

United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP17)

Statement made by Dr. David Molden, Director General of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) at the COP17 and CMP7 at the high-level segment, 9 December 2011, Durban, South Africa

*Madame Chair, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,*

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) is a knowledge development, management, sharing and capacity building centre working on sustainable mountain development.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of December, ICIMOD and its partners organized a Mountain Day. There was general broad consensus that:

Mountains are global resources important for fresh water, food and energy security and biodiversity. They are the 'water towers' of the world providing freshwater for half of the globe's population. Mountains are global hotspots for biodiversity. Mountains play a critical role in ensuring global food security by influencing climate, providing water for irrigation, and hosting gene pools in its agro biodiversity for food security.

Mountains are highly fragile ecosystems and are particularly vulnerable to climate change. There is a major dependency of downstream ecosystems and economies on mountain resources. Mountain women and men play a vital role for the globe as the custodians of ecosystem services, yet often have little access to these services such as water and energy. Degradation of mountain ecosystems and a high rate of poverty amongst mountain people will have serious socio-economic and ecological consequences on surroundings lowland regions and more than billion of people.

Mountains offer solutions to regional and global problems such as poverty and climate change, and mountain women and men are developing solutions that need to be recognised and rewarded. Mountain economies largely have low carbon footprints, but many mountain regions are characterized by a high incidence of poverty. In spite of their importance, the value of the ecosystem goods and services derived from mountains is under-recognised, under-valued, and poorly compensated.

Therefore there is an urgent need to mainstream the role of mountains in national, regional and global processes including the UNFCCC COP. The following actions are required:

- Support adaptation in mountains for improved livelihoods and sustainability by introducing appropriate policies and creating specific financing windows;
- Recognise, value, and create incentives to enhance benefits derived from mountains;
- Fill in knowledge gaps, build capacity and transfer knowhow to support implementation of adaptation and sustainable development in mountain areas;
- Promote regional cooperation to address transboundary issues related to climate change;
- Promote low-carbon or green economy in taking into account mountain specificities such as environmental fragility, vulnerability, and poverty.