



## Report of the Initial Organizing Committee of the Mountain Forum

21-25 September 1995  
Spruce Knob Mountain Center, West Virginia, USA

convened by  
The Mountain Institute

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## Introduction

In September 1995, 27 people from five continents--representatives of NGOs, interagency groups, government organizations, and resource persons--gathered for the purpose mandated by participants at the NGO Consultation on the Mountain Agenda<sup>1</sup>, held in Lima, Peru, in February 1995:

*to further elaborate the objectives and initial activities of the Mountain Forum as an ongoing mechanism for exchange of information and mutual support for equitable and ecologically sustainable mountain development.*

For five days these Initial Organizing Committee (IOC) participants met and worked to address the task charged to them. This is their report.

<sup>1</sup>*The Mountain Agenda refers to a broad set of actions and activities based on Agenda 21, Chapter 13, "Managing Fragile Ecosystems: Sustainable Mountain Development," the prioritized recommendations in nine thematic areas developed by the NGO Consultation on the Mountain Agenda in Lima, Peru, the agreed text of the third annual meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), as well as the Task Managers/Secretary-General's report on Chapter 13. It includes broad policy actions and thematic recommendations and activities at the local, regional, and global level that raise awareness of and implement equitable and ecologically sustainable mountain development.*

## Background: The Lima Consultation

From 22-27 February 1995, 110 mountain NGO leaders and interagency and government representatives from nearly 40 countries came together in Lima, Peru, in a meeting jointly organized by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR's) International Potato Centre and The Mountain Institute. This consultation was endorsed by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and supported by the Swiss Development Cooperation and other donors. Two ambitious goals set for this NGO Consultation on the Mountain Agenda were to:

- develop consensus on a prioritized action plan to implement the Mountain Agenda for recommendation to the third annual meeting of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) in April 1995.
- create a Mountain Forum of NGOs and interested organizations for information-sharing and mutual learning. By understanding and building on our strengths as a community, innovative partnerships will emerge to implement the action agenda.

The prioritized action plan for sustainable mountain development in nine thematic areas was delivered to the high-level meeting of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) in April 1995; it has since been widely disseminated throughout the mountain community.

Many of the recommendations were incorporated into the text of the CSD's report on Chapter 13. Mountain Agenda representatives were given an unprecedented opportunity to speak at the CSD session to high-level representatives and ministers of 46 countries. The Under Secretary-General of the UN Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (UNDPCSD) and many others lauded the Mountain Agenda as one of the "salient achievements" of the high-level meeting, especially for the innovative partnership approach involving governments, agencies, and NGOs. The CSD called for continuation and emulation of this approach as a model for other sectors.

Participants at the NGO Consultation on the Mountain Agenda (Lima, Peru, 22-27 February 1995) nominated regional representatives to an Initial Organizing Committee (IOC), whose mission was to breathe life into the vision of a Mountain Forum. The Mountain Institute (TMI) was asked to convene the IOC participants, who decided to meet before the end of 1995, to take advantage of the momentum generated in Lima and at the CSD. A meeting of the IOC of the Mountain Forum, together with representatives of other key institutions involved in sustainable mountain development (see Annex II for a complete list IOC participants), was convened at Spruce Knob Mountain Center, West Virginia, USA, 21-25 September 1995. The outcomes of this meeting, and the future of the Mountain Forum, are outlined in the sections below.

## **Vision, Mission, and Values**

The Mountain Forum is an innovative and integrative bridge between diverse nongovernmental, governmental, intergovernmental, scientific, and private sector organizations and individuals. The purpose of the Mountain Forum is to provide a forum for mutual support and for the exchange of ideas and experiences. This will empower participants to raise mountain issues on local, national, regional, and international agendas and to promote policies and actions for equitable and ecologically sustainable mountain development. The basic operational values of the Mountain Forum are to be open, democratic, decentralized, accessible, transparent, accountable, and flexible.

## **Functions**

Through improved communications and information exchange, the Mountain Forum will empower and enrich its members; create and strengthen mechanisms for critical dialogue; exchange both successful and unsuccessful experiences; provide a forum for discussing emerging tools and technologies and their applications; exchange lessons of monitoring, evaluating, and assessing impacts; and assist members in influencing regional mountain agendas at the local, national, and intergovernmental levels. Two main priority functions of the Mountain Forum were identified: mutual support and information-sharing, and advocating the Mountain Agenda.

### ***Mutual Support and Information-Sharing***

Organizations working both in mountains and for mountains have only just begun to form a constituency. Those involved come from diverse and often remote regions as well as varied experiential backgrounds. Instead of working in isolation, members will benefit greatly from establishing linkages and exchanges with each other. The resulting web of support would be mutual, requiring a commitment to reciprocal exchange. The Mountain Forum will foster mutual support through the following actions and practices:

- organizing information to facilitate its use;
- disseminating documents, materials, and news;
- accessing and retrieving information in support of member activities;
- establishing and supporting an Internet-accessible information system;
- conferencing electronically (on focused topics, in real time);
- facilitating training;
- supporting research for action, such as providing data in all mountain-related fields pertaining to human sciences, economics, or natural sciences; and
- fostering alliances, partnerships, and joint research activities.

The Information Server Node (see below) of the Mountain Forum will provide the electronic core for information-sharing functions to foster mutual support among Mountain Forum members and to connect the Forum with new and broader constituencies.

Information is perhaps the most powerful force shaping the world today. It is a critical tool for empowerment and a catalyst for social change. In a special presentation to IOC participants, Chuck Lankester, Director of UNDP's Sustainable Development Networking Project, cited the critical role information plays in development by quoting Dr. Ramani at the Sustainable Development Networking 3rd Global Workshop (November 1994):

*[Information] can save a lot by increasing efficiency and by reducing waste. Information improves peoples' productivity enormously, by helping them to network with others. A networked person is a lot more productive than an isolated one. Information networking has its greatest impact in changing peoples' work culture. It introduces informality, reduces hierarchy, offers greater autonomy to those who are young or in relatively junior positions, enables a greater sharing of news and information and an increase in the level of responsibility handled and in the variety of work done. It reduces higher level control, isolation from international trends, etc. . . .*

The IOC recognized the inherent difficulties of providing sophisticated electronic communications to remote mountain areas. Regarding mechanisms, methods, and technologies for information exchange, the IOC strongly asserted that the Mountain Forum should serve to both demarginalize and empower mountain peoples. Special care and attention should be given to increase accessibility to information through whatever means necessary. Thus it was agreed that a combination of modern and traditional communications methods and tools would be necessary.

In addition the IOC recommends that Mountain Forum members assume responsibility for dissemination and fostering exchange to other mountain constituents within their region who may be more remote or who may have difficulty accessing information. To guarantee that mountain people and organizations are not increasingly marginalized by the lack of information, the Mountain Forum believes all members should be aware of, and committed to fostering and maintaining, communication linkages.

### *Advocacy for the Mountain Agenda*

The issue of advocacy merits special explanation to be clear about what is--and what is not--intended. No member of the Forum will have the right to speak on behalf of the whole with respect to specific issues. Rather, advocacy is seen as the need to raise awareness of the Mountain Agenda at relevant fora at national-, regional-, and global-level meetings in order to guarantee that mountains are considered. Specific actions relevant to advocacy include:

- elevating the Mountain Agenda on national decision-maker agendas;
- facilitating dialogue between mountain leaders and national decision makers;
- convening regional and national workshops and task forces;
- informing national decision makers about mountain issues via workshops, briefings, and media;
- encouraging formation of a mountain lobby, involving politicians and other leaders via a caucus of mountain communities;
- attending and convening meetings as required to promote the Mountain Agenda, leading to a 1998 meeting on the Mountain Agenda; and
- contributing directly to the review and implementation of Chapter 13 of Agenda 21.

## **Operational/Institutional Framework**

### *Introduction*

The strength of the Mountain Forum will be determined by its membership at local and national levels. Institutions in direct contact with mountain people and environments will contribute to and benefit most from the Mountain Forum. Members of the Forum in each country will be linked in ways appropriate to their own conditions and institutional environments; linkages may therefore include electronic means but also other mechanisms like newsletters, workshops, and seminars. Members are expected to be mutually supportive and to contribute a powerful force of knowledge and commitment to mountain people and their environments.

The Mountain Forum is a decentralized confederation of networks. Whenever possible, it will seek to include and involve existing information networks as members. The Mountain Forum is a series of regional networks whose activities are catalyzed and coordinated by Regional Facilitating Committees (RFCs). Non-Regional members, international organizations, and individuals will be coordinated by a Global Facilitating Committee (GFC). These networks, along with the Information Server Node (ISN), comprise the Mountain Forum. Activities and meetings of the Mountain Forum will be coordinated by an Interim Facilitating Committee (IFC).

The structure is fairly simple, both in concept and design. The reader is asked for forbearance in the terminology, however, which resulted from vigorous efforts to resist any terms such as "Secretariat" or "central" that do not fully reflect the decentralized and democratic spirit of the Forum. The membership, roles and responsibilities of the RFCs, the GFC, the IFC, and the ISN are discussed in more detail below under "Organizational Structure."

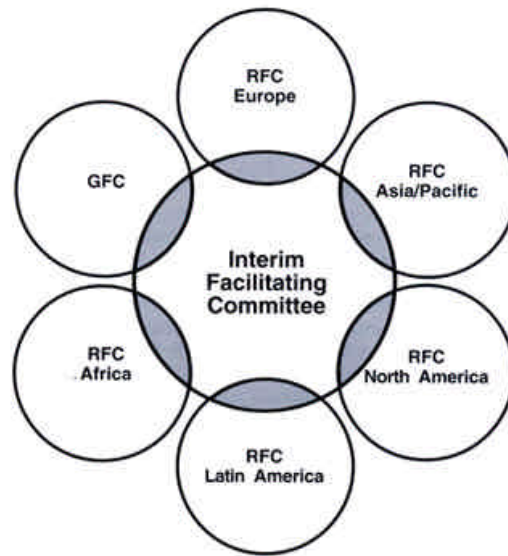
### **Membership**

One of the special characteristics of the Mountain Forum is its commitment to serve as an integrative link among nongovernmental, governmental, and private sector concerns and its capacity to have a completely open and broad membership. It will include mountain communities, NGOs, scholars, researchers and research institutes, individuals, groups and institutions that specialize in mountain-related issues, private associations and organizations, and intergovernmental and governmental bodies.

Part of the capability and commitment of the Forum members will be to serve regional and local information needs, driven by the belief that one of the most pressing needs in advancing the Mountain Agenda is sharing information. The Mountain Forum seeks an open constituency of groups and individuals committed to the Mountain Agenda and to mutual support and information exchange.

### *Organizational Structure*

A schematic representation of the Mountain Forum's organizational structure is shown in Figure 1. It is important to emphasize that Figure 1 is an attempt to graphically depict the governance of the Mountain Forum and not the functions of the Mountain Forum, which is better depicted as an intricate web where all members are linked directly. The components of this diagram-- the RFCs, the GFC, and the IFC--are described in detail below.



**Figure 1. Mountain Forum. Shaded areas indicate representatives to the Interim Facilitating Committee.**

**RFC = Regional Facilitating Committee; GFC = Global Facilitating Committee.**

### *Regional Facilitating Committees and Regional Networks*

The Mountain Forum is a decentralized network of networks, with regional networks providing the connecting points of this global organization. Regional Facilitating Committees (RFCs) were established by the International Organizing Committee (IOC) to mobilize and coordinate these regional networks, their activities, and their membership, including the electronic regional linkages.

Catalyzed by the RFCs, each region will establish a network that acts as an informal forum for exchanging information related to sustainable development of mountain areas among the members of the Forum in that region. The regional networks will be based on inputs provided on a voluntary basis by mountain organizations, professionals, and agencies from countries of that region. For each region, different subgroups will cover the major mountain areas.

To get the Mountain Forum under way, the IOC initially identified five potential regions for RFCs. To allow for evolution of the Mountain Forum, changes in membership, and regional representation, it was understood by the IOC that the structure of regional groupings would be evaluated on an interactive and ongoing basis. Any regrouping or subdividing of regions would be decided by the Interim Facilitating Committee in consultation with RFCs. The five initial regions of the Mountain Forum RFCs identified by the IOC are:

- Africa,
- Asia,
- Europe,
- Latin America, and
- North America.

RFC membership will be formed by the initial member for each RFC inviting new members to join and involving them in inviting other members. RFCs determine the size of their own

membership, thus allowing for the representation of numerous mountainous area subgroups within each region. With regard to RFC representation in the Interim Facilitating Committee (IFC), however, the number of RFC representatives to the IFC will be limited to 3-5 members per region to keep the size of the IFC operational. The IFC Executive Committee will coordinate equal representation from each region and establish limits for the size of the IFC when the time comes to convene a face-to-face meeting of the IFC (see "The Interim Facilitating Committee and the Executive Committee," below).

The following institutions were asked by the IOC to serve as RFC focal points because of their strong capacities in their own regions: ICIMOD, through its Network on Sustainable Development of Mountain and Upland Areas of Asia, would act as the focal point for Asia and the Pacific; and CONDESAN/CIP agreed to serve as the focal point for Latin America and the Caribbean. RFC focal points for each of the other regions will be determined by regional constituents, by processes under way in those regions. Professor Li Bosheng expressed his willingness to serve on the IFC and offered to link the EANCRMTTC of the Chinese Academy of Sciences to the Asian Mountain Network, with special responsibility for information concerning botanical data bases. Once established, other regions will join automatically as RFCs. The basic tasks of the RFCs include:

- promoting membership in the regional network with relevant organizations and individuals, including facilitating the identification, invitation, and introduction of new members by providing startup information and materials;
- through electronic and traditional communication methods and based on two-way flow of information, informing members, who will inform others, of developments on mountain issues of interest;
- ensuring that data bases on mountainous countries of the region and mountain-specific issues are established and maintained in appropriate locations and that these data bases are accessible whenever possible through electronic means;
- promoting as far as possible face-to-face exchanges of people to facilitate partnership-forming, commitment-strengthening, and knowledge- and experience-sharing through visits within regions and to other mountainous regions;
- identifying appropriate institutions to serve as regional and subregional nodes for the purpose of participating in and coordinating the electronic flow of information; and
- contributing to updating and helping to maintain worldwide calendar of events hosted by the ISN.

Subject to their ability to raise additional funds, the regional networks may eventually be in a position to provide small grants to subregional and national groups to become more effective in promoting the Mountain Agenda.

### *The Global Facilitating Committee*

To coordinate the membership, activities, and input of international organizations, UN agencies, independent professionals and individuals, and/or nonregional affiliations, the Mountain Forum provides for a Global Facilitating Committee (GFC), which will perform core functions similar to the RFCs for this constituency. The Mountain Institute (TMI), in its capacity as the IFC convener, will act as focal point for the GFC and will thus catalyze and convene members of the GFC to serve on the IFC.

## *The Interim Facilitating Committee and the Executive Committee*

The Interim Facilitating Committee (IFC) is the group charged with responsibility from the IOC for initiating and managing the organization of the Mountain Forum for the next 2 years. IFC membership consists of representative members of each of the RFCs, the GFC, and the Information Server Node. A workable size of 30-40 members of the IFC was determined. If the number of RFC and GFC members becomes larger than 30-40, then RFCs and the GFC will need to elect representative members to the IFC.

To convene and coordinate the activities of and convene the IFC, the IOC elected an Executive Committee--a tripartite consortium of the International Potato Center (CIP/CONDESAN), the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), and The Mountain Institute (TMI), bound by a Memorandum of Understanding (see Annex III). The administrative role of IFC Convener would rotate every 2 years between members of this Executive Committee. TMI accepted the task of IFC convener for the first 2 years. The Executive Committee of the IFC will be responsible for circulating information and for contacting the wider group regarding any issues requiring consensus for action.

In addition, the IOC agreed to include the Task Manager of the UN Inter-agency Committee on Chapter 13 as part of the IFC. In addition, a representative of the Swiss Development Cooperation will continue to participate in the IFC, and other primary donors will be invited to join the IFC in continuation of the tradition of inviting all parties to collaborate in the Mountain Agenda process.

The core functions of the IFC are to:

- guide the operations of the Mountain Forum and monitor and evaluate its performance;
- convene meetings every other year;
- promote interregional linkages;
- draft proposals for the next evolution of governance;
- solicit funding in support of the Mountain Forum; and
- catalyze direct contributions on Chapter 13 of Agenda 21 to the General Review of Agenda 21 Implementation by a Special Session of the UN General Assembly in 1997.

## *The Information Server Node*

In light of all of the above, the Mountain Forum makes one of its primary tasks the creation of an information network to provide affordable information access to all mountain constituents. It will enable a growing constituency of people to supply and draw from the resource network and data base and to facilitate inexpensive communication for mountain areas. A major goal will be to minimize costs to members. Implementation of these tasks will fall to the Forum as a whole within the structure outlined above, with the electronically mediated communications and related functions supported by an Information Server Node (ISN).

Information exchange would be facilitated by a group of information nodes from regional and subregional nodes that also ideally participate either as members of or in collaboration with the RFCs who are linked electronically. Regional and subregional nodes act as information exchange facilitators or clearinghouses and gather and disseminate information, seek out useful knowledge, and work with NGO and other partners in their regions to develop the skills and technical infrastructure needed to participate fully in the Forum.

Information may be provided in many formats as it reaches end users. General Internet-based information exchange will be used wherever possible--complemented by other traditional

communications means such as facsimile, telephone, postal mail, and face-to-face exchange-- to bridge the borders of the Internet system with users/members who are not on line.

To link all regional and subregional nodes, the IOC decided to create an ISN that would not have any regional affiliation. The ISN would facilitate interregional information exchange by a moderated discussion list and would maintain an Active Mountain Archive, a Mountain World Wide Web Page, an electronically published magazine, and the global Mountain Forum membership contact list. The ISN would provide the following services:

- An electronically mediated discussion forum and information exchange service, including discussion lists accessible through electronic mail. This would be a continuously running moderated conference and would be accessible from anywhere on the Internet. This will continuously promote and facilitate free and open dialogue, debate, call for support or advice from members of the Mountain Forum and others who care to join in at any time. All on-line Mountain Forum members would be able to participate in this discussion list. All on-line members would be responsible for contributing and receiving information for the off-line members in their locality or region, thereby ensuring a broader grassroots participation.
- An Active Mountain Archive of information electronically accessible through File Transfer Protocol (FTP), gopher, and automated electronic mail methods. The Active Mountain Archive is a documentation resource and data base dedicated to the immediate service of the Mountain Forum members; to those receiving the electronic magazine, or E-mag (see below); and to the general public. In addition, the archive is a traffic direction facility connecting users to other relevant but more specialized data bases. The archive will be stored and managed by the ISN and will basically contain articles, addresses, references, input from regional node managers and members, input from the discussion list, uncopyrighted policy documents and meeting proceedings, texts of UN reports and national/international conventions, etc. Forum members, researchers, and academic institutions would all be potential contributors and/or would contribute to organizing the data.
- A World Wide Web site. A Mountain Forum World Wide Web Page would be created to help access information in the Active Mountain Archive and to promote the Mountain Agenda.
- An electronic magazine (E-mag) distributed via Internet by the Information Server that is easily downloadable to a traditional paper format for dissemination within regions to persons not connected to the Internet. The Mountain Forum E-mag would be a quarterly (later bimonthly) magazine covering all aspects of the mountain problematique. It will function as a highly visible interface for the Mountain Forum and for sustainable mountain development globally. All unabridged material used in the E-mag will be deposited in and accessible from the Active Mountain Archive.
- A worldwide calendar of events will be built, updated, and maintained by all members either directly or through the regional nodes.

Other opportunities for networking at the global and regional levels will be explored on a dynamic, interactive, and ongoing basis.

The currently identified nodes for the information network are CIP/CONDESAN for Latin America, ICIMOD for Asia and the Pacific, and TMI for global/UN organizations and other nonregional groups or individuals. Regional nodes for Africa, North America, and Europe, and additional subregional nodes, will be determined by regional members through processes under way in those regions. The ISN will be hosted at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in

Lausanne (Ecole Polytechnique Federal-Lausanne (EPFL)), Switzerland, with TMI serving as the discussion list moderator.

### *Organizational Development and Evaluation*

IOC participants, echoing the sentiments expressed at the CSD meeting, felt strongly that the Mountain Forum, as an innovative partnership initiative, merits special study as a potential model for other sectors. In this context, IOC members appreciated the technical and financial assistance provided in facilitating its successful meeting by the Global Excellence in Management (GEM) Initiative of Case Western Reserve University's (CWRU's) Weatherhead School of Management. Because of the pioneering nature of this worldwide alliance and the complexity of the organizational dimensions of this effort, the IOC felt it was imperative to plan at the outset for the utilization of special resources to help with organization and management issues. There is also the need for ongoing evaluation and monitoring such that all members have an opportunity to learn as the Forum unfolds. The IOC therefore asked GEM to explore the possibility of providing support for continuing involvement with the Mountain Forum in two areas:

1. **Organizational Development and Capacity-Building Consultation:** In order to strengthen the organizing dimensions of the effort, CWRU faculty members and researchers agreed to work with the Forum through a collaborative and consultative partnership to promote organizational excellence, mobilizing the multiple organizations of the Mountain Forum to discover common values, trade best practices, share available resources, and develop plans for joint action.
2. **Evaluation and Monitoring:** Professional and objective evaluation is considered critical to provide ongoing advice, monitoring, and evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of the Forum. To this end, the IFC will work with CWRU faculty members and researchers to develop natural feedback mechanisms built into the operating mechanisms of the Forum. Evaluation of the Forum's success would be based on qualitative indicators such as:
  - the ability to access new knowledge or information,
  - the impact of shared learning through storytelling,
  - the quality level of face-to-face visits and exchanges,
  - examples of policy-making impacts concerning the Mountain Agenda, and
  - general satisfaction level within the Mountain Forum constituency, etc.

Specific criteria for qualitative indicators and their elaboration would be the initial focus of developing an evaluation and monitoring strategy. Comments and suggestions on these criteria, indicators, and issues are most welcome.

Additionally, assistance in preparing for the progress review of the IFC has been requested for 1997.

Beginning in 1997, before the meeting of the CSD, the entire IFC will be convened in alternate years to evaluate progress, to decide on priorities for the future, to agree on a process for making recommendations to the CSD, and to rotate membership of the IFC executive committee.

## **Conclusion and Next Steps**

The IOC collectively endorses this report as the founding document of the Mountain Forum. The role of the IOC has been passed to the IFC and its Executive Committee composed of CIP/CONDESAN, ICIMOD, and TMI--each of which has signed a Memorandum of Understanding. All correspondence will be copied to the IFC, whose responsibility is to share information with their networked constituencies and to implement the actions necessary to get the Mountain Forum started.

The Mountain Forum intends to create an innovative coalition of organizations bound together through mutual interest, support, and commitment. The Forum's initial steps will include development of the Information Server Node and creation of RFCs and networks, including new members.

The principle is to start small and grow with demand and need as partnerships and regional networks evolve. This report will complement project documents to approach donors to solicit financial support for regional networks and activities and to launch the Information Server Node, which aims to link all regions through the Mountain Forum.

We welcome your comments, suggestions and support in this undertaking.

# Annex I.

## Glossary of Acronyms

CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CIP	International Potato Centre of CGIAR
CONDESAN	Consortium for Research and Development in the Andean Ecoregion
CSD	United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development
CWRU	Case Western Reserve University
EANCRMTC	East Asia Nature Conservation Research Monitoring and Training Centre of the Chinese Academy of Sciences
EPFL	Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (Ecole Polytechnique Federal-Lausanne)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GEM	Global Excellence in Management Initiative of Case Western Reserve University
GFC	Global Facilitating Committee of the Mountain Forum
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
IDRC	International Development Research Centre/Canada
IFC	Interim Facilitating Committee of the Mountain Forum
IOC	Initial Organizing Committee of the Mountain Forum
ISN	Information Server Node or Information Server of the Mountain Forum
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
RFC	Regional Facilitating Committee of the Mountain Forum
TMI	The Mountain Institute (formerly Woodlands Mountain Institute)
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDP/CSD	United Nations Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

## Annex II.

### Rationale: Why Mountains?

Mountains make up one-fifth of the Earth's landscape and are home to at least 10 percent of the world's population. In the surrounding lowlands, millennia of intensifying human use have led to advancing biological impoverishment and cultural homogenization. Mountain peoples, in their sloping islands of human and natural variety, have become the guardians of irreplaceable global assets. Their homelands serve as storehouses of timber, minerals, meat, and hydroelectric power for the surging populations below them. At least half of humanity depends on mountain watersheds for their supplies of fresh water. For more than 1 billion people, mountains are sacred places. And mountains are also becoming recreational refuges from crowded cities for the tourist elite. All over the world, expanding economic pressures are degrading mountain ecosystems while confronting mountain peoples with increasing poverty, cultural assimilation, and political disempowerment.

Thus, there is a corresponding need for interdisciplinary approaches to sustainable mountain development that empower mountain communities to exercise more control over local resource management and conservation and to generate more income in sustainable and equitable ways. Since mountain women play a central role in the sustainable use and management of resources, the specific needs and constraints of mountain women must be addressed.

Furthermore, because mountain cultural diversity is a strong and valid basis for the sustainable use and conservation of mountain resources, the cultural expressions of mountain peoples should be recovered and fostered. In this context, protecting indigenous peoples' interests, including their knowledge, should be an integral part of efforts toward sustainable development. Finally, since mountains are home to a substantial portion of the planet's variety of species and ecosystems, it is critical to expand the network of protected mountain areas to include all types of mountain ecosystems; strengthen the management capabilities for conserving mountain ecosystems, species, and genetic diversity; and promote local and NGO participation in the management of these areas.

In order to ensure an integrated approach to the complexity of mountain ecosystems and the diverse social, economic, and political issues there, there is a strong need to strengthen the existing institutional mechanisms—both governmental and nongovernmental—for building the capacities of mountain communities through research, data base development, pilot projects, information exchanges, and in-country training of scientific and technical experts and local natural resource managers.

*For further information on the world's mountain environments and peoples, see "High Priorities: Conserving Mountain Ecosystems and Cultures," by Derek Denniston, Worldwatch Paper 123, Worldwatch Institute, Washington, D.C.*

## Annex III.

### The Mountain Forum: An Illustrated Chronology of Events Leading to the Formation of the Mountain Forum

#### *PrepCom Meetings, September 1991 and April 1992*

At a series of PrepCom meetings, the Mountain Agenda was drafted for inclusion in Agenda 21 as Chapter 13, "Managing Fragile Ecosystems: Sustainable Mountain Development."

#### *Earth Summit 1992 and Agenda 21, Chapter 13*

At the Earth Summit (the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development-UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the largest-ever gathering of heads of state and government endorsed Agenda 21, including Chapter 13, "Managing Fragile Ecosystems: Sustainable Mountain Development." Chapter 13 was drafted late in the UNCED process and could not benefit from the full participation of NGOs and people working in the world's remote mountainous regions. The mountain community, therefore, felt a strong need to come together to build consensus toward concerted action on the Mountain Agenda.

#### *UN FAO Hosts an Ad Hoc Meeting on the Mountain Agenda, April 1994*

The UN, under the leadership of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), took responsibility for coordinating the follow-up to the Mountain Agenda. In this work, FAO has included NGOs in a full partnership. At the UN interagency meeting in Rome in April 1994, official representatives encouraged NGOs to review the Mountain Agenda to develop recommendations on implementation in time for presentation to the third annual session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). This initiative gave birth to a series of unique and innovative partnerships among interagency groups, government organizations, and NGOs in collaboration on the Mountain Agenda.

#### *NGO Workshop on the Mountain Agenda, Spruce Knob Mountain Center, West Virginia, USA, July 1994*

In response to the FAO's request, a participatory planning meeting was convened by The Mountain Institute (TMI) in July 1994 at their Spruce Knob Mountain Center retreat facility in West Virginia, gathering 30 NGO leaders from all parts of the world to plan the first International NGO Consultation on the Mountain Agenda. Thematic areas were identified, participant lists were drafted from existing contacts, and organizers and a venue were chosen.

#### *The NGO Consultation on the Mountain Agenda, International Potato Center, Lima, Peru, February 1995*

Some 110 mountain NGO leaders and interagency and government representatives from nearly 40 countries came together in Lima, Peru, 22-27 February 1995, in a meeting jointly organized by CGIAR's International Potato Centre and The Mountain Institute. Two ambitious goals set for this Consultation were to:

- develop consensus on a prioritized action plan to implement the Mountain Agenda for recommendation to the third annual meeting of the UN CSD in April 1995; and
- create a Mountain Forum of NGOs and interested organizations, for information-sharing and mutual learning. By understanding and building on our strengths as a community, innovative partnerships will emerge to implement the action agenda.

#### *Third Session of the CSD, April 1995*

The prioritized action plan of recommendations for sustainable mountain development in nine thematic areas was communicated and hand-delivered to all governments through the high-

level meeting of the UN's Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) in April 1995. It has since been widely disseminated throughout the mountain community, and many of the recommendations were incorporated into the text of the CSD's report on Chapter 13.

To initiate the next step in creating a Mountain Forum, participants in Lima nominated regional representatives to an Initial Organizing Committee (IOC). The Mountain Institute (TMI) was asked by the participants to act as Interim Convener of the Mountain Forum's IOC. To take advantage of the current momentum and growing awareness of mountains globally, it was necessary to convene the Organizing Committee before the end of 1995.

*Meeting of the Initial Organizing Committee, Spruce Knob Mountain Center, West Virginia, USA, September 1995*

Thirty people from five continents--representatives of NGOs, interagency groups, government organizations, and resource persons--gathered for the purpose mandated by the Lima NGO Consultation: to further elaborate the objectives and initial activities of the Mountain Forum as an ongoing mechanism for exchange of information and mutual support for equitable and ecologically sustainable mountain development. This report outlines the objectives and functions agreed upon by the IOC.

*Meetings of Regional Facilitating Committees and Mountain Forum Exchanges, 1996 and onwards*

*Meeting of the Interim Facilitating Committee of the Mountain Forum, 1997*

As part of its governance function of the Mountain Forum, the IFC agreed to convene meetings in alternate years for purposes of review, monitoring and evaluation of the initial activities and objectives of the Mountain Forum. In addition, this 1997 meeting will seek to catalyze direct contributions on Chapter 13 of Agenda 21 to the General Review of Agenda 21 Implementation by a Special Session of the UN General Assembly in 1997.

*General Review of Agenda 21 Implementation by a Special Session of the UN General Assembly, 1997*

*Global Meeting on the Mountain Agenda, 1998*

## Annex IV.

### **Memorandum of Understanding Between the International Potato Centre, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, and The Mountain Institute**

As part of a global movement to increase the focus of sustainable development on mountain areas within the framework of Chapter 13 of Agenda 21, "Managing Fragile Ecosystem: Sustainable Mountain Development," a series of consultations took place between March 1994 and September 1995, culminating in the establishment of the Mountain Forum.

Annex I to the MOU describes the vision and mission, priority functions, and organization of the Mountain Forum, including the core functions of the Interim Facilitating Committee.

#### *Organization and Functions of the Interim Facilitating Committee*

The meeting of the Initial Organizing Committee (IOC) of the Mountain Forum decided that an Interim Facilitating Committee (IFC) be established consisting of members of Regional Facilitating Committees, a Global Facilitating Committee, an Information Server Node, and an Executive Committee a tripartite consortium to organize and coordinate the work of the IFC. The Executive Committee tripartite consortium will consist of the International Potato Center (CIP), the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), and The Mountain Institute (TMI). One of these organizations will act in turn as Forum Administrator for the group on a rotating 2-year term basis.

The tasks of the IFC would be to establish the Mountain Forum according to the principles and criteria established by the International NGO Consultation on the Mountain Agenda, as confirmed and expanded upon by the IOC and set forth in the report of the IOC meeting on Spruce Knob from 21-25 September 1995. The IFC would then assume responsibility for implementing the functions established for it by the IOC participants (see Annex I for IFC responsibilities).

#### *Commitments*

Through this Memorandum of Understanding, CIP, ICIMOD, and TMI agree to undertake the following roles and responsibilities. Where appropriate and in consultation with each other, CIP, ICIMOD, and TMI will work to implement the core functions described for the "Interim Facilitating Committee" section of the report of the IOC September 1995 meeting.

(1) The Mountain Institute (TMI) will act as the focal point of the IFC for all matters related to global organizations and with organizations and associations having a global focus and mandate on the Mountain Agenda. It will promote the Mountain Agenda through various means, including international meetings. It will make available staff time and supporting computer hardware and software for serving as the "list moderator" for the Mountain Forum's electronic network, and it will serve as a node for global and international issues. In close collaboration with the other members of the IFC, TMI may co-opt 3-4 members to join the Global Facilitating Committee of the IFC. TMI will keep CIP and ICIMOD fully informed about all important matters related to the Mountain Forum.

(2) CIP will act as the focal point for CGIAR on all matters related to the Mountain Forum. The implementation of the activities will be through the Andean Consortium CONDESAN and its

communication system, INFOANDINA. It will make available computer hardware and software for serving and linking the Mountain Forum information network to Latin America, with initial emphasis on the Andean ecoregion. It will also establish linkages between members of the Forum in Latin America.

(3) ICIMOD will act as the regional focal point for Asia and the Pacific on all matters related to the Mountain Forum. It will make available staff time and computer hardware and software for serving and linking the Asia-Pacific region to the Mountain information network, it will promote through various means the Mountain Forum in the region, and it will establish linkages between members of the Forum in the region. In close collaboration with the other regional members of the IFC, ICIMOD may co-opt 3-4 other members to join the IFC.

(4) The three institutions will keep each other informed about all important matters related to the Mountain Forum. Jointly, and where appropriate in consultation with other members of the IFC, they will implement the tasks described for the IFC.

(5) The Forum Administrator provides staff and other resources as needed to support the work of the Mountain Forum, specifically by coordinating the preparation, review, and distribution of all official communications distributed by the IFC and its tripartite Executive Committee; convening the biennial meeting of the IFC; coordinating the fund-raising for the Mountain Forum; coordinating the planning and implementation of a regular evaluation to assess the progress of the IFC in carrying out the functions of the Mountain Forum; and such other tasks as shall from time to time be mutually agreed upon. The position of Forum Administrator will be rotated among the tripartite Executive Committee on a 2-year term basis. The Mountain Institute has been requested to assume and has accepted the responsibility of Forum Administrator for an initial 2-year term. The term should begin January 1, 1996.

#### *Duration*

This agreement will be valid for a period of 2 years from the date of the last signature and may be extended after mutual consultation and endorsement by the Interim Facilitating Committee.

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## Annex V.

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## Annex VI.

### **Purpose, Initial Organizational Mechanisms, and Objectives for the Mountain Forum**

*Excerpted from the Summary Report and Recommendations of the NGO Consultation on the Mountain Agenda, Lima, Peru, February 1995*

Recognizing the urgent need to continue the dialogue on mountain issues initiated at the Lima Consultation, the participants decided to create a Mountain Forum and invite all interested parties to join together to promote conservation and sustainable development in the world's mountains.

#### *Purpose*

To provide a forum for mutual support and the exchange of ideas, experiences, and people to raise mountain issues on local, national, regional, and international agendas and to promote policies and actions for equitable and ecologically sustainable mountain development.

#### *Initial Organizational Mechanisms*

- Basic operating principles: Open, democratic, transparent, accountable, flexible, gender-balanced, and regionally representative.
- Organization: Convened by The Mountain Institute, the Initial Organizing Committee will create a Global Advisory Committee. Using an appropriate combination of communication methods, this advisory committee will function in a decentralized way through the regional groups and nodes.
- Regional Activities: Initially, to create or strengthen all the regional and subregional groups to actively participate in their regions and to participate in the work of the Initial Organizing Committee. These regions include local, subnational, national, and bioculturally defined areas.
- Thematic Priorities: Centered on the issues discussed and recommended at the International NGO Consultation on the Mountain Agenda in Lima.
- Participants: The Mountain Forum will seek the broadest possible participation of all those interested in contributing to and promoting the Mountain Agenda. These parties will include mountain communities, NGOs, scholars, specialized groups and institutions on mountain related issues, private associations and organizations, and intergovernmental and governmental bodies.

#### *Initial Objectives*

- Advocate the Mountain Agenda
- Exchange information (technical, development experiences, ongoing activities, upcoming events, etc.)
- Catalyze and accelerate the implementation of the Mountain Agenda
- Facilitate cooperation and joint efforts
- Meetings/workshops/training/conferences
- Publications, including electronic network
- Visits and exchanges
- Monitor and evaluate progress toward implementation of the Mountain Agenda.

## Annex VII.

### Synopsis of the Thematic Prioritized Recommendations as Written By Participants in the NGO Consultation on the Mountain Agenda, Lima, Peru, February 1995

*The recommendations below have been abbreviated. The full text of the key issues and prioritized recommendations can be found in the Summary Report and Recommendations of the Lima Consultation.*

#### *Cultural Diversity*

- Systems of intellectual property rights for indigenous knowledge should be developed, recognized, and enforced under international conventions.
- Peaceful resolutions of conflicts and the prevention of future strife must involve greater recognition of mountain cultural identities and needs, as well as new mechanisms to promote dialogue. Mountain cultural heritage and diversity must be recognized as a valid basis for conservation, on par with biological diversity. NGOs should play a greater role in facilitating this task.
- Empower vulnerable groups by using culturally appropriate mechanisms for increasing group representation in development decision making.
- As a primary carrier of cultural traditions and identity, mountain languages and other forms of cultural expression need to be transmitted to future generations alongside national and global language capabilities.
- National policies should be reformed to better represent the interests of mountain communities and to establish protocols to recognize and empower the most local forms of representation.
- Proportionately greater investment per capita is required to provide access to information and resources for mountain peoples. The modest total investment needed and modern technology make this a highly feasible priority. NGOs should play a key role in facilitating this task.

#### *Sustainable Development*

- Countries should move to the maximum extent possible to decentralize management and decision making for mountainous regions. This decentralization should emphasize specific measures to empower and strengthen local communities and organizations.
- Gender-balanced approaches are important everywhere but are especially critical in mountains, where family survival depends on the complementary contributions of women and men. Therefore, development must aim to improve women's participation, access to information services, and education. It must also focus on reversing the out-migration of men.
- Nations must cooperate to ensure safe, free transboundary access and migration, especially across watersheds where this is a part of indigenous custom.
- The true value and full economic and environmental costs and benefits of mountain resources should be recognized in calculating the economic returns of development initiatives in mountainous areas. Such full cost accounting will help to counter inappropriate development and to ensure the equitable allocation of equitable benefits to mountain people.
- For sustainable mountain development and conservation, each country should prepare a mountain policy document, a national action plan, and an enabling statement

outlining the current and desired roles of multiple stakeholders, including NGOs and the private sector.

- Improved security for mountain communities depends on focusing attention on basic needs and poverty alleviation targeted to disadvantaged groups. This should take precedence over more ambitious efforts to bring large modern development schemes to remote areas.
- Significant improvements in quality of life of mountain people should be supported through cost-effective programs of NGOs that provide technical assistance, services, and training and that mobilize local capacities.
- Where infrastructure and other modern development initiatives are contemplated, special consideration is needed to provide for the relatively greater costs, effort, and time involved in mountain programs due to mountain specificities.

### *Production Systems and Alternative Livelihoods*

- Mountain economies must be diversified with new sustainable livelihoods that increase the benefits retained by mountain communities, recognize the land and resource rights of indigenous peoples, and carefully blend indigenous knowledge and appropriate technologies. These livelihoods may include nonextractive industries or the sustainable extraction of natural resources. Local communities must participate in all decisions that affect their natural resources and gain direct economic benefit from their use.
- New land use classifications should be established, including tenure, carrying capacity assessments, and biological corridors. These classifications should include distinctions at the micro-level. Governments must make all land use plans with the participation of all interested parties.
- Mountain development must respect local ownership of resources, including proper recognition of opportunity costs, decisional autonomy, ownership of knowledge, and the need for compensation.
- Current and future applied research and information should be reviewed, synthesized, integrated, and disseminated. This research should be conducted by and with mountain communities and be greatly expanded. Topics for this applied research include legal support for mountain people. Based on solid, empirical data, this research should help determine development strategies.
- Migration studies are needed to understand the effects of in-migration, out-migration, tourism, "amenity" migration, labor allocation, gender issues, and age displacement.
- NGOs working closely with mountain communities should encourage the sustainable management of forests and the sustainable harvesting of non-timber forest products. Local communities and individuals should have control over and benefit from these activities.

### *Local Energy Demand and Supply in Mountains*

- Programs need to be designed and implemented based on sound evaluations of local needs and potentials to provide the local populations with sufficient amounts of renewable energy to support livelihoods and legitimate aspirations.
- Energy programs should make use of all existing and emerging technologies for harnessing renewable energy resources.
- Programs must be locally driven and decentralized to match the scale of local demand.
- Energy programs must be environmentally and culturally sound.

### *Tourism*

- Countries and regions should prepare tourism development strategies that will provide for a range of quality tourism opportunities and for the infrastructure in which this can occur in environmentally appropriate ways.
- Instead of focusing solely on promoting nature-based tourism (or "ecotourism"), governments and NGOs should examine all types of mountain tourism for opportunities to minimize cultural and environmental impacts.
- Tourism should be developed only through an integrated process in which all stakeholders—including government agencies, NGOs, and resident peoples—participate.
- Systems should be created for monitoring and evaluating the biophysical and cultural impacts of tourism. This monitoring should take precedence over conducting basic research on tourism.
- The growing phenomenon of amenity migration merits increased recognition, research, planning, and policy changes—especially on a regional and multidisciplinary basis.

### *Sacred, Spiritual, and Symbolic Significance of Mountains*

For each of the following recommendations, it is emphasized that sacred values of mountains are of utmost sensitivity to people from these cultural and faith traditions. It should be absolutely clear that study and understanding of religions or sacred sites is not universally an acceptable activity. Therefore, neither governments nor NGOs should presume to initiate or support any activities without first ascertaining that these are welcomed by local people and faith keepers.

- Recognizing differences in the types of sacred sites for different peoples, each site should be treated as appropriate to the needs of that site and the people for whom it is significant. NGOs may have a valuable role to play in initiating dialogue and reducing conflicts between competing groups. Protection of sacred sites and will become an increasingly important issue for many indigenous peoples. However, as the interest in sacred sites increases, so does the desire for accessibility to these sites and the danger of desecration to these sites. Even documenting these sites is a very sensitive issue. In some cases these locations are known to only a few people within a tribe for particular reasons. It is necessary then to seek out the proper local leaders to neutrally inquire about protection of these sites and whether they should be revealed or shared and how. Therefore, some sacred sites should either not be recorded at all or should be recorded only in "silent files" that respect the rights of indigenous people to safeguard their own knowledge.
- Known and publicly accessed sacred-cultural sites in mountains should be prioritized for conservation at different levels, i.e., local, regional, national, and international.
- NGOs and government institutions are urged to collaborate with local communities to ensure that they receive the appropriate policy, financial, and technical support they need to conserve and manage their sacred/cultural sites in keeping with their own traditions.
- In the field of environmental conservation, special attention should be given to sacred sites in mountains to enhance the conservation of biodiversity based on cultural and spiritual values. Carrying capacity studies are needed to avoid the deterioration of biodiversity.
- Mountain sites of cultural and spiritual significance should be respected as cultural heritage sites, including, for example, as cultural landscapes under the World Heritage Convention. Pilgrimage sites with heavy use need special care and may need control to prevent damage to spiritual values.
- Educational materials should be generated so that students, young people, and tourists recognize the heritage value of these sites and respect the spiritual and cultural norms of the locales.

- When requested by local people, NGOs and intergovernmental organizations should embark on collaborative and cross-cultural research programs and activities with indigenous peoples to study the significance of sacred mountain sites in the environmental perceptions of different cultures throughout the world. This could include inventories of sacred sites in mountains and assessments of their biological values. Such inventories should be more than lists and include the study of historical, cultural, and present context in order to avoid a "postcard" approach to deeply significant places.

### *Water Towers*

- Since water rights and traditional uses are so complex in the mountains, any new water resource projects by governments and private developers must be particularly careful not to violate these sustainable systems.
- River or streamside buffer zones should be established to protect water quality (by moderating both sediment levels and temperature), reduce water erosion, filter upstream pollution, and provide shade, recreation, and corridors for wildlife.
- To conserve water supplies, water consumers--the majority of whom are nonmountain peoples--need education about the full economic and environmental costs of water.
- Upland watersheds are important (but not necessarily sufficient) units for planning participatory sustainable development at the community level. Using watersheds as planning units facilitates the integration of such key issues as biodiversity, protected areas, land use, social and cultural needs, and hazard avoidance.
- Water pricing should be improved to internalize the benefits and costs to both upstream producers and downstream consumers, including the environmental and social costs of developing water resources. These pricing reforms may include transnational benefits and costs.
- Opportunities for small-scale alternatives to large water storage systems should be identified and implemented for water supply, energy production, flooding control, and irrigation.
- Significant improvements in national- and regional-level data are needed to quantify the amount and quality of water supplied by mountain systems.
- Public education about the importance of cloud water collection by trees and other mountain vegetation is needed. To conserve both their biodiversity and water supplies, these forests need protection.
- With demands for high-quality water increasing, better information on site-specific needs for water is required.
- The field capacity of NGOs for collecting data and monitoring water supplies and demand should be utilized and supported.
- Mountain communities should have legislative safeguards to ensure compensation for property lost to water development projects, equitable distribution of water, and fair compensation for diversion and use to downstream consumers.

### *Mountain Biodiversity*

- Expand the existing network of protected areas to include all types of ecosystems found in mountains; strengthen existing management capabilities for conserving mountain biodiversity; incorporate local people and NGOs in the participatory management of these areas.
- Support and conduct research, especially in the following priority areas: genetic diversity, mountain ecosystems, community-based biodiversity conservation programs, traditional knowledge and practices, cultivation of biodiversity resources, and carrying capacity; create a repository for research capabilities and systems for disseminating

- research results; develop an integrated monitoring system to help quantify circumstances under which species and ecotypes are threatened.
- Respect, strengthen, and encourage traditional cultures, whose values and sustainable resource management practices have contributed to conservation of mountain ecosystems.
  - Ensure that an equitable share of economic benefits derived from biodiversity resources remain with the local peoples and their communities.
  - Encourage transboundary cooperation in conserving mountain biodiversity, both within and outside protected areas.
  - Link development programs with mountain biodiversity conservation. Raising awareness, especially among decision makers, on the biodiversity value of mountain areas by providing scientific evidence and data should work to ensure that data about mountain development projects are openly available and that such projects do not have unreasonable impacts on biodiversity. Create and foster special participatory structures within the government to integrate mountain development and supporting local NGO/INGO/government/private sector partnerships to design site-specific initiatives.
  - Assess the adequacy of laws, policies, national environmental action plans, and other institutional structures for national implementation of the biodiversity convention with specific reference to mountain areas.
  - Prescribe environmental impact assessments as mandatory for all projects in mountain areas, and support the development of the necessary capabilities and science.

### *Climate Change and Natural Hazards*

- Technical options for development projects in mountainous areas should be subject to rigorous scrutiny. In general, small scale projects are preferable to larger scale efforts, but the cumulative impact of small projects must also be considered.
- Because indigenous coping strategies have a better track record in reducing risks, more emphasis should be placed on documenting this knowledge and fostering the local implementation of these strategies.
- Research and monitoring to anticipate hazards is urgently needed, along with strategies for prevention, protection, and rehabilitation to reduce damage and risk.
- Greater involvement and appreciation of local historic knowledge and tradition should be fostered by integrating indigenous understanding with management techniques, science, and technology.
- NGOs should play a greater role as integrators between indigenous people, authorities, and other stakeholders.

## Annex VIII.

*The excerpt of the below document has been made available by the United Nations.*

E/1995/32  
E/CN.17/1995/36

United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development Report on the Third Session, 11-28  
April 1995

Economic and Social Council, Official Records, 1995, Supplement No. 12, United Nations, New  
York, 1995, ISSN 1020-3559

### **4. Sustainable mountain development**

190. The Commission recognizes that mountain ecosystems and environments are of crucial importance as rich and unique centres of biological and cultural diversity, water stores and sources of minerals. Mountains cover at least one fifth of the Earth's landscape and are home to at least 10 per cent of the world's population, predominantly economically poor people. Mountain ecosystems are complex, fragile, unique in geomorphology, and react sensitively to global climate change. There is a corresponding need for a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach to sustainable mountain development as well as for the effective participation and empowerment of mountain people in the use and conservation of mountain resources.

191. The Commission recognizes that with increased accessibility into mountain areas, resource degradation and, in some cases, economic and political marginalization of mountain communities has taken place. In order to reverse this trend and to combat the poverty of mountain people, strategies for mountain development must empower mountain communities to exercise larger control over local resource management and conservation and generate income in sustainable and equitable ways. In this context, the Commission recognizes the central role of women in the sustainable use and management of resources; therefore, the specific needs and constraints of women must be acknowledged and addressed. Furthermore, support is needed to recover and foster the cultural expressions of mountain populations because mountain cultural diversity is a strong and valid basis for the sustainable use and conservation of mountain resources; in this context, the protection of indigenous people's interests, including the recognition of their knowledge, should be an integral part of sustainable development.

192. The Commission stresses that the fragility of mountain ecosystems and the adverse impact of the degradation of those systems on highland and lowland populations have not been fully appreciated. The Commission recognizes the importance of mountains as the predominant and most dependable source of freshwater currently used by humanity, and therefore stresses the importance of providing adequate protection for both quality and quantity of water resources from mountainous regions. The Commission recognizes the vital protective function of a stable forest cover for the safeguarding of mountainous settlements and infrastructure. It also urges expanding the network of protected mountain areas to cover all types of mountain ecosystems, strengthening existing management capabilities for conserving mountain ecosystems, species and genetic diversity and promoting local and non-governmental organizations' participation in the management of these areas.

193. In order to ensure an integrated approach to the complexity of mountain ecosystems and the socio-economic issues at stake, the Commission recognizes the need for strengthening the

existing institutional mechanisms as well as the knowledge base about mountain ecosystems through research, database development, pilot projects and information exchange, along with support for training of in-country scientific and technical experts and local natural resource managers.

194. The Commission urges interested Governments, with the support of the international community, to prepare and implement comprehensive national and/or local mountain development programmes in relevant countries as outlined in chapter 13 of Agenda 21: the "Mountain Agenda." These include strengthening national capacity for sustainable mountain development and the preparation of long-term mountain action plans. Action-oriented projects and programmes should emphasize the long-term monitoring of their environmental, economic and social impacts. Initiatives to implement the mountain agenda should incorporate development strategies that address the impacts on mountain communities and ecosystems of, inter alia, production and land-use systems, tourism, transportation policies and energy production and use. These initiatives must incorporate a participatory approach involving all stakeholders, including farmers, women, and local and indigenous communities, as well as non-governmental organizations.

195. The Commission also recognizes that there is a need to take a new look at the overall flow and full-cost pricing of resources and services to and from mountain areas, including water, wood and non-wood as well as range products, energy, mineral resources, tourism and human and government services. The Commission further recognizes the need for a fair share of the benefits derived from the use of mountain resources to remain with the local people and their communities.

196. The Commission notes that there is a need to examine the relationship of Chapter 13 with other chapters of Agenda 21 and with the global conventions and to analyze the extent to which the concerns of mountain areas can be better integrated into their follow-up.

197. The Commission welcomes and supports ongoing efforts in preparing and negotiating subregional and interregional agreements on mountains and, in this context, notes the entry into force of the Alpine Convention as one example, in line with paragraph 13.8 (c) of Agenda 21, of cooperation between countries for the protection of mountain ecosystems.

198. The Commission calls upon Governments and the international community to take action at all levels with the objective of combating poverty in mountain areas, diversifying mountain economies, protecting the environment and food security of local communities, strengthening global information networks and databases, addressing environmental problems, and creating new livelihood opportunities, within the context of appropriate institutional frameworks.

199. The Commission urges interested Governments and organizations, including the private sector, to promote initiatives aimed at raising awareness, including the convening of regional intergovernmental consultations. A wider international meeting involving relevant United Nations bodies could facilitate the exchange of objectives, results and experiences of sustainable development in different mountain regions.

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*The participants and organizers of the Initial Organizing Committee of the Mountain Forum extend their deepest gratitude to those who made this meeting and its outcomes possible.*

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United Nations Environment Programme  
International Development Research Centre/Canada  
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations  
United Nations Development Programme  
Global Excellence in Management Initiative/CWRU

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