



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO NEPAL

Speech of H. E. Veronica CODY, Ambassador / Head of Delegation for the Inaugural Session of International Conference on Resilient Hindu Kush Himalaya: Developing Solutions Towards a Sustainable Future for Asia

Venue: ICIMOD, Lalitpur, Nepal

Date & Time: 03 December 2017, 14:00 hrs.

Good Morning and Namaste to all

- I am very pleased to welcome you on behalf of the EU to the inaugural ceremony of the international conference on Resilient Hindu Kush Himalaya: Developing Solutions towards a Sustainable Future for Asia which ICIMOD is organising together with the EU. I wish to take this opportunity to introduce myself; I have recently been appointed as EU Ambassador to Nepal and I am looking forward to further developing & strengthening the EU-Nepal relationship during my tenure here.
- The EU and its Member States respond to current global challenges and opportunities in the light of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which they helped to shape. This Agenda is truly global, i.e. a call to duty for all countries. Its implementation is a collective undertaking. We are stronger, we can achieve more, if we work together. Our societies are more prosperous, our societies are more harmonious and our people are better off, if we work together. These are quintessential lessons from more than 60 years of European Integration. Lessons we learned the hard way through two devastating man-made disasters: WWI and WW2.
- Collective action enables to better and more effectively address global challenges. The 2030 Agenda emphasises the importance of sustainable management of natural resources for social and economic development. Target n.1 of SDG 15, highly relevant for the Hindu Kush Himalaya region, explicitly mentions mountains among the ecosystems to be conserved, restored and sustainably used. However, what happens upstream –for instance at the roof of the world in the Himalayas -, also has *downstream* effects -in the plains.
- In addition "Interconnectivity" of different natural zones does not stop at country borders. Therefore, it is good to see that this International Conference brings together representatives and experts from the 8 countries in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region -but also from further afield- to collectively discuss key aspects for a more resilient HKH and to arrive, so I hope, on Wednesday at resilience building solutions which map the way forward.
- Resilience is the overarching theme of this conference. But what do we mean by resilience? The EU in Commission Communication of 2012 defines resilience as "the ability of an individual, ah household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, adapt and quickly recover from stresses and shocks". The EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy from 2016 takes the concept further. It speaks of resilience as "a broad concept encompassing all individuals and the whole of society" that features "democracy, trust in institutions and sustainable development, and the capacity to reform". Support to resilience at all levels is also an integral part of the new European Consensus on Development from 2017 "Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future", which is a key element of the EU's overall response to fight poverty, a framework for action which focuses on 4 priorities: People –human development and dignity, Planet -protecting the environment, managing natural resources and tackling climate change, Prosperity, inclusive and sustainable growth and jobs and Peace –harmonious and inclusive societies, democracy, effective and accountable institutions, rule of law and human rights for all. Finally, resilience is also a cornerstone of the Paris Climate Accord, an agreement within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change keenly supported by the EU, which aims to keep a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- The Consensus underlines that sustainable, resilient agriculture remains a key driver for poverty eradication and sustainable development. Two-thirds of the world's poor depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Investments in sustainable agriculture are needed to diversify production systems, prevent malnutrition and generate increases in productivity and jobs, without harming the environment. Smallholder farmers and the poor remain of central importance, with a particular focus

on youth integration and women's empowerment. Sustainable agriculture must harness the greenhouse gas mitigation potential of agriculture, while enhancing resilience to climate change impacts.

- What does this mean in the context of the Hindu Kush Himalaya region? This region of eight countries sources 10 major river systems in Asia that provide water and livelihoods for more than 210 million people. Nearly a quarter of humanity living downstream, i.e. almost 2 billion people –many of them still poor- depend on mountain resources such as water, food, energy, biodiversity and carbon. What happens in the HKH has consequences for Asia and the world. Mountain communities in the HKH are already feeling the "heat", the effects of climate change and the consequences are also felt downstream in the plains and all these effects do not recognise nor stop at borders. The recent catastrophic floods in Nepal, India and Bangladesh this year demonstrate that communities and governments are struggling to prepare for, and recover from these disasters. Moreover, climate change in the HKH region interacts with multiple other forces, including land use change, outmigration and depopulation due to urbanisation. Therefore, amongst others resilience in the HKH region means that there is a clear need to step up regional cooperation, to be better prepared for disasters, to enhance the skills to adapt to a changing situation and to generate new livelihood opportunities in the HKH region and to boost "self-reliance" also under adverse circumstances.
- What is the EU doing to fight global poverty, promote peace, address climate change and to enhance resilience? The EU underpins its policies, which I mentioned earlier, with a substantial cooperation portfolio. Just for Nepal EUR 360 million bilateral funding has been reserved for the period 2014-2020 and resilient rural development and agriculture is one of the three focal sectors of our cooperation. Amongst others we are a major supporter of Nepal's Agriculture Development Strategy, we joined hands on climate change adaptation and resilience building and work on rural development in the Far West of the Country. The EU's Global Climate Change Alliance is one of the world's largest climate initiatives with a commitment of around EUR 350 million for 2014-2020. At least 20% of the EU budget is being spent on climate-related action during the period 2014-2020.
- "HIMALICA", an ICIMOD –EU initiative very nicely complements these efforts, and actually allows us to be here the next three days in this conference. Also called "The Support to Rural Livelihoods and Climate Change Adaptation in the Himalayas", Himalica is a demand-driven regional programme, in which the EU invested EUR 10 mio since January 2013. Through active regional cooperation, Himalica aims to support poor and vulnerable mountain communities in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region. It focuses on the conservation of ecosystems, increased resilience, better climate change adaptation, equitable socioeconomic development through new livelihood opportunities and poverty reduction. This regional programme has five major components: action research, pilots, capacity building, policy and knowledge management.
- This International Conference focuses on the role of a resilient Hindu Kush Himalaya in the future of a sustainable Asia. It is an excellent opportunity to reflect and exchange views with regional and international stakeholders and top notch experts about challenges, opportunities and how to distil best and "resilient" practices.
- Counting on your active participation I am sure that the three days ahead of us during this conference will make a strong contribution to understand the concept of resilience in the HKH context better and to map the way forward –in the interest and to the benefit of the HKH region, Asia and the world at large.
- Last but not least, on this special occasion, may I also take the opportunity to thank Governments of all member countries, for their active involvement in fighting against the climate change.
- I wish you all a pleasant stay in the beautiful Kathmandu Valley.

Danyabad!