

The Orem Declaration of Mountain Women

We, the participants of the international "Women of the Mountains" conference, held March 8-9, 2007 in Orem, Utah, USA, under the banner "International Year of the Mountains+5+Rocky Mountain States" within the framework of summarizing The International Year of Mountains (IYM 2002), The Bishkek Global Mountain Summit (BGMS 2002), The Celebrating Mountain Women conference (CMW) in Bhutan (2002), and in the context of the Mountain Partnership, the U.N. Millennium Development Goals (2000) and other leading international instruments relating to universal human rights, gender equality and sustainable development, declare that:

1. Women play a key role in promoting sustainable mountain development worldwide. Their role is crucial, in achieving the goals of the Bishkek Mountain Platform such as protecting mountain ecosystems, eliminating poverty and food insecurity in mountainous areas, and assisting mountain communities in creating conditions in which they can attain their own goals and aspirations.
2. Women in mountain communities, five years after the Celebrating Mountain Women Conference in Thimphu, Bhutan, still experience serious challenges and setbacks. At the same time, women have proven themselves as very creative and very innovative in a number of areas among mountain communities. Such positive experiences need to be specially acknowledged and encouraged.
3. As far as economic empowerment of mountain women, much more has to be done to improve connections to markets, develop relevant skills, identify and promote high-value-added products and increase micro-credit loans which have helped lift many of them and their families out of poverty. Economic justice must be promoted by supporting fair trade business practices and the creation of economic incentives and programs. In particular, business practices must promote economic justice for women, including a policy of equal pay, of equal access to beneficial credits and of female-centered and non-traditional entrepreneurship, like women's co-operative structures and worker-owned larger enterprises.
4. Women in mountain regions will not achieve sustainable and equitable development unless local, regional and national

governments create mechanisms to reduce the isolation and the impoverishment of rural women and extend to those regions a fair share of support for education, health and basic services, accessible to women, as well as for infrastructure that will connect them with markets and capital, both national and international. This is particularly important due to the increasing rate of male emigration from many mountain communities and its negative implications on members of the mountain communities who remain behind, especially women, children and the poor.

5. It is recognized that mountain women play a key role in forest and environmental conservation. We advocate the empowerment of women in the care and the conservation of the ecological base and the environment upon which all mountain women and their families depend. Actions should include addressing the problems of pollution, contamination, toxic use of chemicals in agriculture and industry, enforcement of environmental laws and policies, and environmental hazard planning and mitigation.
6. Achieving gender equity is at the core of improving the overall welfare in mountain regions. Legislation and policies should promote and protect women's rights, including equal access to all aspects of civil life, such as educational resources and new opportunities given by ICTs, medical and legal services, reproductive rights and disease eradication programs, including the prevention HIV/AIDS.
7. Mountain women and their families must be protected from all forms of violence, including domestic violence against women and girls, human trafficking and slavery, and the violence of neglect through lack of high quality opportunities for education and for development. One of the measures to achieve this should be a partnership between governments and civil societies to raise public awareness regarding the prevalence of violence or trafficking worldwide and to generate practical action.
8. Policies, regulations, and laws must be enacted against traditions and cultural practices that are damaging to women. These laws must be enforced at all levels even in societies governed by tribal chiefs. Practices that should be regulated and be enforced by law include age of marriage, ownership of property, protection from being sold or killed, the opportunity to vote, protection in divorce, and gaining custody of children. At the same time, it is crucial to support existing legal structures which help mountain women make

a difference in their lives and to generate incomes for themselves and their families.

9. It is critical for the improvement of mountain societies that women play a leadership role and participate in decision-making processes. They have many important skills to contribute, including improving communications and networking, facilitating cooperation in lieu of conflict, and giving greater priority to community goods. To achieve this goal, opportunities should be created for women's participation in all levels of the political arena, in institutions of higher learning, and in the business sector as well. There is a form of leadership that women practice that could be embraced by all, including skills of inclusion, listening, and networking, etc.
10. We acknowledge the unique contribution of mountain women as mothers who face particular challenges. Pregnant women and mothers should have access to pre- and post-natal care, accessible insurance, child care, and other health care and employment-related policies that promote the wellbeing of mothers and infants.
11. Today's female youth must be provided with the protection and with encouragement to become tomorrow's leaders and parents. Gender-based discrimination against females must be eradicated before and after birth; and all children should enjoy growing up in a loving family environment, entitled to parity in education, leadership training, and opportunities for optimal development. International educational exchanges between youth will play an important role in achieving these goals.
12. We recognize that in order to promote a peaceful and prosperous society, men and women need to cooperate one with another in mutual respect and on equal terms. We also recognize that respect and equity must be the key concepts of family life in order to promote stable and nurturing environments. Therefore, we declare that efforts should be focused on programs which support the integrity of the family and of parents of both genders, as well as the public promotion of gender equity and mutual respect.

In view of this, we the participants of the Women of the Mountains Conference:

- Support the proposal from Utah to convene an international conference on an annual or biannual basis to illuminate economic,

political, and social problems facing mountain women and their communities, exchange experience and best practices in dealing with these problems, and develop specific recommendations and proposals to resolve these problems and to evaluate the success of alternative approaches.

- Support the proposal to alternate convention sites between Utah and the other mountainous countries around the world, with the aim of focusing attention on the problems of mountain women in particular regions of the world and promoting practical action to solve them.
- Support the preliminary decision of Albania to be the next country to host an international conference on mountain women in 2008 and invite all institutions interested in the causes and the issues of mountain women to take an active part.
- Encourage membership in the Mountain Partnership as a mechanism to strengthen existing alliances and create new ones for awareness raising and collaborative activities for gender equity in mountain regions around the world.
- Encourage the development of a networking and a communication system with assistance from and as a part of the Mountain Forum that enables current and future conference participants, organizations, and government agencies to continue a dialogue about women of the mountains beyond the conference, as well as creates outreach programs that continue to attract the participation and the support of individuals, of organizations, and of governments around the world.

We call upon the United Nations, the international community, and regional, national and local authorities and organizations to:

- Welcome and recognize the gathering and the decisions made during the conference "Women of the Mountains" in Orem as continuing and being an integral part of the process started in Thimpu, Bhutan (2002) and aimed at the further strengthening of the role of women in sustainable mountain development;
- Welcome this Conference as a grass-roots initiative among the mountain communities in the Rocky Mountain States and Provinces of Northern America, which aim to be more involved with the

Gender Initiative of the Mountain Partnership, as well as sustainable mountain development as a whole;

- Welcome and recognize the importance and encourage the use of such regional and local populations, including volunteers and resources in conjunction with external resources to achieve all the abovementioned goals and to improve women's lives and those of their families and their communities. To recognize also that the adoption of the multi-sectoral approach for the improvement of women's status will return a maximum result in a minimum amount of time, effort and resources.
- Welcome and recognize the additional skills and contributions that mountain women provide in leadership roles and encourage that more be given the opportunity to exercise those skills.

We Recommend the Following:

That all concerned stakeholders take appropriate action on the above issues to ensure that mountain women are respected, empowered, protected and able to contribute fully to the sustainable development of their families, communities and regions, and in particular that specific action be taken on the proposals from the Rocky Mountain representatives and conference participants from other regions to share and assist in implementing a variety of positive experiences related to sustainable mountain development between themselves and with other mountain communities worldwide, including:

1. The proposal from the State of Montana regarding national investment in the partnership with the Kyrgyz Republic, which, in the last decade, witnessed the expansion of an existing program between the military into activities involving civilians and grass-roots level exchanges;
2. The proposal from Brigham Young University to cooperate in collecting and compiling data on women in mountainous areas and contributing to the database depository "WomanStats", which allows the evaluation of the effectiveness of efforts to improve conditions of women in mountains and documents the progress made;
3. The proposal of Utah Valley University (UVU), in cooperation with private corporations, to implement ICT education projects in conjunction with the American University of Central Asia, as well as

the proposal for UVU to host with Mountain Forum assistance an interactive platform for communication and dissemination on mountain women issues.

4. The proposal presented by a number of members of the Gender Initiative of the Mountain Partnership to promote a global campaign to include a gender perspective in the curricula of mountain schools and our commitment to join forces to mobilize the needed resources.
5. The proposal presented by participants of the Conference to develop a Gender Watch Professional Group to monitor state actions.
6. The ongoing activities (to be expanded) of various Rocky Mountain universities for service-learning activities in developing nations conducted by students and faculty of those universities.

We invite all interested governments, organizations and individuals both in the Rocky Mountain States and overseas to endorse this Declaration and to promote and engage in activities for its implementation.

We encourage Mountain Partnership, Mountain Forum and UVU to create specific mechanisms to follow-up the decisions of the declaration.