International Conference on

# Green Economy and Sustainable Mountain Development

## Opportunities and Challenges in View of Rio+20

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ICIMOD

FOR MOUNTAINS AND PEOPLE

UNEP

The International Conference on Green Economy and Sustainable Mountain Development is a collaborative initiative to bring together international, regional, and national experts and policy makers to discuss the relevance and scope of the green economy in the context of sustainable mountain development. It will seek strategies, approaches, and options for enhancing the role and prominence of mountain systems in regional and international debates and discussions. The outputs will feed into the forthcoming Rio+20 conference.

### Key Questions to be Addressed

- What is a green economy?
- Why are mountain systems important for the green economy?
- What are the important costs, benefits, and challenges of the green economy in the mountain context?
- What policies and institutional mechanisms are necessary to ensure that mountain systems contribute to the green economy, and that this contribution is recognized at Rio+20?

## What is a Green Economy?

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) defines a green economy as one that results in "improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities". In its simplest expression, a green economy is low carbon, resource efficient, and socially inclusive. In a green economy, growth in income and employment should be driven by public and private investments that reduce carbon emissions and pollution, enhance energy and resource efficiency, and prevent the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. However, there is a need to elaborate the concept of green economy in the mountain context.

## Role of Mountains in the Green Economy

Mountain systems provide ecosystem goods and services that are essential to sustain the local, regional, and global environment and economy. About half of the world's population depends on mountains for fresh water, clean energy, irrigation water, minerals, forest products, recreation, and genetic resources. Half of the global biodiversity hotspots are in the mountains. However at present, generating these public goods and services for the global community has high economic and social costs. How can the opportunity costs be quantified? How can incentives be provided to mountain people for their active role in enhancing the ecosystem functions of mountain systems? The concerns of the mountain regions, particularly those of the developing countries, remain non-existent in the current framework of the green economy. This omission needs to be corrected.

## Conference Structure

The International Conference on Green Economy and Sustainable Mountain Development will be a working conference. The first part will be a two-day workshop in which plenary sessions, panels, and working groups will present and discuss the issues of green economy, sustainable mountain development, the contribution of mountain ecosystem services to the green economy, and emerging opportunities and challenges for mountain goods and services in the context of the green economy paradigm. In the second part of the conference, a broader range of policy makers and experts will discuss and refine the policy-relevant messages developed by the workshop. The conference will conclude with agreement on key policy messages and a road map to promote the mountain agenda in the upcoming Rio+20 conference.

## Expected Outcomes

- A common understanding about the scope of the green economy, its relevance, and the challenges and opportunities for mountain regions
- A framework and rationale for a green economy in which developing and less developed mountain regions capture the benefits of mountain ecosystem services and ensure these services for sustainable development in the mountains and beyond
- Enhanced understanding and recognition of mountain ecosystem services, and their inclusion in national accounts and policies
- Positioning of the green economy agenda in relation to mountain systems, and an outline of a road map for the Rio+20 conference and other regional and international fora
- Actionable inputs for policy development for green growth in the countries of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas

### For further information contact

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