

INAUGURATION  
Day One

---

# Inaugural Session

The inauguration of the Technical Committee on Conservation Exchange was held at the Indian Cultural Centre in New Delhi. A number of important exhibitions on the Indian Himalayas and the Trans-Himalayas were jointly presented by the French Council, Delhi, and ICIMOD.

The inauguration and the inaugural



1974

1974



## INAUGURATION

The inaugural session of the 'Regional Consultation on Conservation of the Kanchanjunga Mountain Ecosystem' was held at the Russian Cultural Centre in Kathmandu. Alongside, a photographic exhibition on the Indian Himalayas and the Trans-Himalayas was jointly presented by the British Council, Delhi, and ICIMOD.

The inauguration and the inaugural address were by the Hon. Dr. Prakash Chandra Lohani, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of His Majesty's Government of Nepal. In his address, Dr. Lohani touched upon the absence of mountain issues from global concerns in the past and the uniqueness of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas amongst mountain environments. He observed that ICIMOD was established at a time when the mountains were rarely heard of or thought of in global fora. Dr. Lohani remarked that there must be much wealth in the mountains that we had not heard about or seen. The Hon. Minister mentioned the value of ICIMOD workshops in bringing together participants from all over the region for sharing their knowledge and views and learning from each other. Dr. Lohani stated that he was happy

to know that the Kanchanjunga Ecosystem was now receiving the urgent attention it merited.

The inaugural address was followed by a welcome address by Mr. Egbert Pelinck, Director General of ICIMOD. Mr. Pelinck welcomed the participants on behalf of WWF-Nepal, the British Council, and ICIMOD. Mr. Pelinck, in his welcome address, spoke of the different types of expertise needed for ecosystem management. He stressed the importance of ensuring the wellbeing of the local people in these ecosystems. He also highlighted some of the challenges of transboundary ecosystem management. The challenges as outlined in this address are:

- a) what we know about the boundaries of the different sub-ecosystems and whether or not all countries used the same criteria;
- b) the legal status and land-use systems of the sub-ecosystems, the status of legal and illegal transboundary resource exploitation, human migration, and the affects of these on conservation; and
- c) ways to promote regional collaboration within an agreed framework

of the unique Kanchanjunga ecosystem.

Following the welcome address, Mr. Mingma Norbu Sherpa, Head, WWF Nepal Programme, introduced the workshop to the participants. Mr. Sherpa noted that the workshop presented a unique opportunity for joint collaboration in conservation. He described the unique environmental and cultural characteristics of the eastern Himalayan area; and this area was one of the ten global biological hotspot sites. The Kanchanjunga ecosystem was "home to endangered species of wildlife, an outstanding diversity in vegetation, and a fascinating assemblage of ethnic groups." Mr. Sherpa also went over the history of the dialogues and meetings that had taken place in order to arrive at a means of conserving the area. He stated that transboundary conservation was not new to Nepal and that appreciable efforts had been made by the governments of Nepal and China in this respect. In closing, Mr. Sherpa stated that the workshop had been convened to discuss a regional approach to conservation and development by bringing together professionals and policy-makers from China, India, and Nepal. The three-day deliberations were to cover topics of mutual interest such as safe-guarding biodiversity and improving the socioeconomic conditions of the local people.

Ms. Sarah Ewans, Director of the British Council, Kathmandu, introduced the exhibition. Ms. Ewans stated that the British Council was established to create an enduring understanding and appreciation of British thought, experience, and achievement through a broad spectrum of fields, viz., education, science and technology (including environment), and the arts. The British Council in India, which had put up the exhibition, had been established in 1948. Ms. Ewans described the work

of the British Council in training and exchanges of professionals, as well as sponsoring conferences and seminars. Ms. Ewans went on to introduce the exhibition 'Himalayan Vision' by Heather Angel. The exhibition addressed a broad range of issues confronting the Himalayas. Ms. Angel, a former President of the Royal Photographic Society and the author of many books on photographic techniques, was specifically commissioned by the British Council for this assignment. She has also led many photographic teams to different parts of the world. Ms. Angel has received an honorary doctorate in Science from the University of Bath for 'distinguished work in wildlife photography' and was a visiting professor in the Department of Life Sciences at Nottingham University. In conclusion, Ms. Ewans recounted the rich biodiversity of the Himalayas and noted that references to this could be found in scriptures such as the Vedas and Upanishads. Repeat photography was also a useful recording tool. Photographs taken a 100 years ago could be compared with more recent photographs of the same sites to illustrate the extent of change, if any. Ms. Ewans also acknowledged the work of other agencies and that of HMG-Nepal in conservation.

After concluding the inaugural session, participants were invited to view the exhibition, 'Himalayan Vision'. Heather Angel's exhibition was complemented by photographs by American photographer and rangeland specialist, Daniel J. Miller. Mr. Miller worked at ICIMOD and was also a well-known photographer of rangeland topics.

A break for refreshments was also taken, after which the participants were transported to the ICIMOD conference hall for the remainder of the first day's sessions.