

The call of the cryosphere: Disappearing snow and ice in the Hindu Kush Himalaya

10 Dec 2023 | 1130 – 1300 | Building 71, Cryosphere Pavilion, Blue Zone | COP28, Dubai

Context

The snow and ice of the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) mountains supply seasonal freshwater to river basins that serve 2 billion people in Asia, but current emission trends and resultant warming is causing glaciers to shrink rapidly, posing severe threats to the region's ecosystems and communities.

ICIMOD's latest report – Water, Ice, Society, and Ecosystems in the Hindu Kush Himalaya ([HI-WISE](#)) – examined the changing cryosphere's impact on water resources, ecosystems and livelihoods. Glaciers shrank 65% faster in the 2010s than the previous decade, and 80% of current glacier volume will vanish by 2100 on current emissions trajectories. Vulnerable mountain communities already suffer losses in lives, heritage, economy, and infrastructure. The impacts do and will cascade into countries downstream.

Even if the Paris Agreement's most ambitious goal is met, limiting global warming to an average of 1.5 °C by 2100, it would still result in a higher temperature increase of 2.1 °C in the Hindu Kush Himalaya, causing the region's glaciers to shrink by one-third, affecting 250 million mountain dwellers and 1.69 billion downstream.

Addressing these challenges necessitates regional and international cooperation in finance, data, technology, and knowledge transfer. We have enough knowledge and data to know that we must act now, but much remains unknown, emphasising the need for ongoing research and collaboration in the region.

Objectives

The event aims to

- Share the latest results on the dramatic changes in the cryosphere in the Hindu Kush Himalaya and the extensive effects of these changes, and share key findings of ICIMOD's recent report on Water, Ice, Society, and Ecosystems in the Hindu Kush Himalaya ([HI-WISE](#)).
- Broaden understanding of the impacts of climate change on water, ice, society, and ecosystem resources in the HKH region.
- Forge collaboration among HKH countries, regional and international partners and promote the need for sustainable climate action in the HKH to stop the melting of the cryosphere.

Tentative Agenda

TIME (Dubai time)	PROGRAMME
11:30-11:40	<p>Context setting and moderation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deepshikha Sharma, Climate and Environment Specialist, ICIMOD <p>Welcome remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pem Narayan Kadel, Chief Policy Advisor, ICIMOD
11:40-12:20	<p>HKH and the cryosphere crisis</p> <p>A journey of a Messenger</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jamyang Jamtsho Wangchuk, Bhutan <p>Key findings from the HI-WISE report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arun Bhakta Shrestha, Strategic Group Lead – Reducing Climate and Environmental Risks and Senior Climate Change Specialist, ICIMOD <p>Recommendations from 2nd Science Policy Forum on Cryosphere Crisis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Babar Khan, Action Area Coordinator, Building Institutions for Regional Cooperation and Collaboration <p>State of the cryosphere – a global perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pam Pearson, Director, International Cryosphere Climate Initiative (ICCI) <p>Q and A</p>
12:20-13:00	<p>Remarks from the representatives of the HKH countries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Saber Hossain Chowdhury, MP, Bangladesh (TBC) - Toeb Karma, Chief, Cryosphere Services Division, National Hydrology and Meteorology Centre, Bhutan - Zhang Yongxiang, Chief Researcher, National Climate Center of the China Meteorological Administration, and former Co-chair of the Paris Capacity Building Committee of the UNFCCC, China - Nameeta Prasad, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change, India - Buddhi Pouel, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Forests and Environment, Nepal - Ahmad Kamal, Federal Flood Commissioner, Ministry of Water Resources, Pakistan <p>Remarks from the UK Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gerard Howe, Head of adaptation and resilience, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, UK Government
12:50-13:00	Conclusion and the way forward, ICIMOD