

23 February 2026

Attention:

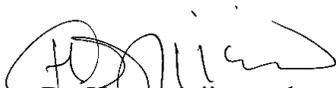
Dear Sir/Madam,

Greetings!!! I hope you are well and thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Aligning with the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) www.iyrp.info, a group of experts, academics and organizations proposed a Western Balkan Regional Gathering of Pastoralists to take place between 19 April and 31 May 2026 in different Zones of all 6 countries of Western Balkans. There will be a series of Zonal Gatherings, with a 'Concluding Assembly of Pastoralists Representatives'. Please read the information on the website <https://minoritymap.org/rg>. The role of The Grassroots Institute (TGI) is to facilitate the macro processes undergoing at regional, national and zonal levels. Hence, this letter is written on behalf of the Regional facilitation Team.

Pastoralist or shepherd communities in Western Balkan countries have rapidly declined in number, despite the fact that they have conserved and protected the pastures and grassland ecosystems, especially in highlands. Although the scientific evidences of "disturbance ecology" have proved that balanced grazing by mobile livestock tended to diversify and regenerate/evolve the pasture ecosystems, yet backed by scientists and conservationists, governments have either banned or restricted the movement of livestock and herders. Parallely, however, the UNESCO-Recognized Intangible Biocultural Heritage of Transhumance, lifestyle and livelihood/land rights of marginalized pastoralists, mobility rights of traditional shepherds, and custodian customary institutions of pastoralism, intertwining the ecology of natural landscapes, are suppressed and neglected. Yet, lack of supportive market mechanisms and discouraging economic incentives are further pushing the pastoralists to give up this rare and "most sustainable" lifestyle and occupation. Our nations do not realize the irreparable loss that our societies are going to incur. With the increasing realization of this global problem, the UN General Assembly declared IYRP 2026 to raise awareness about the serious issues and disappearing cultural heritages of shepherds or pastoralists. With this backdrop, the suffering shepherd people across Western Balkan countries have a golden opportunity to get organized and find out amicable solutions for their problems in a collective manner. It is not the case that governments do not want to listen at all, but there is a need of presenting and displaying the problems, issues, and solutions in organized, structured and systematic manner. **One of the most pertinent agencies in resolving shepherds' problems and providing development support is your organization, which can also help organize the Regional Gathering of Pastoralists at the Zonal level in your country.** The expected outcome of these Regional (Zonal) Gatherings will be WB Declaration of Pastoralists signed by many thousand shepherds and other stakeholders such as civil society groups, citizen groups, academia, intellectuals, business persons, artists, ordinary citizens, etc.

Thus, in above contexts, if **YOUR ORGANIZATION** agrees to take part in the process to organize **Regional Gathering of Pastoralists in one or more Zones in Kosovo, North Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro or Bosnia i Herzegovina**, please give your consent in writing to become official **PARTNER**, and send it to me using email: harjjumend@gmail.com. Your organizational logo and website URL will be placed on the website dedicated for WB Regional Gathering, <https://minoritymap.org/>. Under Partnership, your role will be to organize at least one Zonal Gathering in a country of **Western Balkans region**. We can hold a Zoom Meeting as soon as possible. For further clarifications, you may please contact me or **Dr. Petrit Dobi** (Rural Assistance Support Programme, www.rasp.org.al) | dobipetrit@gmail.com | +355 692067991. Looking forward to hearing from you.


Dr. Hasrat Arijumend
PresidentTGI Canada / Western Balkans
president@grassrootsinstitute.net**The Grassroots Institute Western Balkans**

ul. 8 no. 39 dinosa, 81206 Tuzi, Montenegro

Rr. Pandi Dardha. Nd. 108; H. 1; 11; 0000 Tiranë, Albania

Email: contact@tgi-wb.eu | Web: www.tgi-wb.eu