

COP17 UNCCD Discussion Session

Session title: *Co-Creating Knowledge for Resilient Rangelands: Capacity Sharing with Pastoral and Indigenous Communities to Combat Desertification*

On 19 August 2026, during People Day at COP17 UNCCD, the Green Zone hosted in the Tsagaadai Hall (Science and Community Pavilion) the discussion session entitled: “Co-Creating Knowledge for Resilient Rangelands: Capacity Sharing with Pastoral and Indigenous Communities to Combat Desertification”. Moderated by DNI SC member **Quirico Migheli** (University of Sassari/Nucleo di Ricerca sulla Desertificazione – NRD, and French Scientific Committee on Desertification – CSFD), the 90-minute session brought together international experts and practitioners to explore how scientific, Indigenous and pastoral knowledge can be jointly mobilized to combat desertification and strengthen resilient rangeland systems. **Vera Kuklina** (University of Maryland), an Indigenous Buryat scholar, highlighted participatory approaches that enable Indigenous and nomadic communities to actively co-create knowledge. Her experience from northern Mongolia and Arctic regions demonstrated the value of storytelling, arts-based research, PhotoVoice and participatory workshops in connecting scientific and cultural knowledge. **Abdimalik Egemberdiev** (National Association of Pasture User Unions of Kyrgyzstan – Kyrgyz Jayity) presented Kyrgyzstan's experience with community-based pasture governance. He emphasized the role of local pasture institutions, rotational grazing and participatory decision-making in restoring degraded rangelands, reducing grazing pressure and safeguarding pastoral mobility. **Mungutsetseg Tsend-Ayush** (Agronomes & Vétérinaires Sans Frontières – AVSF) shared lessons from the PLEDGE project, demonstrating how climate adaptation, One Health, community restoration, women's empowerment and youth education can be integrated to strengthen pastoral livelihoods and environmental sustainability. **Abdulhamid Tahir Hamid** (Nigeria Indigenous Peoples and Pastoralists Forum) brought perspectives from sub-Saharan Africa, stressing the importance of pastoral land rights, mobility, inclusive governance, peacebuilding and recognition of pastoralists as key actors in ecosystem restoration. The discussion concluded that successful rangeland restoration requires empowered communities, strong local institutions and equitable partnerships between science, policy and Indigenous and pastoral knowledge systems. Rotational grazing, pastoral mobility and community-led restoration were identified as essential tools for achieving Land Degradation Neutrality, climate resilience, biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods. A policy brief is being prepared as output of this event.