



THE PASTORALISTS ELDERS DECLARATION AT NKUTUK E NGIRON



PREAMBLE

We, the Elders representing the Samburu, Turkana, Rendille, Pokot, Borana, Ilaikipiak Maasai, and Somali pastoralist communities, gathered at Nkutuk e Ngiron Community Land in Westgate with a shared purpose and a unified voice. Anchored in our ancestral ties to land, livestock, culture, and mobility, we affirm that pastoralism is our identity, our knowledge system, and the foundation of our livelihoods.

Recognizing the increasing threats posed by climate change, land fragmentation, resource scarcity, and the erosion of customary institutions, we convene to reflect, reaffirm, and strengthen the systems that have guided our peoples for generations. With renewed commitment, we seek to safeguard our territories, reinforce our governance institutions, resolve inter-community conflicts peacefully, and advance a future where pastoralism continues to thrive.

Guided by our elders' wisdom, our communities' resilience, and the sacred responsibility entrusted to us by our ancestors, we hereby declare the principles, commitments, and actions that will steer our collective journey toward sustainable, peaceful, and dignified pastoralist futures.





1. PASTORALIST LIVELIHOOD, IDENTITY, AND LAND

We affirm that pastoralism is not just a practice or an economic activity, but it is our identity. It is the basis of our lifestyle, cultural alignment, and guide of our Indigenous and traditional knowledge systems.

To preserve pastoralism as a way of life, we declare:

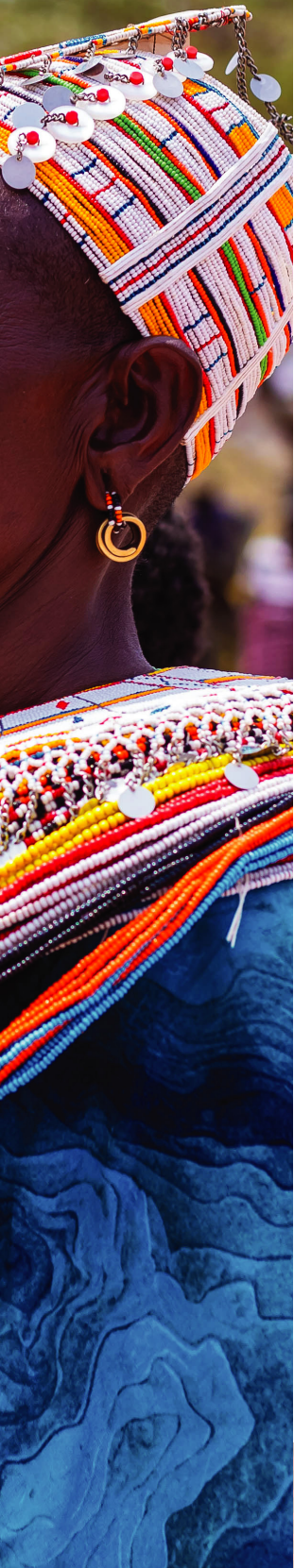
The Elders' Parliament is Paramount: We will fully recognize and support our elders' parliament—such as the Naapo of the Samburu and the Dheeda System of the Borana—as the supreme body for decision-making, conflict resolution and resource management. Their wisdom must be valued and not undermined by political or monetary influence.

Respect for our Customary Governance and Laws: Our customary laws and governance systems (e.g. laiguanak), shall be upheld and enforced without fear. These laws and systems have guided our communities across generations and remain central to our cohesion and governance.

Accountability for Law Breakers: Individuals who violate agreed bylaws, either by illegal sand harvesting, deforestation, unauthorized grazing in preserved grazing areas, or inciting violence within a community or with other communities, will face appropriate fines and penalties.

Roles and Responsibilities within the Community: Elders, men, women and youth must each fulfil their respective roles and responsibilities. Upholding the principle of collective and shared responsibility strengthens holistic social cohesion and relations, while also enhancing effective and sustainable natural resources management.

Monitoring and Enforcement for Resource Protection: Our community laws will guide in the monitoring and protection of our resources, including the proper identification of grazing zones. They will also support the phasing out of retrogressive and conflict-provoking cultural practices like praise songs that glorify violent raids.



2. RANGELAND RESTORATION AND SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

We recognize that our indigenous knowledge has long formed the foundation of successful rangeland management, enabling us to sustain pastoralism on our lands for generations.

To uphold this legacy and ensure continued regeneration and resilience of our rangelands, we commit to:

Reviving Proven Planned Grazing Systems: by implementing strict set seasonal grazing patterns (Aen Enkop), designating sacred areas (Hima) and adhere traditional seasonal calendars that guide mobility and resource use. These time-tested systems allow land to rest, recover, and regenerate, ensuring healthy rangelands and securing the future of pastoral livelihoods.

Sustainable Harvesting of Natural Resources: through using traditional methods for pruning trees and harvesting resources like gums and resins without destroying and depleting the resource. Similarly, waiting for acacia pods to mature before harvesting, as well as avoiding grazing in one place for a long time. These practices ensure regeneration, prevent environmental degradation, and promote long-term sustainability of rangelands.

Sustainable Water Management Practices: through using traditional water utilization techniques—such as designated watering times for different communities and groups—to ensure equitable access for livestock and wildlife, leading to peaceful co-existence and better mobility within the rangelands, promoting improved rangelands recovery.

Protection of Sacred Sites and Cultural Landscapes: through the protection of culturally significant sites and resources such as the white soils (Mpagas- samburu), ceremonial trees (Ewoi – Turkana) and understanding their connection to pastoralists lifestyle to ensure biodiversity protection. Supporting women who are the center of resources management and utilization to continue undertaking their cultural practices like the Olamal among the Maasai.

Upholding the Principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC): FPIC is our inherent right, and as pastoralists, it must be upheld within our lands. For any project, policy, or development proposed or initiated by external parties on our land; we must be consulted first, fully informed, and given the space to make decisions through our traditional and legitimate governance systems. This ensures transparency in the management of our rangelands and guarantees our participation in decisions that affect our territories, our rights, and our resources.

Investing in Rangeland Restoration: through combining our traditional pastoralist practices with appropriate modern innovations. Traditional methods, such as using the hooves of livestock herds to break up bare or compacted soils, remain essential for regenerating degraded areas. These approaches can be complemented with innovative techniques, including the construction of sand dams, reseeded of degraded lands, and water retention measures that support vegetation recovery. Additionally, we encourage the use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies, prioritizing environmentally friendly options such as biopesticides for pest and parasite control. These approaches ensure restoration efforts remain ecologically sound while enhancing the long-term health and productivity of our rangelands.



3. THE FUTURE OF PASTORALISM, MOBILITY, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND TRANSBOUNDARY RESOURCES

To ensure pastoralism thrives despite the adversities of climate change, modernization and shifting land-use systems, we commit to blending our rich traditions with innovations that strengthen resilience for future generations.

This will be achieved through the following actions:

Embracing Customary Dialogue: Elders will continue to lead cross-border engagements, seeking grazing access and establishing agreements to prevent conflicts over resources and territorial claims. For shared border resources, joint committees will be formed to oversee resource use, manage emerging tensions, and promote peaceful coexistence.

Youth Monitoring and Empowerment: As the most energetic demography, the future of pastoralism depends on them taking up good values and putting them into practice. Once the council of elders (or the “parliament of elders”) is revitalized, they will guide, mentor, and monitor youths. Their role will entail instilling values of peaceful coexistence, responsible leadership, and sustainable rangeland use. Youth must also be economically empowered through initiatives such as livestock marketing to reduce vulnerability to conflict and instability.

Promoting School-Based and Reality-based Education Pathways: Youth are encouraged to pursue courses that support coexistence, rangeland management, and the use of law to protect pastoralist rights. Opportunities such as forming student unions can further champion peaceful coexistence and improved resource governance.

Registration of Community Lands: Securing land tenure is essential for safeguarding pastoralist rights. Collective action among communities to accelerate the registration of community lands to strengthen land governance and ensure that communities can fully claim and benefit from their land and resources.

Complementary Livelihoods: To cushion families against climate change shocks and resource scarcity, pastoralists are urged to embrace complementary livelihoods that support, NOT replace, pastoralism. These diversified options will help sustain households while ensuring pastoralism remains viable.

Embracing Technological Advancement: The future of pastoralism will be enhanced by adopting technologies such as GIS to monitor livestock movement, track rangeland changes, and support long-term planning and resilience.

Formation of a Pastoralist Association: We commit to establishing a unified pastoralist association to champion pastoralist rights, advocate for recognition of our systems, and represent our interests at county, national, and regional levels.



4. OUR WAY FORWARD: A CALL TO ACTION

Following this declaration the following actions need to be done:

1. Establish a Joint Council of Elders:

Elders will continue to lead cross-border engagements, seeking grazing access and establishing agreements to prevent conflicts over resources and territorial claims. For shared border resources, joint committees will be formed to oversee resource use, manage emerging tensions, and promote peaceful coexistence

3. Establish a Joint Council of Elders:

We will begin documenting our indigenous knowledge and mapping our sacred sites, grazing routes, and water sources. This will evidence our existence and our way of life as well as transfer knowledge to the youths and future generations.

5. Establish a Joint Council of Elders:

To share knowledge and interact, forums to be organized to engage and learn from each other's best practices.

2. Capacity Building for Our Communities:

We call for the training and capacity building of community groups to be equipped with modern skills and their rights, to complement their traditional knowledge, and inform them on livestock management, and climate-resilient practices like complimentary livelihoods.

4. Establish a Joint Council of Elders:

Our united voice will communicate to all government and non-governmental actors that all undertakings in our lands must follow the principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent as well as policy development practices. The Joint Council of Indigenous Leaders, once established, will play a central role in guiding and supporting FPIC processes within their respective communities, ensuring transparency, accountability, and respect for pastoralist decision-making systems.

This declaration serves to return us to the ways that have always sustained us and adapted for the challenges experienced. We urge everyone to play their roles well for a greater pastoralists' future for generations to come and for better communities to live in. Stronger together.



IN WITNESS WHEREOF:

This declaration is endorsed by community leaders representing the Turkana, Samburu, Rendille, Borana, Pokot, Somali, and Ilaikipiak Maasai communities.

ATTESTED AND WITNESSED BY :

National Government Institutions:

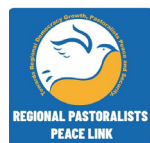


(Isiolo and Samburu Counties)

County Government:



Civil Society Organizations:





Contact Us:

Karionga Village, Juakali Centre, Nanyuki

P.O. Box 499-10400, Nanyuki, Kenya

Tel: +254 722 663 090 / +254 724 540 669

Email: impactkenya2002@gmail.com