

STATEMENT TO THE 20TH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE
UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

First, let me wish you all a Happy International Mountain Day, a time when we can all celebrate the gifts that mountains provide to people, but also a time when we recognize that these are under threat.

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 region stretching across parts of Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar.

The Hindu Kush Himalayas, and mountains around the globe, provide the global population with numerous invaluable services, and the rich diversity of mountain areas, including cultural, biological, and agricultural diversity, holds the keys to the future.

Mountains play an important role in water, energy, and food security. 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. This water is also used to irrigate the breadbaskets of Asia – the downstream plains of the Indus, Ganges, Brahmaputra, Yellow, and Yangtze. Given this, the future food security of over one-third of the global population depends on these mountains.

The potential for clean energy in the region, particularly hydropower, provides opportunities for low carbon growth to meet rising demands in countries with some of the world's largest and fastest growing populations. However, this potential cannot be realized if sustainable and inclusive development in the mountains is not made a priority.

It is clear: Mountains matter for a comprehensive post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

However, our region, its people, and its irreplaceable resources are under growing pressure from the impacts of climate change. Natural disasters are occurring with increasing frequency and magnitude, receding glaciers and changing monsoon patterns are affecting future water availability and exacerbating already high levels of poverty. Livelihoods and traditional coping strategies of local communities are being pushed to their limit, triggering migration out of the mountains.

The Rio+20 outcome document, 'The Future We Want', recognizes the global benefits derived from mountain regions as being critical for sustainable development, as well as the important role that mountain communities play in sustaining these benefits. Now this recognition must be backed by concrete action and investment in adaptation and mitigation, including for the most vulnerable groups of women, men, and children living in least developed mountainous countries. High payoffs will come from investment in livelihood-based adaptation strategies that increase the income and resilience of mountain women and men, disaster preparedness and risk reduction, fostering collaboration across borders, and supporting the knowledge base so that policies and action are based on sound evidence.

ICIMOD sees the Nairobi Work Programme as an important entry point to link knowledge from regional centres with needs on the ground. To assess long-term climate impacts and develop integrated and lasting solutions, science and traditional knowledge must go hand-in-hand, and must be applied in practice and policy. There is also a need to create and support mechanisms for collective reflection and learning among diverse stakeholders, including researchers, policy makers, practitioners, and local communities.

#



Climate change impacts know no borders, and we all share the responsibility in ensuring the global benefits from mountains we all enjoy are available for generations to come. Meeting the challenges of climate change will require us work closer together – to generate and share new knowledge, to increase engagement across the areas of science, policy, and practice, and to build strong partnerships within regions, among regions, and at the global level. We are approaching a critical turning point on climate change. Unprecedented levels of international cooperation and greater investment in climate change adaptation and mitigation are needed to address the challenges in mountains that affect us all.

Dr David Molden
Director General
International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development