

ICIMOD statement to COP 23

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1. Our latest research shows that a two-degree rise in global average temperature would mean three-to-four degrees in the mountains – an outcome that would have dire consequences for the 240 million people living in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) and communities downstream. As nearly a quarter of humanity depends on the resources and services of the HKH, meeting the SDG targets requires immediate action. Climate change is melting glaciers, altering agricultural systems, and increasing the threat of floods and drought.
2. While mountain people will bear significant impacts from climate change, they contribute little to the greenhouse gases that drive up temperatures worldwide. The global community has a responsibility to act urgently to curtail emissions and support the actions of mountain communities to address climate change.
3. Resilience building is critical for mountain women, men and children. Increasing natural threats of floods, droughts, and landslides will require improved preparation to endure these shocks and to restore life and livelihoods afterwards. But we must do more than recover. Mountain communities must be the site of transformative change that enables them to “bounce forward” from these shocks. In the way, we can address additional challenges such as migration and globalization.
4. In spite of these challenges, we at ICIMOD believe that opportunities abound. We must empower women in the face of male outmigration, take advantage of the high-value mountain products, and work with the private sector to build links to new markets. We must improve our stewardship of water, forest, and ecosystem, and orient research and education in service of the mountains. All of these actions will pay dividends to local and global communities.
5. Furthermore we believe the Paris Agreement needs to be implemented in a more equitable and responsible manner. This can be achieved by designing climate actions that simultaneously address the Sustainable Development Goals 2030.
6. Most importantly, we have to see mountains as a force to bring us together. Mountain communities can learn much from each other. Countries can work together to bring the voice of the mountains to the global stage. And through cooperation centered on mountains, resources can be managed more effectively. Together, we can amplify the call for greater cooperation between mountain countries and the rest of the world to stress the imperative for global climate change action.

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