

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

UN SPONSORS PASTORALIST GATHERING IN ETHIOPIA

(South Omo, Ethiopia, 30 October 2007): Pastoralists in Ethiopia's Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region are preparing for five days of debate and celebration in one of Ethiopia's most distant and dramatic locations - Nyangatom woreda, South Omo zone.

Between 8-12 November more than 250 members of more than 17 different ethnic groups will gather to talk about the rise of tourism, trade and economic diversification, the management and eradication of conflicts as well as social change and basic services. Also to be discussed are changes in land use, opening of new transport, communication and market links, development of education and new opportunities for participation in national affairs.

Inspired by visits to other pastoralist gatherings in Ethiopia and Kenya, members of South Omo's pastoralist groups welcome this unique opportunity to discuss how rapid changes are altering the face of South Omo zone in ways that are both appreciated and giving rise to concern.

The gathering will be facilitated by members of the Nyangatom Community in conjunction with Atoweksi Eksil Pastoralist Development Association and will additionally be attended by members of local and national administrations, development agencies and pastoralists from neighbouring groups in Bench Maji Zone, northern Kenya and Southern Sudan.

The first three days of the event (8 - 10 November / 28 – 30 Tikimt E.C.) will be devoted to discussions among pastoralists and customary leaders, while the concluding two days (11 - 12 November / 1 - 2 Hidar E.C.) will afford Government, UN, donor and NGO officials and the media an opportunity to join the debate.

The event is supported financially and logistically by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Pastoralist Communication Initiative, a unique initiative that works exclusively on promoting knowledge and communication for pastoralists and pastoralism in Ethiopia and Africa.

International and national media are welcome to join the meeting during the last two days. For further information and arrangements regarding your participation please contact Meron Tessema of Cactus Communication on 0115 544907 email: cactusplc@ethionet.et or Meron Yohannes of OCHA PCI on 0115 444196 email: yohannesm@un.org