

Mintoo calls for involving local communities in rangeland protection

Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Abdul Awal Mintoo has called for involving local communities in rangeland protection and sustainable land management.

He made the call at a ministerial-level dialogue titled “Restoration of Rangelands and the Well-being of Pastoralist Communities” at the 17th Conference of the Parties (COP-17) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia today, said an official release here.

He also emphasized the need to ensure the protection of government-owned and community lands and to enhance the economic capacity of rural communities.

“Bangladesh is not a country of vast rangelands in the conventional sense,” he said, adding that the livestock sector nevertheless plays an important role in the country’s rural economy and livelihoods.

Agricultural land after harvest, fallow land, char areas, wetlands and areas alongside roads are used for livestock grazing, he said.

The livestock sector contributes around 2 percent to the country’s total GDP and is linked to the livelihoods of millions of people here, he said.

Mintoo said grazing areas are gradually shrinking due to population pressure and various forms of land use.

Rangelands have declined significantly, particularly in coastal areas, he said.

Therefore, the minister said, it is essential to identify and map community and government-owned grazing lands, strengthen cooperation between local administrations and communities, and establish simpler and more effective mechanisms for resolving land-use disputes.

Highlighting the environmental importance of Bangladesh's wetlands and flood-prone areas, he said these areas play a crucial role in maintaining soil fertility, regulating water, conserving biodiversity and storing carbon.

The minister said livestock production and environmental conservation should not be viewed as conflicting objectives; rather, they should be considered in an integrated manner in national land management planning.

Citing the example of Tanguar Haor, he said community-based management has produced positive results in conserving biodiversity and natural resources.

However, he added that such initiatives require long-term commitment alongside sustained financing to ensure their success over the long term.

The minister said Bangladesh would further integrate sustainable rangeland and common-land management with the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, the National Adaptation Plan, and the national roadmap for addressing land degradation, drought and desertification.

He called for ensuring adequate financing, accountability and evidence-based measures for rangeland restoration and sustainable land management.

He said Bangladesh was ready to share its experiences with other countries and learn from their effective practices.

Ministers, deputy ministers and heads of delegations from various countries participated in the ministerial-level

dialogue.