

From Rio 1992 to Rio+20, 2012 and beyond: Where do we stand? – How can we make a difference and promote the sustainable mountain development agenda?

A preliminary brainstorming e-session for preparing the Hindu Kush-Himalayan status report on challenges and opportunities faced by the region, as well as the possible way forward for mountains, in the context of the Rio+20 agenda of the green economy and institutional arrangements.

Background

Rio 1992 – institutionalising global mountain development and research

Chapter 13 of Agenda 21 on 'Managing Fragile Ecosystems: Sustainable Mountain Development' (see Annex) articulated specific programme actions under two headings: generating and strengthening knowledge about the ecology and sustainable development of mountain ecosystems, and promoting integrated watershed development and alternative livelihood opportunities. In the wake of the adoption of this Chapter at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio in 1992, many initiatives relating to mountain development took place at local, regional, national and global levels. For instance, many countries established focal points for sustainable mountain development; others prepared regulatory frameworks in support of mountain areas, and together with international bodies and institutions developed transboundary initiatives linked to key functions of mountain regions such as biodiversity or water. As a follow up of the recommendation of the Sustainable Development of Mountain Areas of Asia (SUDEMAA) Conference of 1994 – which was Asia's regional response to Chapter 13 of Agenda 21 – the Asia Pacific Mountain Network (APMN) was established by ICIMOD in 1995 as a knowledge sharing platform connecting individuals and organisations interested in sustainable mountain development (SMD) issues of the region.

Mountains have also been considered in decisions and actions deriving from the two global conventions signed at Rio on climate change and biodiversity. In 2004, the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted a Programme of Work on mountain biodiversity which was reviewed in 2010. In 1993, the United Nations General Assembly Special Session UNGASS identified FAO as the Task Manager of Chapter 13 to facilitate efforts in SMD at the global level, and FAO subsequently prepared a five-year review of implementation and has reported a number of times to the UN General Assembly. At the same time, following the 1992 Earth Summit, regional and global consultations were held with the participation of eminent mountain experts, non-government organisations (NGOs), universities, governments, multilateral agencies, and the private sector which led to the establishment of the Mountain Forum in 1995 for networking and exchange of information and advocacy. Following the WSSD 2002 in Johannesburg, the International Mountain Partnership was established with a permanent central Secretariat at the FAO. In September 1995, 27 representatives of NGOs, interagency groups, government organisations, and other resource persons gathered from five continents for the purpose of further elaborating the objectives and initial activities of the organisation that from then on would be known as Mountain Forum – an ongoing mechanism for the exchange of information and mutual support for equitable and ecologically sustainable mountain development.

This partnership today includes 50 countries, 16 intergovernmental organisations and 106 major groups from research, civil society, and the private sector. The research community has also established its own networks for mountain research and development, among

others the Mountain Research Initiative (MRI), and the International Journal for Mountain Research and Development (MRD).

Rio+20 – an opportunity for promoting sustainable mountain development

On 24 December 2009 the UN General Assembly passed a resolution to hold a 'Rio+20' Earth Summit or United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) in June 2012 in Rio. This event presents an excellent opportunity for taking stock on achievements, experience, and lessons learnt in sustainable mountain development over the last 20 years. It also provides an excellent opportunity for identifying shortcomings relating to the engagement so far and above all, for incorporating new challenges and identifying new needs and opportunities, for example, related to globalisation and global change in all its forms, including in particular climate change.

The main objective of the Rio+20 Conference is to secure renewed global commitment for sustainable development, assess the progress and gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summit commitments on sustainable development, and address new and emerging challenges.

The assessment report will include achievements, experience, and challenges in sustainable mountain development from international bodies, government organisations, academia¹, civil society, and the private sector. The report will consider initiatives and challenges at the local, regional, national, and international levels. It is expected that the findings of the assessment will be presented at an international symposium or conference to be organised by SDC in Switzerland during October, 2011. The symposium will offer a platform for exchange of ideas, views, and opinions to those working in the fields of sustainable mountain development in order to share lessons and explore viable pathways to further promote sustainable mountain development in the future.

The UNCSD - Rio + 20 will focus on two key themes: 1) Green Economy in the Context of Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development, and 2) Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development. The report will therefore place a particular emphasis on these two focal areas, without neglecting other topics and issues that are important for sustainable mountain development both in the past and in the future.

Specific Aims of the Regional and Global Assessment

In anticipation of the themes of Rio+20, the Global Status Report and the Symposium will

- review commitments, by taking stock of the progress made in development across the mountain areas of the world over the past 20 years, by presenting and appraising strategies, policies, and instruments, and programmes by mountain communities, governments, civil society organisations, academia, and the private sector for promoting sustainable mountain development in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan (HKH) region;
- Analyse emerging issues and challenges, by identifying gaps relating to mountain development in different mountain regions recognising that there are regional specificities and variations; and
- Discuss ways forward for closing these gaps and for enhancing sustainable development in mountain regions worldwide.

¹ There is also a pre-Rio global science meeting planned for March 2012 in London, and we should also make this a target to contribute scientific papers; the report should take the objectives and outcome of this meeting into consideration: see <http://www.planetunderpressure2012.net>

General Framework and Methodology:

The assessment will follow a common framework and methodology. The report will be required to ensure the inclusion of the three-pronged objective of securing renewed political and financial commitment, assessing the progress to date and remaining gaps, and addressing new and emerging challenges as a strategic entry point to the Rio+20 agenda. The study will focus on the two themes: Green Economy and Environmental Governance. The report will be of a regional nature providing the context of the particular country and will be prepared by organising a multi-stakeholder dialogue and consultations.

Proposed activities

The following 6 steps are envisaged for preparing the global status report on sustainable mountain development:

- 1 Reach a general agreement on the concept, framework, process and method for the assessment among the national and regional stakeholders**
- 2 Identify national and regional focal points**

The task of these focal points is to coordinate the collection of relevant material and to analyse and describe the achievements and current status of sustainable mountain development. The focal points mainly include members of government organisations (GOs), NGOs, and academia with a history and commitment of working on the SMD agenda or related topics. They can be seconded by additional interested and competent partners who can be associated via suitable arrangements. Key actors and stakeholders will be identified by drawing on the network of all national focal points².
- 3 Collect information on the status and challenges of mountain development**

This step will be done by the national and regional focal points based on 1) and 2) above. A global synthesis will be compiled based on the regional/topical reports by a team of international experts.
- 4 Synthesise, present, and validate key findings at an international conference**

Global and regional experiences, lessons learnt, and challenges will be presented and discussed at a global symposium in Lucerne, Switzerland in October 2011. The output will be a pre-synthesis providing a global outline. Gaps to be filled relating to status and challenges will be identified, key messages for policy makers discussed and extracted, and a final global synthesis report prepared after the event.
- 5 Finalisation of the regional assessment reports by including the outputs and recommendations of the Lucerne symposium reflecting the views of the regional and global stakeholders, especially those expressed by the senior policy makers and political and development leaders from around the global mountain countries and regions.**
- 6 Produce and disseminate final global status report in view of Rio+20 in 2012**

This will be done in the three months following the Lucerne symposium. Work on validation and review will be coordinated by a small editorial team involving interested and competent individuals.

² For fair representation, key actors should be taken from each of the following fields: government; academia and research; sub-national, national and international/multilateral (donor) agencies and institutions; civil society, NGOs, and INGOs; the private sector.

Expected outputs

The expected outputs are:

- A regional **pre-synthesis report** on status and challenges of mountain development and research immediately following the Lucerne Conference in October 2011, for discussion and circulation to interested stakeholders in sustainable mountain development
- A final **global status report** which
 - documents the progress and key lessons learnt relating to sustainable mountain development; this includes an overview and critical assessment of programmes, strategies, and tools that have been applied by various stakeholders, or in different mountain regions of the world;
 - presents an overview of emerging challenges in sustainable mountain development, and innovative ways how these could be tackled, including promising strategies, policies, economies, technologies, institutional arrangements, and innovative research;
 - A synthesis of key findings including policy recommendations which may be published as a standalone document for Rio+20 and used for briefings such as by the MPC members to the representatives of state delegations to Rio 2012.

The global status report will be a narrative document. It will be produced in a user-friendly format and accessible text with graphs, tables, maps, and pictures. It will contain both qualitative and quantitative information relating to local, regional, and global mountain contexts. The international journal *Mountain Research and Development (MRD)* will be used for publishing key elements of the report in greater detail after the Rio+20 Conference.