

Recommendations of the African intergovernmental consultation on sustainable mountain development

African Inter-Governmental Consultation on Sustainable Mountain
Development, Addis Ababa

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Keywords: mountain resources, mountain development, sustainable mountain development, environmental issues, policies, Africa.

Preamble

From 37 June 1996, representatives from 13 African nations and more than 10 international organizations and NGOs, close to 70 delegates in all, met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for the first African Intergovernmental Consultation on Sustainable Mountain Development.

African mountains are an important source of water, energy and biological diversity. They are also a source of such key resources as minerals, forest products and agricultural products, and are important for tourism. Widespread poverty among mountain inhabitants in Africa, however, is causing rapid changes in mountain ecosystems, as resource poor farmers are forced to respond to economic and demographic pressures by overexploitation of natural resources. This often affects not only upland communities, but those living downstream as well. Hence the proper management of mountain resources and the socioeconomic development of mountain communities deserves immediate action.

This Consultation was organised to allow African nations to collectively address these concerns and propose appropriate action. It was organised and cohosted by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) of the Ethiopian Government and the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, under the auspices of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, the Task Manager of Chapter 13 of Agenda 21: "Managing Fragile Ecosystems: Sustainable Mountain Development". The financial support for the Consultation was provided by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the Italian Cooperation, FAO and UNESCO.

Based on the presentations and discussions held, the Consultation delegates made the following recommendations in four priority subject areas towards enhancing sustainable development and environmental conservation in mountain ecosystems.

Socioeconomic issues:

1. Strengthen community involvement at all levels and stages of decision making in development processes in mountain areas, and develop a sense of community ownership and management of mountain resources.
2. Improve education and awareness to promote conservation and sustainable development of mountain areas through strengthening of mass media, school curricula, training of mountain community leadership, and facilitating interaction and capacity building in mountain communities.
3. Alleviate poverty in mountain areas by promotion of alternative income generating activities, diversification and improvement of sustainable agricultural production, increased investment in and improved marketing of products and services from mountain areas.
4. Develop policy for the equitable distribution of benefits from mountain resources, and ensure that a percentage of revenue accruing from mountain areas be retained locally for sustainable mountain development and conservation.
5. Increase awareness of, and take appropriate action to address population pressure on mountain ecosystems.
6. Document and conserve cultural values which promote sustainable development in mountain areas and create awareness of cultural values which inhibit development.
7. Combat illiteracy in mountain regions by providing basic education for all mountain communities, including functional literacy for adults and complementary primary education for children who are unable to attend school.
8. Promote the empowerment of mountain communities for a greater role in decision-making in development processes and conservation efforts.
9. Formulate and implement national policies on women based on the Beijing Platform of Action, to, inter alia, promote the political, social and economic empowerment of women in mountain areas.
10. Remove social injustice and inequity by promoting positive interaction and cooperation among communities and by creating awareness for greater respect for the cultural values of mountain communities.
11. Put in place appropriate early warning systems and emergency measures in mountain areas prone to natural disasters.

Technical issues:

1. Build a research capacity which fully integrates biophysical and socio-economic development concerns and ensure that research findings are appropriately disseminated and applied.
2. Improve and promote the use of existing developed, as well as traditional/indigenous technologies by involving local communities and providing training in their application.
3. Improve education and awareness methods by providing training in communication and extension to all groups involved in mountain development, and develop mountain specific resource materials.
4. Reinforce technical skills through training, information exchange and curriculum development and guidelines for natural resources management.
5. Improve environmental impact screening and assessment capacity in mountain areas and apply to all mountain development, including biophysical and socioeconomic considerations using best available technologies.
6. Promote greater appreciation and application of appropriate traditional/indigenous knowledge and strategies in natural resource planning and management.
7. Promote landuse practices which are appropriate to the land capability and the needs of communities and discourage policies and processes that result in unsuitable use of natural resources in mountain areas.
8. Water and biodiversity conservation should be given priority in mountain development programmed.

Legislative issues:

1. Harmonize legislative policies specific to mountain environments.
2. Review, identify gaps and formulate new mountain specific legislation which provides for community participation in decision-making and sharing of benefits from services provided by mountain resources.
3. Develop regulations for environmental impact screening and assessment procedures for mountain landuse and integrated development which involve local communities in the management of public lands.
4. Review legislation and promote an appropriate land tenure system and system of property rights, which recognises the importance of and supports

community ownership and control of mountain resources, and gives special attention to women's property rights.

Institutional issues:

1. Establish or strengthen governmental and nongovernmental institutions at all levels to develop and promote understanding of mountain ecosystems and their sustainable management, with special attention to ensuring strong coordination among all stakeholders, and in particular research and development organizations.
2. Create awareness among policymakers regarding mountain development and conservation and include integrated sustainable mountain development as a priority in national development planning.
3. Clarify the mission, functions and powers of governmental organizations regarding mountain development and management, and promote regional cooperation concerning the management and sharing of mountain resources, e.g. water.
4. Strengthen local community based institutions to promote involvement and ownership of development programmes in mountain areas.
5. Ensure that the true value of resources emanating from mountain areas is recognised by government, and that adequate resources are allocated to mountain development.
6. Promote networking for the development and conservation of African mountains that builds on existing collaborative efforts, such as the African Mountains Association (including support for national chapters) and the African Highlands Initiative. Such networking should enhance information exchange and monitor progress towards sustainable mountain development among participating institutions

Resolution

The delegates to the African Intergovernmental Consultation on Sustainable Mountain Development urge governments, Intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to adopt the recommendations of this Consultation concerning the sustainable development of African mountain ecosystems in the context of Agenda 21, Chapter 13, "Managing Fragile Ecosystems: Sustainable Mountain Developments. The Consultation urges governments to consider these recommendations in all national development policies and programmes, and to collaborate at regional and international levels for sustainable mountain development.

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