ICIMOD Director General Dr David Molden’s Statement to the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, Paris, France

May I bring you the warm greetings of the people of the Hindu Kush Himalayas, who are as hopeful as all of us gathered here in Paris that finally we could be building a tangible momentum towards a decarbonized future!

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) is a regional intergovernmental knowledge centre dedicated to sustainable development in the Hindu Kush Himalayas, a mountainous corridor stretching across Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar.

The Hindu Kush Himalayas, and mountains around the world, provide the global population with numerous invaluable services. With the largest reserve of ice and snow outside the Polar Regions, the Hindu Kush Himalayas act as the water towers of Asia, providing fresh water to over 1.3 billion people. The potential for clean energy in the region, particularly hydropower, provides opportunities for low carbon growth and the transition to a low-carbon economy.

Mountains play an important role in water, energy, and food security. Ironically, mountain communities around the world live in a dichotomy of sorts. On the one hand, mountains provide tremendous ecosystem services to regulate climate, and on the other, mountains experience the most severe effects of climate change that affect ecosystems, agriculture, and livelihoods. That’s why the vulnerability of these fragile mountains to the impacts of climate change has to be at the heart of global climate debate.

The Hindu Kush Himalayas and its inhabitants are under considerable stress because of the effects of climate change. In short, mountains are feeling the heat. Natural disasters are occurring with increasing frequency and magnitude. Glaciers are receding like never before. Monsoon patterns seem to be becoming unpredictably volatile. Poverty is deepening and migration is increasingly becoming the only viable choice of survival. Indeed, for thousands of vulnerable mountain communities, climate change could soon become an existential crisis.
On our part, institutions like ICIMOD will continue to build coalitions across the areas of science, policy, and practice, and build strong partnerships at all levels to invest in mitigation and adaptation measures targeting the most vulnerable groups living in the poorest and the most inaccessible pockets of the Hindu Kush Himalayas.

*Ladies and Gentlemen:*

Should we fail to act now, then we are staring at a frightening prospect that shall besiege mountain people and all of us in not too far away a distance. We sincerely urge the international community to build on the momentum from here on, because the faster we are able to forge consensus to cut emissions, the better would our collective future be. The stakes are piling high, and the need for global political will has never been direr.

*Thank you very much!!!*