

# Kathmandu Declaration on Green Economy and Sustainable Mountain Development

7 September 2011, Kathmandu, Nepal

## Preamble

Following the invitation of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 120 participants including scientists, development practitioners, policy makers, and civil society and private sector representatives met in Kathmandu from 5 to 7 September 2011 to deliberate on the role of mountains in green economy. Recalling the recognition of the importance of mountains at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992 through adoption of Chapter 13 in Agenda 21, and realising the need to revisit the mountain agenda in the upcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in June 2012 (commonly called Rio +20), the participants put forward the following declaration.<sup>1</sup>

## Declaration

Recognising that:

- mountain systems support about half of the earth's human population by providing numerous goods and services including fresh water, food, life-saving medicinal herbs, energy, rich biodiversity and associated traditional knowledge, as well as cultural diversity;
- global drivers of change such as growing human population, increasing urbanisation, industrialisation, globalisation, other socioeconomic changes, and climate change put increasing pressure on the available natural resources of the world and the mountains in particular;
- mountain ecosystem goods and services have therefore to respond to an increasing demand, while prevailing policies have not adequately prepared mountain populations and regions for the new challenges, and global dynamics create strong externalities for mountainous areas;
- mountain communities are characterised by their resilience, and their adaptation efforts have

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<sup>1</sup> This declaration was formulated and approved by the conference participants. It considers the 37 comments received from participants after draft circulation. The declaration expresses the opinions of the participants and has not been formally negotiated. It therefore does not commit the institutions and governments represented.

produced promising solutions relevant not only locally but also to the global community at large;

- promoting the sustainability of mountain ecosystems and services for future generations and for the continued prosperity of both upstream and downstream areas requires targeted actions and the concerted efforts of local, national, regional, and global institutions, calling for a joint effort of all sectors of society;
- the call for a low carbon economy has the potential to strengthen sustainable mountain development and help to create the conditions necessary for achieving the Millennium Development Goals in mountain areas;
- mountain economies are characterised by their low carbon footprint and by their potential to contribute low-carbon products to the local and global markets;
- however, the low carbon footprint is accompanied by a high incidence of poverty;

the participants formulate the following recommendations.

## **General**

- The Rio+20 conference should recognise the contribution of mountain systems and their ecosystem goods and services to a green economy, sustainable development, and human wellbeing and should set principles and policies for global, regional, and national actions in support of sustainable mountain development.
- Considering the increasing importance of mountain ecosystems for downstream communities, the high incidence of poverty and unequal access to resources in mountain areas, the growing vulnerability of upstream and downstream populations, and the threats to the availability of mountain ecosystem services, global stakeholders should revisit the criteria of the mountain agenda and Chapter 13.
- International organisations and national governments are implored to favour policies and all possible efforts to strengthen the efforts of mountain communities to ensure a continued availability of fresh water, biodiversity (including agrobiodiversity), cultural diversity, and space for tourism, recreation, and spiritual renewal, as well as to cope with the consequences of climate and environmental change.

## **Recognition, valuation and capture of benefits deriving from mountains**

- More focused research, reliable data and information, dissemination of positive experiences, applicable knowledge, and good practices, and systematic efforts to create awareness among grassroots communities, civil society, and government institutions are required.
- Considering the ecological, economic, and cultural diversity of the global mountain systems, regional centres of excellence and knowledge should be created and strengthened.
- Approaches to green economy in mountains shall be designed according to local conditions and must be context appropriate, taking into account mountain specificities such as environmental fragility, vulnerability, and low economies of scale.

## Appropriate policy frameworks

- International efforts to include the use and value of natural resources in gross domestic product (GDP) are commended and should be adopted at the national level.
- Concrete mechanisms, customised for mountain areas, must be promoted at the global, national, and local levels to reward and compensate mountain communities for conservation and provision of ecosystem services.
- Governments should create incentives and provide support for market-driven investments and flow of financial resources (including remittances) for low-carbon production and sustainable development in mountains.
- Development of services for mountains (e.g., knowledge, technology, business development, and infrastructure) should be low carbon, environment friendly, and mountain adapted.
- International organisations, intergovernmental organisations, and the private sector should contribute to the promotion of niche products and services of mountains through mechanisms such as mountain branding, labelling, and standards.
- Approaches must be promoted to improve markets for ecosystem services, to simplify processes of international instruments such as REDD+, and to develop and improve methods for valuation of environmental services.
- The transboundary aspects of mountain ecosystem services call for regional cooperation, collaborative institutional partnerships, and a strengthening of upstream-downstream linkages.

## Ensuring equity

- Promotion of green economy in mountains needs to be based on equitable access to resources and property rights, inclusive growth, and ensuring that benefits reach poor people including women, men, and children, indigenous people, and ethnic minorities.
- Marginalised groups must have a role in resource governance and a voice in decision making.
- Traditional knowledge and practices need to be documented, evaluated, and built upon to solve problems at the local level and beyond, and to conserve and develop mountain ecosystem services.
- A dynamic green economy and society must be supported so that mountains become attractive to youth and to emigrants from the mountains.