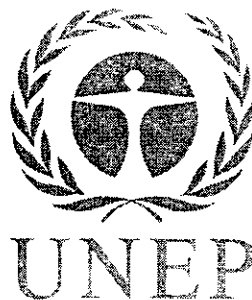


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UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at its 11th Session, 2012

Friday, 11 May 2012

**Item 8: Half-day discussion on Central and Eastern Europe, the
Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia**

Statement delivered by:

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Mr. Chair, members of the Forum, distinguished delegates, colleagues and friends,

I would like to elaborate on UNEP's engagement with reindeer herders in Russia and Mongolia as an example of a joint effort of a UN agency and indigenous peoples to increase the resilience of traditional livelihoods, as well as pastoral ecosystems in the region.

Together with the Association of World Reindeer Herders, the International Centre for Reindeer Husbandry and local herders, we have developed the initiative called *Nomadic Herders* (www.nomadicherders.org). This is both a project and a partnership, and is following up on the Permanent Forum's recommendation from its 9th session. The partners of the project *Nomadic Herders* have a shared goal to secure healthy well-functioning ecosystems to protect the biodiversity, and to ensure a basis for indigenous livelihoods and the ability for communities to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change. Within UNEP, the initiative falls under the *Ecosystem-Based Adaptation Programme*, which takes a holistic approach to support communities in adapting to the negative effects of climate change at local, national, regional and global levels, <http://www.unep.org/climatechange/adaptation/EcosystemBasedAdaptation/tabid/29583/Default.aspx>.

The project: *Nomadic Herders* started in Mongolia late 2010 with a request from the Ministry of Nature, Environment and Tourism to engage further with the local reindeer herders, the Dukha, to assess and increase awareness of Mongolian reindeer husbandry, its challenges and opportunities. In June 2011 UNEP and the Association of World Reindeer Herders facilitated a community-based workshop and field visits in Tsagaannuur, the district of reindeer husbandry in Mongolia, to meet Dukha reindeer herders and to discuss their concerns and identify ways to jointly address these concerns. Outcomes were presented in the report "*Changing Taiga: Challenges for Mongolia's Reindeer Herders*". Let me give you a short summary of the report:

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The Dukha reindeer herders live in the northwest of Mongolia, close to the Russian border. The Dukha are Mongolia's smallest ethnic minority. Fewer than 200 herders still practice reindeer herding, using the animals mainly for transportation and dairy products. The area in which they live is particularly vulnerable to competing interests and pressures on the land from unregulated mining, logging and unsustainable tourism. Their homeland, the taiga, is also a hotspot for globally significant biodiversity and one of the Mongolian regions that will suffer the greatest impacts of climate change over the coming decades.

In addition to outlining the challenges of the reindeer herders in Mongolia, the *Changing Taiga* report presents recommendation from the Dukha herders for improving the sustainability of reindeer herding and the management of pastures and their homeland. The recommendations include:

- Training the Dukha in recording their own terminology and knowledge related to reindeer husbandry, migration practices and land use;
- Establishing community monitoring of changes in land use, industrial development, local climate variability, and other environmental, social and economic changes affecting the reindeer herding community and taiga ecosystem;
- Developing local adaptation strategies based on herders' traditional knowledge; and
- Empowering the Dukha herders by providing technical and financial assistance to develop local reindeer herders' institutions.

Building on the recommendations from the Dukha, and experience of the Association of World Reindeer Herders working with herders in the Russian Federation, the *Nomadic Herders* partnership has developed a proposal to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) for a larger project addressing rangeland conservation and sustainable livelihoods, combining indigenous knowledge, local observations and scientific studies.

The proposal includes elements of knowledge exchange and building partnerships between reindeer herding communities across the larger region and increasing the capacity of nomadic herders in how to engage in land use and natural resource management. As a way of ensuring a legacy of our activities, reindeer herder youth will be involved in all the project activities.

The proposal is awaiting formal approval by the GEF Council next month (June 2012).

To conclude, I would like to use this opportunity to thank the Russian Federation and Mongolia for endorsing the GEF proposal and its participatory approach. I would also like to acknowledge Norway for funding our current activities with Dukha reindeer herders in Mongolia.

Thank you for your attention.