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Agenda Item 4

Africa: resilience, traditional knowledge and capacity building for pastoralist communities

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(Check against delivery)

Chair

Through centuries of experience, pastoralists have developed a strong indigenous knowledge of the landscape and climate variability, which forms the basis of a vibrant and resilient culture and livelihood.

Mobile pastoralism can be both economically and ecologically efficient, allowing pastoralists to sustainably exploit fragile, dryland environments to produce meat and milk in areas where few crops can grow.

However, despite the advantages, pastoral systems today are struggling to provide and sustain livelihoods. Chronic marginalisation, insecurity, land tenure, poor infrastructure and limited commercialisation have all combined to undermine pastoralism.

Traditional pastoralist communities are some of the poorest, most vulnerable and marginalised. The small, scattered nomadic pastoralist and agro-pastoralist populations in the Horn of Africa region, for example, face high risks of malnutrition, low rates of education and literacy and limited access to services. Many live below the poverty line.

But we know that traditional pastoralist communities in Africa also have enormous resilience and coping capacities. We need to build on that knowledge to help create and strengthen alternative livelihood opportunities in a way that is connected to 'place' and traditional practices.

There is also a need to help build the capacity and accountability of governments to protect the well-being of their traditional nomadic populations.

Chair

The Horn of Africa crisis of 2011 highlighted the importance of building the resilience, livelihoods and long term food security of pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities in the region.

Australia's humanitarian response to the crisis, valued at over \$100 million since 2011, is complemented by aid programs that are helping to build community resilience and long-term food security across sub-Saharan Africa. These programs also reflect our own shared experience with dryland agriculture. We are helping to build the capacity of key African agricultural organisations to trial innovative approaches to increasing crop outcomes, resistance to pests and enhance livestock health.

In northern Kenya, Australia is also supporting a UK-led social protection program to help reduce extreme poverty, vulnerability and hunger in the traditional pastoralist communities of Mandera, Wajir, Marsabit and Turkana by delivering regular, guaranteed cash transfers. The program is also working with the Kenyan Government on its policies which address marginalisation of the people in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands and providing endorsement of pastoralism as a viable livelihood.

Australia is also partnering with the UK and EU to scale-up an innovative index-based livestock insurance pilot in northern Kenya. Based on a private-public partnership, this program represents the first provision of financial services to many of the selected communities, and has the potential to limit the loss of key livestock assets in the face of drought.

Australia has also supported traditional pastoralist households in southern Somalia affected by the 2011 drought with cash-for-work activities, along with the treatment and vaccination of herds. This recognises that enhancing livestock health builds and retains assets and the livelihoods of Somali communities - reducing forced migration and minimizing the separation of pastoral families.

Australian-funded NGO projects with nomadic and pastoralist communities in Ethiopia, South Sudan and Kenya are also supporting those nomadic communities that are gradually becoming more settled, as well as helping agro-pastoralists to adopt appropriate farming technologies and practices.

Chair

These are just a few of the ways in which Australia is helping pastoralist communities in Africa to overcome poverty. By empowering these communities to apply and share their knowledge of the environment, and to create and diversify their livelihoods to withstand external shocks, we will help to build a sustainable future for all.