



Official Submission to UNFCCC Secretariat
by ICIMOD, Kathmandu (NWP member)

**Proposal for a Potential Future Area of Work of the Nairobi Work Programme:
Mountains and Climate Change**

Preamble

Recalling Decision 6/CP.17 on the Nairobi Work Programme on impacts, vulnerability, and adaptation to climate change, under which the 17th Conference of the Parties (COP-17) requested the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) to reconsider the work areas of the Nairobi Work Programme and make recommendations to the Conference of the Parties including identification of potential future areas of work that could also support the scientific and technical work under the Cancun Adaptation Framework' and invited the Parties and relevant organizations to submit their views to the Secretariat, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), (www.icimod.org), as an active member in the Nairobi Work Programme (NWP), takes this opportunity to express its views on a potential future area of work of the NWP on mountains.

Rationale of the Proposal

Mountains ecosystems are globally significant. They occupy 24% of the global land surface area and are home to 12% of the world's population. About 10% of the world's population depends directly on mountain resources for their livelihoods and an estimated 50% of the world's population depends, directly or indirectly, on mountains for their water supply. Fifteen percent of the global energy supply comes from hydroelectricity sourced from mountains, and mountain ecosystems are rich sources of biodiversity, agro-biodiversity, and medicinal, aromatic, and dye plants. Mountains also provide nutritious foods, mineral resources, and recreation destinations, and possess rich bio-cultural heritage.

For example, the Hindu Kush Himalayas (HKH), also known as the water towers of Asia, are the source of 10 major river systems that provide water, forests, biodiversity, and other vital ecosystem goods and services to support the lives and livelihoods of more than 1.3 billion people. The region includes four global biodiversity hotspots, 488 protected areas, 330 Important Bird Areas, and 60 global eco-regions. It is also home to more than 40 per cent of the world's poor and faces extreme vulnerability and risks due to climate and other changes.

The Hindu Kush Himalayan region is regarded as one of the region's most vulnerable to climate change. At high altitudes in the Himalayas, temperatures have been warming at a rate three to five times the global average. This warming has resulted in increased snow and glacial melt and a rise in the frequency of extreme events such as devastating floods and droughts. This has exacerbated problems of poverty and food insecurity that

was already major challenges in the region, which hosts around 45% of the world's poor. Among 170 countries evaluated in the Climate Change Vulnerability Index, which ranks the vulnerability to the impacts of climate change over the next 30 years, Bangladesh ranked 1st, India 2nd, Nepal 4th, Afghanistan 8th, Myanmar 10th, and Pakistan 16th – all very high.

ICIMOD's Proposal: Mountain and Climate Change as the Future Work Area of the NWP

Despite the global significance of mountain ecosystems and evidence of disproportionate impacts of climate change in mountain regions, the UNFCCC process has yet to recognize mountain ecosystems as regions of high vulnerability. UNFCCC instruments for mitigation and adaptation finance, transfer of technology, and capacity building have not covered mountain regions, such as the HKH, on a par with coastal areas and small islands.

Recognizing this, the Government of Nepal hosted an International Ministerial Conference on Mountains and Climate Change, 5–6 April 2012, which was attended by ministers and heads of UNFCCC delegations from around 30 countries, including Qatar, the host of COP-18. The conference issued the Kathmandu Call for Action 2012 to promote the global Mountain Initiative.¹ ICIMOD supports this call and is of the view that mountains and mountain communities, including poor and marginalized men, women, and children as well as indigenous peoples, need special treatment under the instruments of the UNFCCC to cope with and adapt to the growing implications of climate change impacts on their habitats, livelihoods, and cultures.

Given the pressing need for an immediate and urgent response to build the resilience of mountain ecosystems and to help their inhabitants better adapt to the impacts of climate change, ICIMOD on behalf of its stakeholders and partners proposes the inclusion of a new work programme called '**Mountains and Climate Change**'. Such a programme is imperative because mountains provide vital goods and services to more than half of the world's population while simultaneously bearing a larger share of the burden that has resulted from anthropogenic climate change.

ICIMOD's proposal to establish a new area of work on **Mountains and Climate Change** under the Nairobi Work Programme will be supported by the governments of mountain countries and regional centres of excellence with mountain expertise. The proposed new area of work may focus on instruments of adaptation and mitigation and building resilience, specifically by identifying mountain ecosystem-based adaptation needs, special provisions for financial support to mountain countries, the transfer of technology, and capacity building. Emerging areas such as REDD+ and the work programme on loss and damage could also be linked to future areas of work on mountains.

(End)

¹ The Mountain Initiative aims to highlight the specific problems faced by poor and vulnerable countries with large mountainous territories in the world (see http://moenv.gov.np/newwebsite/moe_admin/download/Kathmandu%20call%20for%20action.pdf).