CHARTER ON CLIMATE CRISIS

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Marag is an established NGO working with the pastoralists of Gujarat, mainly Kutchh region

In the World Environment Summit held at Copenhagen last year delegates from worldwide made their representations expressing their concerns over environmental change. We all in India saw in the news at that time an old rustic Bharawad man making his presentations at Copenhagen. This was Jesangbhai Bharwad, accompanied by Dr. Lalji Desai representing Indian pastoralists’ concerns on behalf of Marag, Ahmedabad. At this event a charter of demands was presented to summit organisers by Marag, and the same is presented here.

Prologue:

Both climate change scientists and experts on biodiversity say indigenous communities around the world are becoming increasingly vulnerable to the effects of global warming.

We, over hundred representatives of pastoralists from across the Gujarat, call the attention to recognize the important role of Pastoralism as a sustainable way to use the natural resources
in world. There is a growing body of scientific evidence showing that the pastoral people’s use of natural resources is in harmony with nature, and promotes environmental integrity and conservation of both wild and domestic biodiversity. To endorse this, pastoral representatives from 6 Districts have come together to a conclusion with the participatory tools and techniques method that the main factors contributing towards the climate change are the anti pastoral Government policies and its support to handful of capitalists promoting industrialization.

Today Maldharis have become dependent on others for their livelihood and there is also social ignorance about Maldharis. As a result of this, they have lost their social status and hence, their self esteem.

Based on this conclusion a draft was framed stating our demands/Declaration addressing various national and international level Governments and policy makers.

Our Strengths:

1. Today many scientists have started believing that traditional indigenous knowledge about nature and ecosystems is an indispensable part of the fight against climate change and loss of biodiversity.

2. More traditional interventions practiced by the pastorals have crucial connections in strengthening people’s resilience in the face of increased stress on climate.

3. The community still follows the customary institutions and customs; and major decisions are taken by keeping the entire community in loop. Our sense of Pastoralism (Maldhariyat) is very strong. We are esteemed for our value for words given and our strength of character.
4. Intact ITK.

5. The diverse and rich livelihood options we have kept alive in using our existing natural resources.

6. There is an exemplary unity within the community. To keep Maldhariyat alive, certain customs are practiced. (Ana, Jiyana, Arsi-parsi, Janda breeding practice, etc.)

7. We staunchly believe in social judiciary system. We do not approach police or court to settle the disputes within the community and settle it through the social judiciary.

8. We don’t see land, livestock or forest as commercial activity. We feel a sense of ownership for these natural resources.

Our Conclusion:

The entire process shows that by using the concept of participatory tools and techniques, the many visible and hidden benefits that pastoralists bring to local, national and regional levels can be revealed. It urges the Governments to realize the tremendous potential that Pastoralism holds with its strategy of adaptability in harsh arid environments, and bring out the pastorals from the cycle of poverty, conflict and environmental degradation. The Governments should recognize the fact that Pastoralists are 'invisible assets' in the fight against poverty and climate change.

Our Demands/Rights/Declaration

1. Provide the necessary POLICY SUPPORT to achieve our economic and social development in harmony with nature;

2. SUPPORT the strengthening of the organizations of pastoralists at national, regional and international levels, including through the promotion of programs to disseminate relevant knowledge on rights and policy among pastoral and other indigenous communities;

3. URGENTLY ADOPT at the national level—with full participation of Pastorals and other indigenous peoples— legal and judicial instruments to protect the collective rights of Pastoral peoples, by ratifying the International Labour Organization Convention 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, and by developing national legislation in line with this declaration and other relevant international instruments;

4. RECOGNIZE and RESPECT our customary laws, customary institutions and leadership, and our common property rights and customary governance and use of natural resources that we have managed sustainably by using them seasonally or as buffer zones in times of climatic and other disasters;
5. **REVERSE** policies and legislations that negatively affect Pastoral peoples, and **DEVELOP** adequate mechanisms of restitution and compensation in case Pastorals have lost access to their customary resources;

6. **RECOGNIZE** the crucial role of indigenous knowledge and the capacity of pastoralists and all other indigenous communities to conserve biodiversity in full compatibility with pastoral livelihoods;

7. **EMPOWER** Pastorals in the management of existing protected areas, and **RECOGNIZE** their customary territories as community conserved areas (CCAs) when so demanded by the Pastoral peoples.

8. **PROMOTE** conditions and mechanisms for lasting peace and conflict resolution at all levels;

9. **CORRECT** urgently the government policies and plans favoring only sedentary populations with the full participation of Pastoral peoples, and **PROMOTE** policies and international legislation to facilitate cross-border mobility by pastoral and other indigenous peoples who have traditionally lived in more than one country, and facilitate free movement of livestock with relevant safeguards where needed;

10. **RESPECT** Pastoralism and mobility as distinctive markers of cultural identity, integrity and rights;

11. **ADOPT** measures to reverse negative environmental impacts of development schemes, and **SEEK** prior and informed consent before all private and public initiatives that may affect the integrity of pastoral peoples’ customary territories, resource management systems and nature;

12. **ASSURE** equal access by pastoralists and other indigenous communities to higher education, and **DEVELOP** specific educational programs on Pastoralism and subjects related to mobile and indigenous communities, **PROMOTE** action-research having relevance to nomadic communities, and **ENSURE** access by Pastoral communities to such relevant educational and action-research programs;

13. **PROMOTE** education of children in Pastoral communities by providing boarding schools as required, using the indigenous or local languages, and **RESPECT** the dignity of pastorals by incorporating in the teaching curriculum elements of the local culture and indigenous knowledge;

14. **PROVIDE** adequate and appropriate health services and health education for Pastors and indigenous tribes, including mobile clinics and migratory frontline health workers;

15. Trainings and **CAPACITY BUILDING** should be done by the Government to educate the younger generation on ITK so that the best practices are percolated in younger generation. (e.g. Veterinary Practices, breeding, feeding practices);
16. Develop **STRATEGIES** and **MECHANISM** to support pastoralists to reduce the impact of droughts and climatic change. Sheep, Goat, camel and Donkeys should be included in famine code and a special package should be released for them during the times of famine.

17. Promote **CONTROL OF MARKETS** with policy, incentives, infrastructure development, capacity building and access to information, in order to achieve fair trade conditions.

18. According to the circular by the Gujarat Government dated 30/12/88 J.M.N.1687/7098/01, 40 acres of land should be **RESERVED** per 100 live stocks. Encroached grazing land should be identified and released.

19. According to the resolution of Government issued on 16/5/2001 the **PROTECTED FENCING LAND** (Vidi or Rakhal) used by Maldharis to keep their live stock should be registered in their name.

20. Sheep, Goat, camel and Donkeys should be included in **FAMINE CODE** and a special package should be released for them during the times of famine.