**IYRP Support Group (ISG)**

**Meeting Conclusions and Recommendations**

**18 March 2021**

*Participants included: Gregorio Velasco-Gil, Francesca Pasetti and Serena Ferrari (FAO/PKH); Munkhnasan, Hijaba Ykhanbai, Tungalag Ulambayar (Mongolia); Engin Yilmaz (Turkey); Ruijun Long (China); Barry Irving and Jurgen Hoth (Canada); Dana Kelly, (Australia); Ann Waters-Bayer (CELEP/Agrecol); David Borre and Elisabeth Huber-Sannwald (Mexico); Pablo Manzano (University of Helsinki); Tezera Getahun (Ethiopia); Ken Otieno and Loupa Pius (Kenya); Hossein Badipour (Iran); Pedro Herrera (Spain); Kevin Kirkman (South Africa); Andres Oskal (Norway); D.K. Sadana (India); Debbie Jewitt (South Africa); Jim O’Rourke, Layne Coppock, Greg Perrier, Maryam Niamir-Fuller, Kathleen Galvin and Barbara Hutchinson (USA).*

1. **Update on FAO process towards FAO Conference in July 2021 and discussion on communication strategy**

Gregorio reported that the FAO Conference will consider the FAO Council’s Report as a whole, rather than vote on individual sections. Therefore, it is highly likely that there will not be any problems or need for special preparation of documents, etc. So far, no side events are being planned. However, we should continue to seek more government letters of support and continue to raise awareness. Also, we could advocate for IYRP among the Government Ministers who might be coming to the FAO Conference. That list will not be available until the last minute. Ann and Engin pointed out the high cost and time needed to do a social media campaign similar to the one for COAG.

***ACTION:*** *The ISG Global Communications Team should consider how to raise awareness in the week before the FAO Conference in a “light” mode, e.g. targeting a Facebook or Twitter campaign to Ministers attending the Conference. The RISGs can handle local social media to support this.*

1. **Update from Government of Mongolia and National Steering Group, and discussion of UN General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2021: processes and prospects**

Munkhnasan and Hijaba reported that the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry (MoFALI) is on track to help the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) to send letters to all Governments prior to UNGA, despite the Covid pandemic and the lockdowns. MoFA has requested the ISG to prepare a DRAFT Action Plan that includes a financing plan for the IYRP, as preparation for the debate in UNGA. Maryam pointed out that we had expected a more bottom-up approach, with the RISG taking on a major role in time for presenting their Action Plans during the Joint International Grassland & Rangeland Congress (IGC/IRC) for validation. But given the urgency of this request, the ISG will rely on all the letters of support and commitment received, and any other documentation at hand. Munkhnasan also requested a summary report of all letters of support received so far. Mr Ganzoric has joined the MoFALI as head of its International Cooperation Division and is very supportive of the IYRP. Similarly, the Mongolian Permanent Rep/Ambassador in New York is aware of this initiative and is very supportive. Maryam suggested that, if requested by the Permanent Rep in New York, the ISG could help prepare a webinar or briefing on the IYRP for Ambassadors there.

***ACTION:*** *Maryam will take the lead to urgently prepare a summary report of all letters received, and a draft Action Plan and will share with all ISG members and RISGs for review. Once drafted, the files will be sent to Munkhnasan for onward distribution.*

***ACTION:*** *Munkhnasan will communicate the new addresses to which letters of support should now be sent; this will be the Minister of MoFALI, with copies to Ganzoric, Munkhnasan, FAO and Maryam.*

***ACTION:*** *Hijaba will check with government officials if they need to have copies of all the letters received so far and whether the Permanent Rep in New York has access to all of them.*

**3. Update from the Global Communications Team (Engin, Ann, Barbara)**

Ann reported that, at the moment, the team is maintaining the website and has revised the IYRP global flyer and updated it in February 2021; the North American RISG consolidated it into one page. The global flyer has not yet been translated into all languages, except for Russian, which was done by the Central Asia and Mongolia RISG. The Global Comms Team is asking for one or two members from each RISG to join it; the first joint meeting is to be held 26 March. The Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) RISG suggested to add a button on each regional page of the IYRP website for relevant policy documents. The IRC/IGC organizers have offered a special IYRP page on their website; the Global Comms Team will discuss how to populate it.

Engin recalled that the TOR for the Global Comms Team recommends: (1) branding by May; (2) make visuals by August; (3) drafting messages for social media for UNGA by August; and (4) organizing an event during the UNGA in New York, depending on resources available.

***ACTION:*** *RISGs to send any materials they want added to the regional pages on the IYRP website, including the minutes of their meetings after all participants have endorsed them*.

**4. Other UN events and processes, including UN Food Systems Summit**

Maryam reported that the **UN Convention to Combat Desertification** (UNCCD) Secretariat supports our efforts and their Liaison Office Director has met with the FAO representative in New York. The current head of the G77 in New York is from Guinea. The West Africa RISG should consider engaging with Guinean counterparts to close the loop from the side of the country. The “Group of Friends of Drought, Land Degradation and Desertification” – an informal coalition of Ambassadors – is chaired by the Ambassadors of Iceland and Namibia. The Europe and ESA RISGs could see how to reach up to these Ambassadors.

In terms of the **UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration** (UN DER) and the **Global Landscapes Forum** (GLF), things are quite busy onboth fronts, but through the efforts of Abdelkader (UNEP), Fiona (ILRI) and Jonathon Davies (IUCN), we are getting very good exposure for the IYRP. If anyone else is involved in these efforts, please contact Maryam.

Ann reported that the **UN Decade of Family Farming** (UNDFF) meeting was last December (report sent). They are planning a high-level meeting during the UN Food Systems Summit at the time of the 76th UNGA (September 2021) and a Global Forum on the Decade at the end of 2021 or the beginning of 2022. We might want to see about getting issues of rangelands and pastoralists into those meetings. There will be a meeting of the World CSO Coordinating Committee (WCC) for the UNDFF in April, and either she or Fiona will attend on behalf of the ISG.

***ACTION:*** *ISG to consider how to engage with the UNDFF high-level meeting in September 2021.*

In regards to the **UN Food System Summit** (UNFSS), this is now scheduled for September. Hijaba was nominated as a “Champion” and plans to participate in the upcoming UNFSS Civil Society Forum (26 March). Maryam, Pablo M and others have reviewed the draft “Action Track” papers 2, 3 and 5 and pulled together a short one-page critique that has been distributed to UNEP, ISG and other stakeholders. Munkhnasan reported that MoFALI is discussing participation in the national dialogue, so they can bring in the pastoralist perspective.

Pablo M raised the concern that the Action Track papers seem to follow a narrative where any form of livestock production destroys the environment, generates excessive greenhouse gas emissions and, therefore, the Papers call for moving to vegan diets. This is not helpful to the pastoralism/ healthy rangelands narrative that we are promoting in IYRP. It appears that there is a very large civil society organization movement in Europe that is opposing the Action Track narratives around livestock and is bringing another story. The ISG can make sure that we get the facts and sound science out correctly on rangelands and pastoralists.

***ACTION:*** *We all need to coordinate on the UNFSS process. We must see if the initial steps we have taken so far are sufficient, or whether we need to do much more as we get closer to the Summit itself. RISG chairs are asked to inform Maryam and Ann of any activities related to UNFSS in their region.*

**5. Updates from the RISGs on country support; strategizing and developing subgroups; discussion on protocol to upload material to their folders in the website**

Jim stressed that top priority of all RISGs is to get **letters of support**. In some cases requiring special attention, the ISG could send a letter (with signatures of Jim and Maryam) to individual country Ministers to encourage them to send a letter of support but, in most cases, it should be sufficient if the national focal points in the RISGs seek letters from their Governments, using the one-page IYRP flyer or the 4-page one. The RISGs will request a special letter from the ISG only if needed.

Such a request had come from the South Asia RISG. Sadana thought a letter from the ISG could sometimes be useful but it is important that local people in the individual countries – perhaps NGOs, perhaps groups of stakeholders – take action to gain support from their Governments.

***ACTION:*** *ISG to draft a letter that can be used by country members of RISGs if needed.*

Jurgen suggested that the South Asia and other RISGs could take a similar approach as in Canada: they prepared a letter and sent it to numerous grassroots and international organizations operating in Canada asking them if they support the IYRP. This can be sent to a Minister as one letter signed by 200 organizations with their logos. He offered to share the letter drafted for Canada with the other RISGs. A similar approach was taken in Spain.

***ACTION:*** *RISGs that would like to receive the sample letter to rally support from numerous organizations in Canada to lobby the Government to support the IYRP should contact Jurgen.*

The Central Asia & Mongolia RISG has adapted the IYRP flyer for the region in English and Russian.

Munkhnasan reported that the Mongolian Government received an official support letter from the Russian Federation.

The China and East Asia Group has been communicating about the IYRP with people in different parts of China, also at provincial level. Ruijun suggested that the Mongolian Ambassador to China visit Inner Mongolia and other provinces to discuss and request local government support. The Chinese Rangeland Society could assist in this effort.

The Europe RISG is organizing some events to address the European Union (EU) and its member countries. Engin emphasized the need for support of the Mongolian Government in these activities to ensure that high-level decision-makers can be attracted from the EU. This could benefit also other countries in the world, because the EU has a huge influence at UNGA.

***ACTION:*** *Engin will resend the message request support from the Mongolian Government for the event with the EU; Munkhnasan will arrange the required support.*

Regarding creation of **RISG subgroups**, it is up to each RISG to decide how to organize itself. Most but not all RISGs have named liaison people for communications and formed communications subgroups. A couple of RISGs have set up policy subgroups that try to find out about and influence policy at national and regional level. Ann reported that there was a request whether there could be exchange between the policy subgroups so that they could learn from each other and improve their work.

Jurgen requested a list of the **RISG chairpersons** and is particularly keen to contact those in Africa, where there are frameworks like the Gaborone Declaration for Sustainability that brings together 12 nations and works with the League of Conservation International in South Africa on grasslands. Here he sees scope for synergy.

***ACTION:*** *Ann to send an updated list of RISG chairs to the ISG list.*

**6. How to distinguish and coordinate three sets of member lists: a) IYRP General List, b) ISG list, and c) lists being maintained by RISGs**

Jim explained that the original IYRP General List was started about six years ago and includes all people who want to be kept informed about the IYRP. The ISG mailing list includes people who are actively supporting the IYRP. It should now include the chairs of all RISGs. Each of them can communicate with their group members, and other RISGs can contact the chair if they want to contact someone in the RISG, e.g. the person coordinating communications.

Barbara reported that the ISG list now has 88 names. The IYRP General List is much larger, but most members want only periodic updates about the IYRP. The ISG does not have the names of all people in the RISGs, which are growing and maintain their own member lists. Ann wondered if people in the RISGs who have a role such as chair or communications link person or policy subgroup coordinator should be on the ISG list. Hijaba pointed out that, because of language issues, not all people in the Central Asia & Mongolia RISG need to be in the ISG list.

***ACTION:*** *The RISG chairs to send Barbara the names and email addresses of people from their RISGs who should be on the ISG mailing list.*

Ken differentiated between the big list of interested people (IYRP General List), the smaller list of active people like a technical working group (ISG) and the RISGs that focus on mobilizing and campaigning at country and regional level. He reported that the ESA communications group had its first meeting; issues arising will be discussed in the upcoming meeting with the global comms team. Some clarification is also needed about the RISG’s review of the proposed 12 monthly themes. The plan of the ESA RISG is that the co-chairs and the coordinators of the regional communications team and policy working group would join the ISG meetings.

Jim suggested to concentrate first on letters of support and getting the IYRP designated, and then start planning the years ahead. Ann explained that the proposal for the **monthly themes** was made a couple of years ago. The best time for each RISG to comment on this proposal would be during the IGC/IRC in October, when there will be three sessions devoted to action planning at regional and global level for the coming years, including the monthly themes. The South Asia RISG has already suggested that the month for women pastoralists should be March, because that is already an international month for women and 8 March is International Women’s Day. Such suggestions will be taken into account when finalising plans for the monthly themes. New themes may also come in.

***ACTION:*** *Each RISG will review appropriateness of the monthly themes and bring any suggestions for changes into the planning sessions in Nairobi this October.*

**7. AOB**

Referring to South Asia, Sadana raised two points:

1. some countries have no rangelands or pastoralists (e.g. Maldives)
2. for several activities planned by the RISG, it needs funds.

Jim responded that the financial support available will be summarized in the overview that Maryam is making, based on the letters of support and commitment from various countries and organizations but, generally, each RISG will have to find its own funds for its activities.

Jim urged as many ISG members as possible to join the Nairobi meeting in person, although virtual participation will also be possible.

Jim adjourned the meeting and informed all that the Global Communications Team will send the minutes.