**Minutes of Zoom meeting of International Support Group (ISG) for   
International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP), 25 June 2020**

***Participants:*** *Gregorio Velasco Gil, Burmaa Dashbal, Jim O’Rourke, Chris Magero, Ann Waters-Bayer, Kathrine Johnsen, Barbara Hutchinson, Pablo Manzano, Greg Perrier, Abdelkader Bensada, Barry Irving, Anders Oskal, Maryam Niamir-Fuller, Ray Smith, Ykhanbai Hijaba, Paola Peraldo*

**Update on the IYRP process (Jim & Maryam, ISG Chair and Vice-Chair)**

* According to current information, the earliest possible date for the IYRP is 2026.
* The meeting of the FAO Committee on Agriculture (COAG) during which the designation of the IYRP will be discussed and decided upon is in the week of 28 September – 2 October 2020. We currently assume it will be a physical meeting at FAO headquarters in Rome: however, depending on the situation with Covid-19, the meeting may be virtual or postponed.
* It will be crucial now to have letters of commitment (in addition to the letters of support for the Mongolian proposal) from as many organisations and governments as possible. These letters should give details of how the organisation or government expects to support the IYRP. The Australian Rangelands Society (ARS) has sent a letter of commitment in which it states that current funds will be reallocated for the IYRP. Dana could make this letter available; it could be used to give ideas for other organisations. It will be especially important to receive such letters from organisations in the USA and Europe.
* ***To do:*** Dana to send ARS letter as example to the ISG.

**Report from Mongolian National Committee for IYRP (Hijaba)**

* + The Mongolian Government has submitted a proposal for a side event on the IYRP at the COAG meeting, which may or may not be virtual. Mongolia is inviting other partners to join in the side event , including ISG partners ILRI, FAO, UNEP, IUCN, IFAD, IRC, Yolda Initiative, African Rangelands Initiative, Rangeland Partnership and the Central Asia Pastoral Alliance (CAPA). The Mongolians want to bring in voices online from pastoralist organisations in six regions. They also want to show a short video on Mongolian rangelands and pastoralists.
  + Gregorio is currently reviewing the draft agenda for the side event.
  + The Mongolian Government has received 30 letters of support so far for the IYRP proposal: 4 from countries and 26 from organisations, including pastoralist organisations.
  + Discussion: It would be good to have a support letter from WWF Germany, which has just started a series of online discussions in a new “Global Grassland and Savannah Dialogue Platform”.
  + ***To do:*** Barb to check with Hijaba to make sure the master list of letters of support is up to date and whether WWF also sent a letter of support.

**Report on FAO preparations for the COAG meeting (Gregorio)**

* + The IYRP side event will be on the Tuesday or Wednesday (29 or 30 Sept) of the COAG meeting; the vote on the IYRP proposal is scheduled for Thursday (1 Oct).
  + For the side event, we need high-level speakers from international organisations and supporting countries in order to gain attention.
  + Gregorio would welcome creative ideas for a week-long display in the FAO lobby, with films, photo exhibition, etc. Some ideas suggested during the ISG meeting were:   
    - CELEP’s pastoralist film festival from different parts of world  
    - show a film every day during the COAG week; if online, the film shown each day could be  
     hosted by an institution in a different country  
    - also an online photo exhibition could be considered, if the COAG meeting is virtual.
  + Gregorio stressed that more letters of support from national governments are needed, e.g. from South America, South Asia, Australia and Europe, especially Scandinavian countries with reindeer-herding groups.
  + When the Mongolian Government presents the proposal for the IYRP to the COAG, it needs to address the issue as to where resources for the IYRP will come from.
  + As soon as Gregorio knows if COAG has approved the IYRP side event, he will let the ISG know, so that preparations can begin. The approval should come within the next two weeks.
  + The ISG will need to find resources for the side event and for other displays/events on rangelands and pastoralists during the week of the COAG meeting.
  + Gregorio prepared an FAO rationale to accompany the Mongolian proposal to the COAG for an IYRP. In essence, the rationale was the same as what had been prepared by the ISG but some specific points were added about relevant FAO activities and interests.
  + ***To do:*** Gregorio to send i) a copy of the submitted rationale and proposal for the designation of the IYRP as soon as it is accepted by FAO Management, and ii) a draft of the side-event programme.
  + Gregorio suggested that the Mongolian Permanent Representative in Rome send out invitations and information (e.g. in the form of a newsletter) with links to key resources about rangelands and pastoralists to all other Permanent Country Representatives in Rome.
  + ***Suggestion by ISG:*** A subgroup in the ISG could be formed to prepare for the side event at the COAG meeting if all Partners agree

**Involving pastoralists before and during the COAG meeting (Anders)**

* + Anders (International Centre for Reindeer Husbandry) will work on gaining support in the Scandinavian region, including also the Ministries of Foreign Affairs; for this, he would like to have 1–2 pages of background information about the IYRP proposal.
* He stressed the importance of active involvement of pastoralists, e.g. through WAMIP.
* Reindeer herders could offer a live transmission from Scandinavia for the side event by mobilising indigenous youth (who compiled a world-prize-winning food book) to prepare food online in a demo kitchen.
* Anders suggested developing a map (even if couldn’t be exact, if it has to be prepared in such a short time) that shows the areas used by pastoralists around the world, for display during the COAG week.
* ***To do:*** Hijaba to send Anders the Mongolia proposal; if needed, Hijaba and Maryam could help make a 2-pager out of it.

**Mapping pastoralists (Pablo and others)**

* Pablo pointed out that a map of areas used by pastoralists would differ from a map of rangelands, as pastoralists in many parts of the world, e.g. in Africa, also use land in the dry season that is used for crop farming in the wet season. Pastoral production systems are not confined to the rangelands.
* Pablo is working on a post-doc with the University of Helsinki. His work includes mapping pastoralist mobility patterns, using a participatory mapping approach that gives pastoralists a chance to show their “own geography” from the pastoralists’ perspective (Anders’ term). Pablo could have a draft of this map ready by the time of the COAG meeting.
* There is potential of linking with WWF’s new grasslands platform (mentioned above), which also has a mapping initiative, in collaboration with IUCN, and also linking with the mapping initiative of ILRI and the University of Idaho.
* ***Suggestion:*** A “Mapping Sub-Group” should be formed to address the need to visualise pastoralists over the globe. This group could include the University of Helsinki, IUCN, WWF, ILRI, University of Idaho etc. Perhaps WWF could take global leadership. Other could be asked if they are interested to join.

**Further steps to prepare for the COAG meeting**

* Abdelkader to ask UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen or the Deputy Director to speak on behalf of UNEP at the IYRP side event for COAG.
* Jim & Maryam to request to all organisations that sent a letter of support for the Mongolian proposal to send the following to Mr. Batmunkh (Chair of Mongolia’s National Support Group for IYRP), Gregorio, Hijaba, Jim and Maryam:
  1. 1-page write-up or PPT slide about what they have done so far to support the IYRP
  2. Video testimonies they may have already developed
  3. List of their top three publications on rangelands and pastoralists.
* All these organisations should lobby their Ministries to produce a letter of support for the Mongolian proposal and send this to the COAG Secretariat with cc to the Mongolian Delegation in Rome.

**Further steps to prepare for the IYRP sessions at the joint IGC/IRC**

* Jim & Maryam to ask selected members of the ISG to start forming regional groups (made of interested people from the IGC Continuing Committee, the IRC Continuing Committee, the ISG and the panel speakers living/working in a region) to prepare for the IYRP sessions at the IGC/IRC in Nairobi in October 2021; the preparations would include:
* Agreeing on why the IYRP is important for the region
* Identifying key stakeholders and players concerned with rangelands and pastoralists in the region
* Proposing priority themes for the region (referring to the 12 monthly themes proposed for the IYRP)
* Starting to develop an action plan for the IYRP in the region, to be discussed at the IGC/IRC.