclusive, tenure-led governance

5. Align and Redirect Financing

Desertification, land degradation and drought cost the global economy USD 878 billion each year, with a restoration financing gap of USD 278 billion annually. Meanwhile, some USD 2.6 trillion in environmentally harmful subsidies is paid out yearly, equivalent to the entire investment needed by 2030 to meet global land restoration and drought-resilience targets.

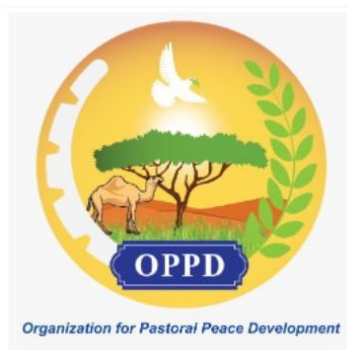
We call on Parties to:

- **Assess and repurpose harmful subsidies** towards LDN, consistent with KMGBF Target 18, via a Science-Policy Interface / Global Mechanism technical assessment reporting to COP18.
- **Create dedicated financing windows** directly accessible to smallholder and family farmers' organizations, cooperatives, community-based and pastoralist organisations, Indigenous organizations and communities, local communities, and women-led and grassroots women's groups, with simplified requirements, honoring the call of "nothing about us without us."
- **Require land tenure and gender safeguards in GEF-LDN funding**: incorporate recognition of customary tenure and women's land rights before release, and expand the GEF Small Grants Programme for women-, Indigenous, pastoralist, and youth-led initiatives.
- **Continue funding the Women Delegates Fund beyond COP17 and create direct financing channels for youth-led rural organisations** to address land-based drivers of youth out-migration.
- **Track and report who receives finance, ensuring transparency and accountability** for reaching local land stewards and food producers.

This coordinated call on gender, land tenure, and rangelands invites Parties and all other UNCCD actors to partner with us to ensure accelerated progress toward achieving LDN. Land restoration cannot succeed where these crucial enabling conditions are absent.

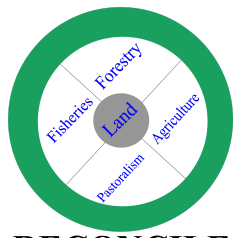
- Landesa
- International Land Coalition Secretariat
- TMG Think Tank for Sustainability
- Pastoralist Goals Foundation
- Fundación Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (FARN)
- UN Women
- Fundación Barranquilla+20
- Organization for Pastoral Peace and Development
- Ambition Loop
- Huairou Commission
- Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI)
- Resource Conflict Institute (RECONCILE)
- Disi Women Cooperative Association of Multiple Purposes LTD
- Both ENDS
- Youth Negotiators Academy (YNA)
- Growthwatch
- Foundation for Ecological Security, India
- Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)
- Robert Bosch Stiftung





HUAIROU COMMISSION
Women, Homes & Community





RECONCILE



YOUTH NEGOTIATORS ACADEMY



Growthwatch

