

To:

H.E. Mr Bolorchuluun Khayangaa
Minister of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry of Mongolia (MoFALI)
13381 Governmental Building 9th, Peace Avenue 16a,
Bayanzurkh District, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
info@mofa.gov.mn

Copy to:

- Munkhnasan Tsevegmed, Officer, MoFALI, and Secretary of Mongolia National Task Force for the IYRP (munkhnasan@mofa.gov.mn / munkhnasan2025@gmail.com)
- Gregorio Velasco-Gil, AGAG, FAO (gregorio.velascogil@fao.org)
- Igshaan Samuels, Co-Chair ISG for the IYRP (isamuels@uwc.ac.za)

Wednesday 1st May 2024

Dear H.E. Mr Bolorchuluun Khayangaa,

We, the non-governmental civil society organisation partners of the Altyn Dala Conservation Initiative (“Altyn Dala”), are writing to express our support for the United Nations-designated International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026 (“IYRP 2026”).

Rangelands cover more of the Earth’s surface than any other land type and include some of its last great wild spaces. In 2006, our organisations came together in partnership with the Government of Kazakhstan to enable the protection of fragile steppe, wetland, and desert ecosystems across Kazakhstan, and to encourage diverse wildlife to flourish. Together with the government and other national stakeholders, we helped to create new State Protected Areas including Ecological Corridors to safeguard these globally important rangelands and help recover flagship species of the Central Asian steppe. Millions of Saiga antelope are once again roaming the Kazakh Steppe grasslands, and Kulan and Przewalski’s Horse are being returned to areas where they were previously driven to extinction.

The Kazakh Steppe is also of immense national cultural significance with its rich pastoralist history. Kazakh pastoralists inhabited the steppe for thousands of years, and their way of life is deeply intertwined with the land, influencing Kazakh culture directly.

Yet new challenges are emerging as increasing cultivation and use of former rangelands is gaining momentum and livestock agriculture is intensifying in many regions of Kazakhstan. An urgent question facing custodians of these rangelands is how to find a balance between wildlife conservation and restoration, with its associated ecosystem function and societal benefits, and increasing pressures to intensify use of rangeland systems for local and national economic development.

We believe that the **International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026** serves as a unique platform to bring more awareness and understanding to the value of healthy, sustainably managed rangelands amidst the threats they face today. This mission is at the heart

of Altyn Dala's work in Kazakhstan, and as such, we would like to lend our support to the IYRP 2026 initiative to advance these issues on the global agenda.

In the lead up to IYRP 2026, Altyn Dala civil society partners would be delighted to participate in some of the established Working Groups, such as 'Rangelands & Biodiversity' or 'Pastoralism & Climate Change'. We are implementing a number of projects looking at sustainable rangeland management, participatory spatial planning, soil health, ecosystem restoration and steppe livelihoods, which could serve as an opportunity to share our learning and experience.

Whilst our partnership's work on biodiversity conservation is well-established, we recognise the need to engage more closely with the agriculture sector on ways to harmonise the objectives of nature conservation and agricultural development. Through IYRP 2026, we hope to engage with the Regional Support Group for Central Asia & Mongolia and learn from pioneering work on sustainable rangeland management across the region. Through our ongoing activities and engagement, we hope to encourage the participation of the Government of Kazakhstan with IYRP 2026 and strengthen regional cooperation to help answer these important questions.

Our current project activities include a focus on learning from other temperate grassland and rangeland projects, to enable Altyn Dala staff to dedicate some of their time to IYRP 2026 activities. We have also submitted a new project proposal to the Science for Nature and People Partnership (SNAPP), which – if successful – would provide funding to bring together an interdisciplinary working group to consider the question of optimizing management of Kazakh and Mongolian rangeland ecosystems, with participation of the Central Asia & Mongolia RISG.

Together, as the civil society partners of the Altyn Dala Conservation Initiative, we are delighted to express our support to the **International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026** and are looking forward to engaging with its activities further.

Signed on behalf of civil society organisation partners of the Altyn Dala Conservation Initiative:

Name: Alyona Krivosheyeva

**Title: National Coordinator – Altyn Dala Conservation Initiative, and
Conservation Director, Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan**

Signature: 

Date: 7th May 2024

Name: Stephanie Ward

**Title: International Coordinator – Altyn Dala Conservation Initiative and
Project Lead, Frankfurt Zoological Society**

Signature: 

Date: 7th May 2024

