International Expert Consultation Meeting: Mountain Initiative on Climate Change
Preparing Roadmap for the Ministerial Conference of Mountain Countries and UNFCCC process

Conclusion and Recommendations of the Experts on Mountain Initiative on Climate Change
23 to 24 September 2010, ICIMOD

Recognizing that there is an urgent need for mountainous countries and countries with mountain ecosystems of the world to reinforce the mountain agenda in response to global change, into ongoing multilateral environmental negotiation processes notably in the upcoming UNFCCC meetings and the Rio+20 conference, by developing a common vision, strategy, knowledge base and approaches, an International Expert Consultation Meeting on Mountain Initiative on Climate Change was organized jointly by the Ministry of Environment, Government of Nepal and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) in Kathmandu on 23-24 September 2010.

The main purpose of the meeting was to start a process of global and regional consultation involving the concerned climate change experts for charting out the future roadmap for the Mountain Initiative (MI) with a long term strategy reiterating the global mountain agenda in the UNFCCC and the Rio+20 processes and beyond. The Mountain Initiative was launched by Government of Nepal in response to the call made by the Right Honourable Prime Minister of Nepal during the COP 15 summit asking all the mountain countries and stakeholders to come together and form a common platform to better advocate mountain issues in climate change negotiations so as to ensure that mountain concerns get due attention in the climate change agreements and related decisions.

The meeting was attended by high level policy and decision makers, national experts involved in the UNFCCC process and representatives from academia, international organizations, and development partners. Experts from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Canada, China, Columbia, India, Italy, Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, Nepal, Pakistan, Peru, Tajikistan, Switzerland. Experts from ICIMOD, Mountain Partnership Secretariat (FAO), World Bank, UNEP, UNDP, DFID, ADB, DANIDA, FINNIDA and others participated in the meeting. Observers also joined from academia, research centers, networks, and in individual capacity.

The workshop was inaugurated by the Hon. Minister of Environment of the Government of Nepal, Mr. Thakur Prasad Sharma. Hon. Dr. Dinesh Devkota, Member of the National Planning Commission participated in both opening and closing sessions. Dr. Andreas Schild, DG ICIMOD, Dr. R.S. Tolia, Uttarakhand, India; and Mr. Klas Sanders, WB HQ gave key note speeches. Two analytical papers specifically prepared as the back ground documents for the Consultation on: 1) Mountains of the World-Ecosystem Services in a Time of Global and Climate Change: Seizing Opportunities-Meeting Challenges, and 2) Funding Mechanisms, Instruments and Facilities for Mountain Systems were presented by the authors. This was followed by the presentation of synthesized paper on ‘Key issues for the Mountain Initiative’.
The expert meeting wholeheartedly expressed happiness and pledged support for the Mountain Initiative launched by the Government of Nepal. They also appreciated the excellent technical inputs and support provided by ICIMOD.

The Experts appreciated the fact that the Meeting was conducted in a highly consultative, open and participatory manner comprising of two working group exercises and plenary discussions. After two days of intensive discussions on the agenda items and having listened to the latest information on the impacts of climate change on world’s mountains, the experts have come up with a set of recommendations to the proposed International Ministerial Meeting of Mountain Countries on Climate Change as well as proposed to forward their conclusion for sharing with the mountain country delegations participating in the future UNFCCC negotiations and Rio+20 meetings. The Experts reinforced the following points as the basis for their common understanding:

- The critical roles played by World’s mountains should be recognized by the global community as they are: a) ‘water tower’ of the world, b) provider of the critical ‘ecosystem goods and services’, c) harbinger of global climate change, d) repositories of ‘critical biodiversity’, and e) destination for global travellers and adventures;

- The Experts felt the need to fill the information and knowledge gaps by supporting generation of research-based data for which intensification of mountain-specific research work will be the key areas on topics including climate variability, water availability, glacier hydrology, and other aspects of cryospheric changes, adaptation and mitigation measures and the effects of black carbon both in short and long terms.

- The Experts recognized that multiple factors mainly related to climate change are increasing the vulnerability of mountain people and ecosystems that requires urgent and immediate effective approaches to build resilience and adaptive capacities of human and natural systems in mountain areas.

- Development of long-term and good understanding of high mountain ecosystem and glacier hydrology and their socio-economic implications will be critical to provide robust future water and environmental scenario critical for downstream population and global food security; this will require global investment in knowledge and capacity development as well as regional and global networking and sharing of research and development information and knowledge.

- Mountain ecosystems including biodiversity, watersheds, forests and pasturanelands are bearing the brunt of rising temperature; extreme events such as flash floods, wild fires and landslides; invasion by non-native species due to multiple global changes. These impacts have degraded the vital ecosystem services critical to support the livelihoods for millions of people both upstream and downstream; the global community must take responsibility to help mountain countries take appropriate measures to better cope with and adapt to these vulnerabilities and risk factors by supporting a range of mountain specific programmes such as the implementation of national adaptation plans and enhance these multiple ecosystem services for human survival.
The International Expert Consultation Meeting agreed to the following conclusion:

1) Commends and supports the Mountain Initiative of the Government of Nepal and recommends sharing the conclusion and recommendation of this International Expert meeting in future forums including the proposed Ministerial Conference.

2) Establishment of a **Contact Group** based on the membership of the participating countries in this expert meeting to disseminate the conclusion of the meeting as well as to raise awareness of the key stakeholders and policy and decision makers in their respective countries and the UNFCCC COP meetings.

3) Establishment of a **Technical Working Group** comprising of Dr. Dinesh Devkota (Nepal), Mr. Douglas McGuire (Mountain Partnership), Ms. Laura Madalengoitia Ugarte (Peru), Ms. Gulmira Sergazina (Kazakhstan), Ms. Lorena Santamaría Rojas (Columbia). Dr. R.S. Tolia and Mr. John Drexhage will be independent members and the Ministry of Environment, Nepal and ICIMOD will be represented by Dr. Ganesh Raj Joshi, Secretary and Dr. Madhav Karki respectively. A draft of the Terms of Reference for the Technical Working Group will be developed and shared within a month of the finalization of this document.

4) All the invited Countries will be requested to nominate a Focal Institution and/or Focal Person for future communication for improved and effective coordination.

7) Advocacy activities, especially by improving knowledge management and communication capacity of the participating countries will be planned and implemented to promote the inclusion of a mountain specific funding priority within the UNFCCC financing framework; this will require pro-active and coordinated effort in the COP 16 meeting and beyond, which Nepal and ICIMOD should lead and seek support of mountain countries and other stakeholders.

8) Conclusion of the Expert meeting will be used to plan and organize regional consultation meetings in major mountain regions in the year 2011 so as to better prepare for the ministerial level meeting as planned by the Govt. of Nepal in 2011; the Ministerial Meeting is expected to endorse a clear structure and roadmap for the Mountain Initiative.

9) The Meeting further opined that while specifying the scope of Mountain Agenda, it is important to give cognizance of the respective positions of countries in the UNFCCC negotiations such that the Mountain Initiative (MI) is in line with key national and regional positions.

10) Regarding the membership, the meeting recommends that mountainous countries as well as countries having mountain ecosystem priority from both the developed as well as the developing countries will be encouraged to join the MI.
11) In order to make the MI more effective and garner international support for it, the meeting set the objective to mobilise more countries notably from Africa and Latin America reflecting the lack of representation from Africa and only two representatives from Latin America in this International Expert Consultation Meeting.

12) The Meeting highlighted the need for initiating knowledge development, capacity building and communication related activities in future under the MI in all the regions.

13) The Experts also emphasised the need to launch more effective capacity building, training and advocacy related activities, regionally and globally, using the recommendations of this Expert Group meeting so as to enable mountain countries to advocate for the inclusion of a mountain specific issues and funding priority within the UNFCCC process starting from the preparatory meeting of the Parties in China and COP 16 meeting in Cancun, Mexico.

14) The meeting also recommended to the Ministry of Environment, Nepal to prepare for the international ministerial conference by organizing regional consultation meetings in different regions and building capacity of the mountain country teams including that of the MI secretariat at the MOE Nepal for raising coordinated and stronger voice at future international climate meetings especially, COP 16 at Cancun and beyond including Rio+20 preparatory meeting in Switzerland.

The Meeting acknowledged the significant contribution made by the ICIMOD and other experts in the form of Analytical and Discussion papers prepared and presented by the Govt. of Nepal and ICIMOD. The meeting thanked the Govt. of Nepal and ICIMOD for their warm hospitality and for successfully and professionally organizing the consultation meeting which has immensely contributed in highlighting the current status on mountain systems especially in the context of climate change. The meeting also deeply appreciated and thanked for the financial support provided by InWEnt, Germany to fund the costs of the consultation meeting.

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