



Govern d'Andorra

## Background Note

### **Mountains and Climate Change: highlighting the need for the protection of vulnerable mountain ecosystems while building the resilience of mountain peoples and economies, to reduce loss and damage**

#### **Proposed COP 28 agenda item**

The inclusion of the agenda item “Mountains and Climate Change: highlighting the need for the protection of vulnerable mountain ecosystems while building the resilience of mountain peoples and economies, to reduce loss and damage” for the COP28 is fully in line with agreed commitments and the spirit of the Convention as considered in the Preamble and Article 4.8 of the Convention which invites Parties to give full consideration to the needs arising from the adverse effects of climate change on fragile ecosystems, including **mountainous ecosystems**, among others.

The guiding principle is to exchange on how to better highlight the need for the protection of vulnerable mountain ecosystems while building the resilience of mountain peoples and economies to reduce loss and damage.

Mountain ecosystems have been identified by the IPCC among the most vulnerable to climate change, as temperature evolves faster in these regions, both in terms of impacts on the population that live there, but also in the ecosystem services they provide. These climatic variations have severe consequences on socioeconomic activities, especially those closely linked to biodiversity, landscape and nature, therefore, putting mountain peoples and their livelihood in an extremely vulnerable position.

Very recently, on the Sixth Assessment Report of the IPCC (March 2023) special attention is drawn to the upcoming irreversible adverse impacts and adaptation limits of mountain regions and their severe consequences for people, infrastructure and economy.

The high exposure and sensitivity of mountains to climate change, their fragility and underrepresentation were already recognised in Chapter 13 (*Managing fragile ecosystems: sustainable mountain development*) of the 1992 Earth Summit Agenda 21, in the UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/71/234 on “*Sustainable Mountain Development*” and also in the findings of the IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate (SROCC).

For its part, the World Meteorological Organization hosted the **High Mountain Summit** in 2019 where all participants committed to recognize the importance of mountain regions as a home of the cryosphere, and source of global freshwater and ecosystem services to the world. They called upon multilateral stakeholders to recognize the role of mountain areas and the importance of mountain specific

non-economic and economic activities, the weight that these activities have in particular economies, especially in those countries that are fully integrated into mountainous areas and the negative evolution of which, due to climate change, will have devastating effects on their societies.

The United Nations General Assembly declared the year 2022 the **International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development**, during which many international environmental bodies started to bring specific attention to mountains. It is the case of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) who identified during its 56th session 3 additional thematic areas for the **Nairobi Work Programme** to focus on among which are: (a) Mountains and (c) Adaptation possibilities in high-latitude areas and the cryosphere. At its 57th session, the SBSTA adopted conclusions emphasized the need to address systematic observation gaps for mountain and polar regions and the cryosphere, among others, to improve understanding of climate change, climate-related risks and tipping points, and adaptation limits and to ensure enhanced delivery of climate services and early warning systems; and notes with concern the existing gaps in the global climate observing system.

Besides, addressing challenges in mountain regions is of utmost importance for accomplishing many targets of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

### Rationale

Mountains are home to more than a billion of people, they are rich ecosystems that provide essential goods and services and are places where local communities generate an interlinked relationship with natural environment. Mountains include all regions where glaciers, snow or permafrost are prominent features of the landscape, and that river basins with headwaters in the mountains supply freshwater to not only its local residents, but also for lowland citizens that benefit directly or indirectly from mountain ecosystem services, therefore having a crucial role on water security and the promotion of food security.

The **triennial Resolution on Sustainable Mountain Development** adopted on 14 December 2022 and co-sponsored by 110 governments during the 77<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly, invites member states to further enhance support to sustainable mountain development.

The declaration of the **International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development** in 2022 has proven that placing sustainability and resilience of mountain ecosystems and communities at the heart of national and international agenda is key and instrumental to initiate processes, policies and investments that build synergies and coherence with other internationally agreed development goals such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

One of the main outcomes of the Year was the proclamation of the “**Five Years of Action for the Development of the Mountain Regions 2023-2027**”. Its global framework aims to contribute to three interconnected long-term impacts:

1. Mountain ecosystems are conserved and restored for productive and sociocultural purposes, and biodiversity is sustainably protected and uses for the continued provisions of global ecosystem services.
2. Mountain peoples’ resilience to climate change and disasters is increased.
3. Quality of life in mountain areas is improved.

To scale-up nature-based solutions to reduce climate risks and to promote adaptation and mitigation is one of the pathways to contribute to the Five Years of Action. Nature-based solutions as defined in the UNEA (United Nations Environment Assembly) resolution 5/5 of 2 March 2022, are the “*actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems, which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human well-being, ecosystem services and resilience and biodiversity benefits.*”

The approach of nature-based solutions clearly links climate change and biodiversity preservation. In this sense, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in December 2022, established 23 action-oriented global targets for urgent action over the decade to 2030. Among these targets and keeping in mind the relation of climate change and biodiversity, 3 targets can be highlighted: target 3 (ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas are effectively conserved and managed), target 8 (minimize the impact of climate change on biodiversity and increase its resilience), target 11 (restore, maintain and enhance nature’s contributions to people, including ecosystem functions and services).

Mobilizing and coordinating within the United Nations and with other stakeholders towards supporting the implementation, follow-up and monitoring of the sustainable mountain development actions will maximize intergovernmental engagement and processes towards mountains resilience. Considering that in general, mountain territories cover the territory of multiple countries, **multilevel cooperation** (regional, national and international) is essential to effectively implement the 2030 Agenda. Cooperation between states and international organizations will be a key issue of this roadmap, since alliances is the only way to face the challenges arising from climate change, and more specifically those related to water and food security.

Mountains have slowly increased its relevance and presence in the UN agenda through the creation of diverse groups, outlining its key role on providing goods and services to the entire planet and supporting the livelihoods of a vast number of people.

For instance, the UN **Group of Friends of Mountainous Countries** or the **Mountain Partnership** (FAO’s multi-stakeholder platform for promoting sustainable mountain development) agreed during its Sixth Global Meeting

(2022) on increasing its commitment to mobilize countries with mountainous territories to jointly advocate for their interaction within all UN multilateral processes.

More recently, a negotiation group has been created on the framework of the UNFCCC, the **Group of Mountain Partnership** (formerly the Group of Mountainous Landlocked Countries).

Despite their global relevance, mountains still do not receive appropriate attention in United Nations processes. Mountains have been chronically underrepresented in the global observing system, hindering its valuable ecosystem services, which is why, mountain areas must be a priority in the frame of a global action.

### Possible outcomes of the debate

The ultimate objective is to define how to strengthen, coordinate and give full coherence to mountain-based actions in the context of climate change and bring mountain work programmes and mandates under the umbrella of the UNFCCC.

*Considering* that keeping 1.5°C within reach requires decisive action that would avoid irreversible adverse impacts and prevent adaptation limits reach.

*Considering* that temperature evolves faster in mountain regions, both in terms of impacts on the population living there, but also in the ecosystem services they provide.

*Considering* that, climatic variations have severe consequences on socioeconomic activities, especially those closely linked to biodiversity, landscape and nature, therefore, putting in an extremely vulnerable position.

*Considering* the abovementioned, an urgent and decisive action to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions is crucial.

As an outcome of the ministerial meeting on Actions to Mitigate Climate Change in Mountain Regions held during COP 27 and, inspired by the Ocean dialogue, we firmly believe that the UNFCCC is the natural space for Parties and stakeholders to improve understanding of the mountain-climate challenges and solutions, share knowledge and experience and identify how to strengthen synergies.

### Objectives:

**Give more visibility to mountain vulnerability to climate change, increase the importance of collaboration for stronger voice of mountainous countries and, over all, to give mountains the importance they deserve under the process.**

**Increase adaptation and resilience through nature-based solutions, joining forces with international partnerships to minimise loss and damage on mountain peoples and their livelihood.**

**By giving support to this proposal, Parties welcome the establishment of a Dialogue on Mountains and Climate Change and agree to request the UNFCCC Secretariat, through a plenary decision of COP 28, to hold the first edition in COP 29 (2024).**

The COP will then be invited to consider a summary report of the dialogue and to take the actions it deems appropriate.

May this proposal be adopted by the Parties and upon the Secretariat's convenience, according with the UNFCCC's established processes and methodology.

Andorra la Vella, 8 November 2023