



International
Rangeland
Congress



Press Release

International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists Support for United Nations Resolution

September 23, 2016 - The Society for Range Management (SRM), The Rangelands Partnership (a collaboration of 19 Land-Grant Universities in the U.S.), the International Rangelands Congress (IRC), and the International Grasslands Congress (IGC) have pledged to work together with organizations around the world to gain support for naming and implementing an ***International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP)***.

Rangelands are landscapes dominated by grasses and other low growing vegetation and include grasslands, savannas, shrublands, deserts, tundra and alpine communities, marshes, and meadows often tended to by pastoralists and ranchers. Pastoralism is the branch of agriculture concerned with animal husbandry, which traditionally occurs on rangelands. Pastoralists and rangelands are intimately tied.

Pastoralism represents a lifestyle that oversees and nurtures the open spaces of our world. These lands are important for livestock production, habitat for wildlife, soil and water conservation, recreation, and conservation of biological diversity. In the face of variable climatic conditions and an increased focus on food security issues, it is essential that the value and vulnerability of pastoralism and the rangelands they sustain is recognized. A United Nations designation for an ***International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralism*** will greatly increase visibility and awareness world-wide.

Beginning in 2015, the partnering organizations began efforts to build consensus for achieving an IYRP designation. This led to the presentation and, ultimately, the approval of a resolution at the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-2) meeting held in Nairobi, Kenya on May 26, 2016. Titled ["Combating desertification, land degradation and drought and promoting pastoralism and rangelands"](#), the resolution required high level support from more than 100 countries and calls for:

- raising "global awareness of sustainable pastoralism and rangelands"
- strengthening "the science-policy interface on sustainable pastoralism and rangelands"
- conducting a worldwide gap analysis "to better understand the implications for sustainable livelihoods"

To begin implementing the UNEA-2 resolution, a meeting was later held in at the International Rangelands Congress on July 19, 2016, in Saskatoon, Canada. More than 50 representatives from around the world discussed and committed to an action plan of next steps in the IYRP process, including:

- raising awareness at grassroots levels in both developed and developing countries
- promoting an IYRP at the Convention on Biological Diversity Conference of the Parties, to be held in Cancun, Mexico in December 2016
- continuing to work closely with countries willing to take forward a formal request to the United Nations General Assembly for an IYRP

- Promoting an IYRP at future UN-related events as well as at other related conferences and meetings throughout the world.

These efforts are fully underway with multi-organizational task forces organizing numerous activities to alert key stakeholders to this important opportunity. For additional information or to learn how you can help with this effort, contact Barbara Hutchinson, The Rangelands Partnership/SRM (barbarah@cals.arizona.edu) or Jim O'Rourke, IRC/SRM (jorourke@csc.edu). Also, please visit: IYRP Resources webpage (The Rangelands Partnership): <http://globalrangelands.org/international-year-rangelands-and-pastoralists-initiative>