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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

Chairperson of the 8th session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Delegates of Indigenous Organizations, Distinguished Personalities, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Accept greetings from the Mbororo Pastoralists of Cameroon. We are once more thanking the Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations for making it possible for our participation by funding this event. Briefly I will present to you the situation of the Mbororo Indigenous Pastoralists and the situation of climate change, bio cultural diversity and the stewardship role.

The Mbororo pastoralists are a set of indigenous people who migrated in the late 18th century from West Africa into the Republic of Cameroon and solely depend on cattle herding for their livelihood. They are found in eight out of the ten regions in Cameroon because of the favourable climate for good fodder available for cattle. Even though the Mbororo pastoralists are 2.5 million in number, they presently constitute a minority in Cameroon. They have no positions in government because they neglected and rejected western education in the early 60's because at that time they were always on the move. Today, they have limited concentrated settlements and wherever they are settled are considered foreigners who could be chased away by their farming neighbours at anytime, and wherever the Mbororo pastoralists live, they feel unsecured. Their survival is threatened by environmental degradation, climate change, unsound development policies and some powerful individuals or interest group since they mostly depend on natural resources for survival.

The theme this year is of great importance to the Mbororo Pastoralists, Potential climate change threatens not only the mountain and grassland ecosystems but also the lives of those inhabiting the region. Changes in climate both at global and local scales have serious effects on the pastoralist and the Baka Community in that:

- Recent change in climate has increased and lengthened the drought period. In the year 2007 about 37000 cattle died as a result of drought in the Eastern Region of Cameroon. This is rather very unusual because this Region falls within latitude 3°N of the Equator which is an area of heavy rainfall. In the Western highlands of Cameroon, the drought period extended to five months leading to heavy loss of cattle by pastoralists thereby increasing poverty level.
- Climatic change has also led to an increase in migration and transhumance. Recently Mbororo-pastoralists have abandoned the highlands of Cameroon and some migrated right into Nigeria leading to heavy loss of cattle on their way and loss of stock to some government officials as compensation for migration thereby impoverishing them.
- Widespread livestock diseases have also been reported as a result of climate change like the frequent out break of diseases such as Food and Mouth Disease, Lumpy skin disease and Trypanosomiasis.
- Global warming has also increased the intensity of rainfall, temperatures and winds in some areas of the Western highlands of Cameroon leading to landslides, floods, thunderstorms and lightening that destroy many pastoralists' homes and animals.
- Climate change has also affected the environment in terms of flora change. Invasion of pastures by unwanted species like bracken fern and bokassa grass is associated to climate change. These species of pastures are a problem to the pastoralists because when consumed act as poison to these animals leading to deaths.

Although Pastoralism makes a significant contribution to the gross domestic product in Cameroon and provides a livelihood for the about 2.5 million Mbororo pastoralists, they have the highest incidents of Poverty and less access to basic social services. Apart from Climate Change Mbororo Pastoralists also face Political and Economic marginalisation, inappropriate development policies and increasing competition for the limited natural resource.

Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association in trying to resolve some of these problems has developed an agro-pastoral component where Mbororo pastoralists are sensitised on the importance of pasture improvement, planting of trees in some water catchment areas and planting of environmental friendly trees in some communities

We will therefore like to put forward the following proposals

- Mbororo pastoralist communities need more investment in good basic services, which include: drought and flood mitigation and preparedness system, access to climate information and effective conflict mitigation mechanisms.
- Recognise and Protect Pastoralists' land and resource rights and put in place development policies aimed at helping the pastoralists to develop wherever they are settled, including the assignment of fixed and protected grazing lands to protect Mbororo pastoralists communities. Eliminate discrimination against these pastoralists, respect their rights and integrity as citizens and stop all sorts of extortion, forceful migration, seizure of animals and tortures which is a violation of human rights and a restriction of human freedom and dwellers rights and responsibilities be clarified
- Empower Mbororo Pastoralists and the Baka communities of Cameroon to influence policy formulation at the national level, its implementation at the local level including planning of climate change adaptation strategies, negotiation processes concerning plan, known as Reduced Emissions from Deforestation
- Sensitization of pastoralists on the adverse effects of uncontrolled bush burning, climate change and how to mitigate and buffer the influence of climate change through afforestation programmes (planting of Acacia and Luceana that have succulent barks which store water). Advocate for pasture improvement, protection of water catchment through pasture improvement like planting of Bracharia, stylosanthes, guatamala, clovers and planting of trees in catchment areas. ..
- In a bit to combat over grazing, diversification of production should be introduced making the pastoralists avoid overstocking of livestock but do farming as well (Agro-pastoralism) and other traits.

Above all, the most important thing is to give formal education a priority to the Mbororo- pastoralists because if they are educated, they would be able to cope with their complex and dynamic environment and can lobby and advocate for their rights and issues emerging as a result of climate change. Ladies and gentlemen permit me end here thanks for listening

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