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STATEMENT TO THE 8TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

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Organization: Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association (MBOSCUDA)

Madame Chair of the 8th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Delegates of Indigenous Organizations, Distinguished Personalities, Ladies and Gentlemen.

The Mbororo Pastoralists greet you all. We are once more thanking the United Nations Voluntary fund for Indigenous Populations for making it possible for our participation.

We are cattle herders who solely depend on cattle and natural resources for livelihood. Presently we constitute a minority in Cameroon with no representation in the government. Wherever we are settled we are considered foreigners who could be chased away by our farming neighbors. Overall, we suffer from a feeling of insecurity in terms of our cultural identity, access to land and access to public services.

Our grazing land is constantly seized by farming neighbours and wealthy individuals. More than 20,000 hectares of land have been seized; 91 families with more than 1,000 people have been displaced, along with 15,740 of their cattle in the village of Ndawara by a multi – millionaire rancher who then converted the land into a tea estate. Those who tried to manifest their discontent either by instituting legal cases or peaceful demonstration were subjected to various forms of human rights abuses including unjust arrest, torture, extortion and detention.

Two weeks ago a piece of land owned by a Mbororo pastoralist family in Wum- Menchum Division with a land certificate was seized by the Minister of Land Tenure and State Property and given to the farming community in that area.

About a month ago the Divisional Officer for Fundong sub Division sent out a circular to all the Mbororo traditional leaders asking them to sensitize their subjects that all grazing lands are national lands and that Mbororo pastoralists should not construct permanent structures in grazing areas. Furthermore, that they should construct huts with temporary materials like wood and thatch so that when their cattle is finished they leave the area for some other people. In the letter he also said that all permanent structures built by the Mbororo in these areas will be demolished. The question we Mbororo pastoralists ask ourselves now is: "We should leave and go to where?" Currently we have no answer to the question.

There is also a continuous destruction and destabilization of our traditional institutions and Mbororo culture. Danpullo a multi- millionaire rancher connives with the administration to create many traditional institutions and decided on who should be the leader without prior informed consent nor acceptance of the Mbororo pastoralist community in order to protect his financial and political interest.

Another large problem threatening the Mbororo community is that of kidnapping members of their community (especially children) by gangs of bandits. This poses a problem on many levels. The bandits threaten the communities that they will kill their hostages if the Mbororo do not pay the high ransoms they demand. They also threaten to kill the hostages if they inform the force of law and order. This results in major financial losses in the Mbororo community.

We greatly appreciate all the United Nations agencies for all they have been doing in promoting the rights of Mbororo Pastoralists and we will like to propose through the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to the United Nations Human Rights Council and other United Nations agencies the following:

- A letter written by the United Nations Human Rights Council to the government of Cameroon, assessing the level of implementation of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights.
- Ratification and follow-up of the ILO Convention 169 by the government of Cameroon, since we work very closely with the ILO in Cameroon.
- National Human Rights Commissions, Non-Governmental Organizations, Indigenous Peoples' Organizations and Human Rights Advocates should be empowered by the United Nations Human Rights Secretariat and other United Nations agencies to support those indigenous Mbororo people suffering from human rights abuses.
- The Cameroonian government should prosecute Danpullo to the fullest extent of the law and the Mbororo Pastoralists be compensated for the extensive damages Danpullo has done to them and their land.

With the guidance of the Almighty, I hope that one day, the Mbororo pastoralists will gain back their rights as human beings. Thanks for listening.

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