

1.1 Introduction

The present chapter attempts to summarise and synthesise the issues, challenges, and opportunities in economic development and natural resource management in the mountain areas of South Asia, as presented in papers and discussions at the Conference. Starting with the background, objectives, and organisational structure of the Conference, the first section highlights the key issues raised and observations made in the opening session. Section 2 summarises the main issues and challenges in development as highlighted in papers presented at the Conference. Section III highlights the issues raised and options and recommendations made in the detailed thematic discussions on different sectors and aspects of development. The final section presents the main conclusions arrived at and recommendations made by the Conference.

Background and objectives of the conference

The mountains of South Asia are home to millions of rural poor, and their future livelihoods are being threatened by rapid degradation of natural resources, and this could also have serious implications in terms of downstream flooding and siltation. Many studies have suggested that, unless concerted action is taken immediately, poverty, hunger, and decline in resources will continue to aggravate these mountain areas. The important contributing factors are rapid population growth, insufficient

growth in per capita incomes from both agricultural and non-agricultural sources, and mismanagement of a fragile environment. Increasing numbers of poor people have little option but to expand the area under cultivation to marginal and forest lands. Indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources such as forests, not only by locals but also more often by outside interests, and many development activities have added to resource degradation, leading to problems such as soil erosion, loss in land productivity, and pollution of the environment.

Over the past few decades, mountain areas throughout the region have been subjected to rapid changes. Expansion in education and health services, development of roads and electricity, improvements in irrigation, new agricultural and related technologies, and penetration of commercial forces are drastically altering many mountain areas. Whereas previously little attention was given to resolving mountain development problems, today there is widespread awareness and commitment. Among the mountain people themselves, there is a rising tide of expectation after centuries of isolation. There is much enthusiasm and willingness to work for a better future.

There have been several initiatives in the recent past, by governments in the region and local communities, to improve livelihoods and conserve the environment in their mountain areas. The results have varied depending on the degree to which mountain 'specificities' have been incorporated and the appropriateness of institutional mechanisms used for their implementation. Yet the challenges of poverty alleviation and sustainability of livelihoods are becoming more serious, primarily due to the overall inaccessibility and fragility of resources and environment in these areas, but also on account of the socio-political and economic marginality of mountain people and the unsuitability of institutional and related arrangements often taken in development initiatives. Nonetheless, there are some success stories amidst a plethora of failed experiments; and it is necessary to look at both to chart out appropriate approaches and strategies for the future.

It is against this background that the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Kathmandu, and the German Foundation for International Development (DSE) jointly organised a five-day International Conference entitled, 'Growth, Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Resource Management in Mountain Areas of South Asia' from January 31-February 4, 2000, in Kathmandu. The broad goal of the Conference was to contribute towards formulation of development strategies to achieve a pace and pattern of economic growth that will lead to alleviation of poverty with sustainable use and management of natural resources in mountain areas. The specific objectives were as follow:

- to analyse the nature and severity of the current crisis in livelihood needs and environmental degradation and of the future outlook if the current trends continue;
- to review the experience with development strategies in mountain areas and the reasons for past successes and failures; and

- to identify appropriate strategies and an agenda for action in respect of economic development and sustainable use and management of natural resources in the fragile eco-systems of mountain areas.

Organisation

The Conference participants, about 70 in all, included senior government officials engaged in policy-making and implementation, academics, experts, and representatives of civil society from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Pakistan. Resource persons from Germany and China, representatives of international development organisations, bilateral donors, and experts from DSE and ICIMOD also participated in the Conference.

Presentation of papers, parallel working group discussions and presentations, plenary sessions, a field visit, and a closing session to highlight the principal conclusions and recommendations were the main components of the Conference. Altogether nineteen papers discussing the key problems and challenges facing sustainable natural resource management, poverty reduction, and development in the mountain areas of South Asia were presented in the plenary sessions. The first paper reviewed the status, trends, and policies related to development of mountain areas in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan (HKH) region. Another six papers presented in Plenary Session I dealt with the situation in each of the South Asian countries present at the Conference and in the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau Region of China. At Plenary Session II, on the second day of the Conference, five sectoral papers were presented on the broad theme, 'Options and Opportunities for Economic Diversification.' Diversification of agriculture, commercialisation of natural resources (non-timber forest products or NTFPs) for sustainable livelihoods, and development of tourism and micro-enterprises in mountain areas were the topics selected for presentation. Similarly, there were seven other sectoral papers in Plenary Session III; all seven papers were related to the theme, 'Access, Resources and Institutions'? These papers dealt with issues concerning the land system/tenure in Asia, Nepal, and North-East India, participatory resource management practices with a focus on forest resources, mountain women, improving accessibility, and highland-lowland linkages. Participants were also exposed to some real-life situations and experiences in tourism, a nursery for medical plants for farmers' benefits, dairy development, vegetable cropping, community forestry and watershed development, and participatory development planning during a day-long field trip.

On the basis of the five days' presentations and discussions in the plenary sessions and intensive discussions in eight Working Groups on the subjects of Diversified Agriculture, Enterprise Development, Forest Products, Tourism, Land Systems, Land Tenure, Natural Resource Management, and Impact of Globalisation, the Conference arrived at a number of conclusions and made detailed recommendations on various aspects of sustainable development in the mountain areas in South Asia.

Overview and expectations: the opening session

The Conference was formally opened with a welcome address by Mr Egbert Pelinck, Director General of ICIMOD. In his welcome speech, Mr Pelinck observed that ICIMOD has regularly undertaken numerous studies and organised meetings on sustainable mountain development since its establishment in 1983. Many subjects and problems had been covered. However, comprehensive stocktaking on a common and critical problem like poverty had been less frequent. He observed that the present Conference had been organised to revisit ICIMOD's original mission and assess where it stood at a time when processes of globalisation and liberalisation were also starting to affect the region.

The Conference, according to Mr. Pelinck, was significant for at least five reasons. First, physical access was improving and new exciting developments were taking place in the field of access to information. Second, technological options to incorporate the fragility of the youngest geological formation in the world were being adopted more and more, whether in farming systems or in road construction. Third, new institutional mechanisms for managing natural resources at community level had been developed. Fourth, globalisation and liberalisation had allowed mountain economies to bring mountain-specific products and services to international markets. Fifth, mountain issues had now entered the mainstream discussion on poverty and environment.

Mr. Pelinck urged the Conference participants to identify opportunities by which mountain areas could benefit from market-centred development and not lose out in the processes of commercialisation and globalisation of markets. He called for addressing not only economic but also the social impact of various interventions. He hoped that the outcome of the deliberations would include: (1) an agenda for knowledge generation and dissemination; (2) a set of suggestions for reorientation of policies towards mainstreaming mountains in a sustainable growth scenario; and, (3) suggested roles for different partners in development, viz., communities, government agencies, non-government and community-based organisations, international organisations, and donors and the private sector.

Dr. K. Barth, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Nepal, made it clear that Germany, one of the most important contributors to ICIMOD, did not see herself exclusively as a donor in relation to ICIMOD but also as a partner. He said that sustainable and integrated development, 'particularly in the agricultural field and under very special, and sometimes inclement, circumstances prevailing in mountainous regions', required exactly the kind of multi-pronged, interdisciplinary, and long-term approach that ICIMOD was pursuing. He called for regional cooperation among scientists and experts from all nations able to contribute relevant knowledge and experience, and in particular from the countries where the new insights gained and methods developed through such cooperation were to be employed.

In his inaugural address, Dr. Ram S. Mahat, Minister for Foreign Affairs of His Majesty's Government of Nepal, said that the question concerning how mountain

people and the environment would cope with and benefit from the results of globalisation processes without adversely affecting sustainability of their environment was one of the greatest challenges and needed to be pondered over and the challenge met for the good not only of mountain people but for the overall and sustained well-being of the world community at large. He added that the development challenges in the hills and mountains were enormous. He, however, noted that development efforts for improving the resource base, increasing the economic opportunities, and promoting the use of improved technologies had not been able to keep pace with population growth.

Dr. Mahat remarked that environmental problems were not new for mountain communities. However, he added that currently the pressures were much larger in scale and consequently traditional adaptation mechanisms had become inadequate. He said that the processes underlying widespread resource degradation could not be tackled effectively if we perceived them only as a physical chain of cause and effect in isolation from social, economic, and institutional frameworks.

According to Dr. Mahat, the most difficult development and environmental question before us today was how to bring about a change in the lives of already hard-pressed mountain people. He warned that the inability to identify workable solutions could easily affect much larger mountain communities. He observed that the poverty eradication efforts of the governments of the South Asian countries as well as those of non-governmental organisations and the international community and donors had mostly been characterised by limited and ad hoc initiatives. Recognising the contributions to poverty alleviation made by programmes such as Comilla, Grameen Bank, Anand, Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), Sukhomajari, Community Forestry, Small Farmers' Development Project (SFDP), Production Credit for Rural Women (PCRW), Participatory District Development Programme (PPDP), he, however, observed that once these programmes expanded, they became victims of all types of bureaucratic and political malpractices and, as a result, fell apart. Therefore, he called for tackling aspects of management, governance, transparency, accountability, and participation before experimenting with new programmes.

Outlining the objectives and structure of the Conference, Dr. Mohan Man Sainju, the Conference Chairperson, noted that mountain areas were becoming increasingly important from the point of view not only of millions of people living there but also of people living in the plains and beyond. He noted that the mountain areas were coming out of their traditional isolation because of modern technology, communications, education, and commerce. He pointed out that lack of mountain-focused development strategies had retarded the growth of mountain economies. He also raised a concern about unrestrained use of the environment which had accelerated the depletion of natural wealth and created new problems of pollution of air, water, and soil.

Striking a note of optimism, he added that, mountain areas were not only confronting challenges and problems; they were also offering new opportunities. The first of

these opportunities was presented by the breakdown of the isolation in which mountain areas had lived in the past. With their gradual interaction with the outside world, mountain areas were beginning to recognise their comparative advantages, including in the areas of cultural resources and environmental endowments. The challenge, however, was how to get the people who were struggling with subsistence farming to participate in sustainable growth.

Dr. Sainju cautioned that the task was not simple and that the 'business as usual' approach would not work as it did not address the challenges posed by the worsening poverty and unsustainable growth process. In this respect, he emphasised the importance of a path that recognised the intrinsic capacity of the people in mountain areas and pursued a path of development that would help improve the quality of life of the majority without compromising the basic interests of future generations.

Reminding the participants that the Conference aimed to contribute towards formulation of development strategies for achieving a pace and pattern of economic growth that would lead to alleviation of poverty with sustainable use and management of natural resources in mountain areas, Dr. Sainju asked them to focus on the current crisis in livelihood needs and environmental degradation and the experiences with past development strategies in mountain areas. On that basis, the Conference should identify appropriate strategies and an agenda for action in their presentations and discussions.

Mr. Jürgen Richter, the DSE representative, in proposing a vote of thanks to the guests and participants, said that the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development was firmly convinced that marginal lands in future would have to play an important role in any food security and poverty alleviation strategies and that, therefore, more resources would have to be allocated for agricultural research, extension, and infrastructure for use of such land resources in mountain areas. He hoped that the Conference would devote sufficient attention to this aspect. Describing the philosophy of DSE as "organising events in a participatory and interactive way in order to ensure that all available knowledge is tapped and everybody can contribute", he remarked that the continuous and mobile visualisation methodology that would be used at the Conference would help to intensify and focus discussion and to achieve concrete results. Mr. Richter assured the participants that the DSE had the 'firm intention' of following up on the advice and recommendations of the Conference.

1.2 Key Issues and Challenges Facing the Mountain Areas of South Asia

The first part of the Conference focused on an assessment of the overall dimensions of poverty in the region—looking at it regionally as well as nationally.

These issues and challenges in development of mountain areas are, in a way, as diverse as the areas themselves, transcending different physical and topographical characteristics, racial and ethnic as well as biological resource diversity, history and

culture, and administrative systems of different countries. Yet, a number of common issues, as presented below, can be identified as revealed in the different country overviews, sectoral papers, and discussions in plenary sessions of the Conference.

Policy context

- Consideration of the ‘mountain perspective’, as defined in terms of inaccessibility, fragility, marginality, diversity, and niche’, essential for formulating mountain-sensitive development strategies. This will help not only to ameliorate the impact of marginalisation of mountain communities but also to achieve social equity by building on the comparative advantages of mountain areas.
- The persistent human poverty in the HKH region should be addressed through a broad-based strategy that incorporates economic growth, ensures equity and the interests of future generations, and addresses environmental sustainability. It is important to recognise that development issues in the mountains, such as sustainable livelihoods, mountain agriculture, persistent poverty, governance of the commons, fragile environments, gender, and inaccessibility are intertwined and call for an integrated development approach.
- Synergy between national and local levels with hierarchies of interventions to achieve consistency in implementation of mountain development programmes needs to be created. This also implies that roles of different stakeholders should be recognised, particularly in addressing the issues of marginalisation and decentralisation through NGOs; for example, community-based savings and credit groups and forest user groups. Involvement of the private sector and civil society has in fact helped address many problems and constraints through innovative approaches. Finding common ground to match externally-supported projects with internally evolved programmes is an essential part of the process. Policies to facilitate cooperation in use of transboundary resources (e.g., pastures, forests, and water) are necessary. Ways to develop collaborative and conflict-resolving mechanisms need to be found for this purpose.
- An enabling policy environment is essential in order to recognise and strengthen potentials developed at the grass roots’ level and to encourage people-based initiatives in different areas. Policy support is also needed in order to promote research and development into niche-based products, market opportunities, harnessing indigenous knowledge system, and ensuring intellectual property rights for tribal and ethnic minorities. Recognising and supporting local strengths and diversities and bringing about people’s participation are important challenges for mountain development policies.
- Mountain communities are often faced with difficulties in securing tenancy rights over land and forests and gaining access to social services (e.g., credit, education, and health), partly because of the problems of the tough terrain and inaccessibility and partly due to their inadequate representation on policy-making bodies. Due attention should be paid to equity in the distribution of services, infrastructure, opportunities, and resources.

Mountain agriculture and diversification of livelihoods

- Mountain agriculture, especially food grain production, has not been able to meet the food requirements of mountain households. Many mountain farmers are reported to have lost interest in farming — the proportion of people engaged in agriculture has gone down significantly. Multiple livelihood strategies through diversification of household activities have been the main coping strategy to meet food and other requirements in the past. However, these options for maintaining livelihoods are becoming inferior in quality and also diminishing over time.
- It has been increasingly realised that marginal lands will have to play an important role in ensuring food security in the future in view of the limited alternatives for most mountain households. This will require decentralised and innovative approaches to diversifying crop production as conventional high-yielding practices have little potential.
- It is evident that subsistence agriculture is undergoing transformation in several areas in the HKH region. With improved accessibility (i.e., roads, market, and support services), more and more people are benefiting from crop diversification and cultivation of horticultural and other high-value crops. Significant changes are occurring in the quality of livestock. However, diversification is not feasible without addressing the issue of food security in terms of availability of food, purchasing power, and efficient distribution systems.
- The impact of economic reforms on subsistence agriculture should be carefully studied. Some key areas suggested for the assessment are access of marginalised farmers to agricultural inputs and extension support, market development, and gender and social equity.
- Tourism development is providing employment and livelihood options for many mountain communities. Different policy approaches are considered in the HKH region for tourism promotion, ranging from village tourism to organised tours to selected areas. Tourism, however, has its own environmental and social implications, arising from increased demands for fuelwood, lodge construction, generation of garbage, land-use changes, and social and cultural impacts.
- There is potential for development of skill-based enterprises. However, these need to have a mountain orientation with emphasis on value addition of niche-based products. These enterprises also need to respond to changes. Development of any kind of enterprise in mountain areas calls for careful consideration of factors such as access to markets and development of new products based on changing demands. Integrated policy and programme support is essential in this respect.
- Remittances play an important role in maintaining livelihoods during slack agricultural seasons. In view of the changing pattern of outmigration — from temporary to permanent and single to family migration — whether remittances will continue to flow in as in the past needs to be examined. Also, the issue of how far remittances help mountain households needs to be carefully studied.

Food deficit, natural hazards, adversities, risks and vulnerability

- Increasing population, persistent poverty, and declining resources are leading to ‘silent crises’—displacement of marginalised farmers and degradation of natural and land resources. There is increasing vulnerability of mountain farmers to forces such as natural disasters and hazards, food deficit and landlessness, diseases and pests, and epidemics. These problems are not new, but what is new is that more mountain households are becoming affected by these events than ever before.
- One of the significant trends witnessed by the HKH region in recent times is the change in demographic patterns (growing younger population) and increased male outmigration in search of cash income opportunities in the cities, both within the countries of the Region and beyond. This has led to a shortage of men in the labour force and increasing farming-related workloads for women. On the other hand, there are also some parts of the HKH region in which in-migration to mountain areas from the plains is taking place. The majority of mountain tribal communities resent this immigration and, in some areas, this has resulted in ethnic conflicts and civil unrest.
- While intensification of agriculture is continuing with expansion of cropped lands, marginalised farmers have limited access to agricultural technologies and inputs (e.g., fertiliser, seeds, and extension services), and this, in turn, is contributing to the decreasing productivity of marginal land.
- In spite of the strong resilience shown by some mountain communities, such as pastoralists, in maintaining their livelihoods so far, their resource base is eroding over time. With increasing exposure to ‘modernisation’, the aspirations of mountain communities are also increasing, but the means and resources at their disposal are decreasing.
- Some countries are providing heavy subsidies on energy use and physical and social infrastructure to the areas that have strategic importance. To what extent this can be sustained and how far these measures lead to sustainable development of mountain areas are questions that need to be examined.

Accessibility, highland-lowland linkages and impact of globalisation

- Breakdown of isolation and opening up of mountain areas to the wider market economy have both positive and negative impacts on the livelihoods and culture of mountain communities. However, because of the strong highland-lowland linkages, mountain areas cannot be looked at in isolation. The important challenge is to identify the different linkages and develop the competitive advantages that the mountain areas offer.
- Apart from uncompensated over extraction of mountain resources by people from the lowlands, the mountain areas may also face exclusion through trade and changes in property rights in the changing context of globalisation. There is no easy way to check these processes, and a suitable strategy for mountain areas is to identify

niche-based products and opportunities for value addition and to develop their comparative advantages.

- There are changes taking place in the access of mountain communities to traditional as well as modern market channels. The implications of these changes for the growth of mountain areas, for sustainable livelihoods of mountain people, and for socioeconomic equity need to be examined and appropriate policy measures taken to check any exploitative activities and inequitable effects, particularly in the context of wider commercialisation and globalisation.

Governance and management of natural resources

- In the absence of appropriate resource management strategies on the part of government, conflicts of interest regarding use of natural resources are growing between the state and ethnic minorities and tribal communities who are largely dependent on these resources for their survival.
- Commercialisation of forest products can help mountain communities achieve sustainable living standards; however, the state has to mediate to keep the balance between the sustainable livelihoods of mountain communities and commercialisation of resources.
- Participation of local mountain communities, who have a large stake in conserving natural resources for their survival, is crucial in their management. Recognition of the needs and concerns of local communities by the state is of utmost importance in any activity regarding regulation, regeneration, and sustainable use.
- The problem is not only of the degradation of natural resource endowment but also of the continuation of improper management. Equally important are transparent and well-articulated policy frameworks for use of natural resources in the mountain areas and for ensuring increased investments with proven strategy(ies) for regeneration of resources.

Land use and tenurial issues

- Long political turmoil has often led to undesirable land-use changes and natural resource depletion in a number of mountain areas. Peace and political stability are preconditions for rational and equitable land use.
- In many areas, landholding distribution is skewed and implementation of land reform has been ineffective, leading to inefficient and inequitable land use.
- Unclear land rights and inappropriate land-use policies have often led to land-use patterns that have endangered biodiversity and damaged mountain environments.
- Market-led reform of land markets, including introduction of economic and environmental cost-based price tags on different pieces of land, may help facilitate appropriate land use to some extent. Notwithstanding, policy reforms are necessary for greater transparency and land tenure rights to encourage economic and environmentally friendly land-use changes.

Gender and social equity

- Mountain women across the HKH region share some common challenges: lack of access to productive resources (land), formal credit, and social services. They also have heavy workloads, lack control over production systems and benefits, and suffer from poor health conditions. Policies should recognise intra-household poverty to be a main constraint on poverty alleviation and should target programmes to deal effectively with these problems.
- There is a growing recognition that development efforts should ensure gender equity through mainstreaming gender needs and concerns. Quite often in the past gender issues have been tackled not through their incorporation in the broader development strategies and programmes but by creating a separate compartment or programmes to deal with women's disadvantaged position in society. This approach has mostly failed and changes are being introduced.
- Diversification of economic activities and introduction of new technologies have led to improved socioeconomic conditions and reduction in the workloads and drudgery of women in some cases, but very often these have also by-passed and further marginalised women and, in some instances, even resulted in increased workloads. For example, the shift from food crop cultivation to vegetable growing and livestock raising has benefited women economically but increased their work burden. Similarly electricity and improved cooking devices have reduced their workload in some areas but an increase in stall-feeding of livestock has led to an increase in their workloads.

Addressing the knowledge gap

- Data gaps, variations in data sources, issues of spatially disaggregated data (plains and mountains within the same administrative unit), and lack of data about gender and the poor have handicapped research and, consequently, hampered formulation of appropriate policies. There are also no cadastral surveys of communal land systems in many areas, and this constrains formulation of suitable land-use and land-tenure policies.
- Similarly, there is little effort in research and development to support and strengthen the indigenous knowledge base and practices.

1.3 Sectoral Strategies and Policies for Growth and Poverty Alleviation

This section discusses the opportunities and options for sustainable growth of mountain areas and factors facilitating their realisation and equitable sharing of the benefits of their outcomes. It is based on the detailed discussions in the eight separate working groups in the Conference and is organised into three broad headings: economic opportunities and options, land systems and natural resource management, and accessibility, equity, and linkages.

Economic opportunities and options

Diversified agriculture in mountain areas

It is being increasingly realised that diversification in agriculture can provide more choices and quality options for sustaining the livelihoods of mountain farmers. What is necessary in this process is to develop a clear understanding of the agricultural practices in specific mountain areas using a mountain perspective framework.

Diversification of agriculture implies changes in farming practice with introduction of high-value activities in agriculture, horticulture¹, and livestock practices. It is a departure from subsistence farming practice to a market and demand-based agricultural-livestock production system. The main purpose is to reduce the poverty in mountain areas by expansion of income earning options through off-farm employment and sustainable and efficient use of natural resources. Some key preconditions for diversification of agriculture are as follow:

- availability of infrastructure, both physical and institutional, at the local level;
- access to support services (e.g., credit, agricultural inputs, training and information);
- improved access, particularly of marginalised farmers, to markets and knowledge about comparatively profitable products and functioning of product markets;
- availability of food at affordable prices; and
- safeguards against ecological problems (e.g., land degradation, pests/diseases, overexploitation of natural resources, and endangered biodiversity).

While emphasising adoption of new technologies, it should be realised that it is difficult for mountain communities to have fair access to such technologies. Furthermore, at times, these may result in changes in gender relations, exacerbating persisting inequities. However, an enabling policy environment sensitive to mountain specificities—backed by appropriate institutions—can bring about benefits to mountain communities by helping them access appropriate technologies and promote their comparative advantages.

Mountain enterprise development

An enterprise may be defined as any activity aiming at earning cash income through sale of its product in the market. There is already a wide variety of traditional enterprises, entrepreneurs, and market links. One big challenge facing the small mountain entrepreneurs is the relatively small scale of activity. Processing and value-addition normally require pooling together resources from numerous producers. This is one of the reasons why categorisation of enterprises according to their scale, quality

¹ horticulture as used throughout this text refers to the cultivation of fruit and vegetables, usually on a commercial basis, and not to gardening.

of products, and capacity is very important. Another emerging trend is related to the greater vertical integration from pre-production to post-marketing which has become possible because of technological interventions.

To increase financial and economic viability of any enterprise through changing and upgrading the scale of its operations, there is a wide array of options and challenges. These include identification and analysis of comparative advantages for (new) enterprises in mountain areas, access to effective and affordable sources of energy, assessment of options for appropriate technologies, and a move towards demand-led diversification in products and production systems. Nonetheless, food security or availability of cereals is the most important pre-condition for enterprise development in mountain areas that are still dependent on subsistence farming. It is also necessary to pay attention to exogenous factors, such as peace, stability, and harmony, and effectiveness of support services.

The market alone cannot ensure enterprise development in mountain areas. Continuous support from the state remains essential. Most important, there is a need for clearly defined policies as well as changes in the legal framework (e.g., land rights) to promote enterprises based on comparative advantages of mountain areas. Rather than general concessions, selective support is required, especially to promote special products of mountain areas. The role of the state is to improve accessibility, support specialised entrepreneurial ventures suitable to local conditions, and provide continuing support in the form of safeguarding against crises, extending credit and training, helping market promotion, and ensuring quality. A potential role for the private sector is in linking small producers to wider market opportunities and dissemination of innovative techniques through establishment of processing and marketing enterprises linked to small producers in specialised product lines. Community mobilisation and participation, especially among entrepreneurs themselves, are extremely important, especially for articulation of and lobbying for their interests, dissemination of knowledge, marketing, and sharing benefits.

Commercialisation of forest products for sustainable livelihoods

Commercialisation of forest products, especially NTFPs, has a great potential for ensuring sustainable livelihoods among mountain communities. The overarching issue in the commercialisation process, however, is related to enabling policies that should focus on assessing the basic needs for forest products, providing incentives for sustainable use of forest products, and ensuring guaranteed benefits to the producers. What is important here is to complement commercialisation by improving the access of mountain communities to support services such as credit, appropriate technology, and processing/value-addition facilities. Emphasis, at the same time, should be placed on regeneration of resources and protecting endangered species.

Given the unequal highland-lowland economic links and intensive use or over exploitation of forest resources in mountain areas, retention of benefits for mountain communities through regulatory and compensation mechanisms assumes special

significance. It is possible to acquire such benefits for mountain communities by having a provision for compensation by outside users—contributions from people profiting from forest products—and subsidies for affordable alternative energy options. Similarly, the mountain people need to build community-based institutions to act as a social force to build trust among themselves and also to reduce the numbers of financial intermediaries and middlemen. It is necessary to strengthen capacities within communities in order for them to expand their socioeconomic roles in the community.

There are some social and institutional issues involved in the commercialisation process that need attention: gender equity in access to and control over the benefits, social responsibility among the users, and sensitivity to cultural and religious rights over forest products.

To maximise the benefits of commercialisation to marginalised communities, different government agencies acting to promote the process should develop a shared understanding and strategies so that the communities are not discouraged by the process. As and wherever possible, traditional institutions that have proven track records in preserving forests should be strengthened, as they can be very effective in conflict mediation and resolution. Efforts to retain the benefits and exploration of new possibilities and options should include supporting various research activities for updating indigenous resource pools and genetic quality and documentation of the indigenous knowledge of women. Investments in research activities also help the state to document and register indigenous knowledge and genetic pools and to ensure intellectual property rights for the communities.

Mountain tourism

Mountain tourism can flourish in various forms: eco-tourism, pilgrimage, wilderness and sanctuaries, protected areas, and cultural tourism. In the case of the HKH region, apart from the aforementioned, tourism is also linked to adventure (e.g., trekking and expeditions). Nature conservation and preservation of mountain culture and cultural diversity are important aspects of any form of sustainable tourism in the mountains.

The effects of tourism on different spheres of the mountain community and mountain environment are varied. The contribution of tourism to local economies is still relatively low, although it is considered to be one of the main contributors to national economies. Both forward and backward linkages from tourism are weak. Mountain tourism also lacks a clear marketing strategy. Local communities have no other option but to rely on weak infrastructures and institutions. Organising and monitoring tourism in such cases can be difficult. Mountain tourism is often sensitive to exogenous factors such as security and natural calamities. Another important aspect of tourism is to have a cadre of trained people at the local level who are knowledgeable about the local mountain environment and can provide quality services to visitors while promoting the local, cultural identity and who can assist in preserving the environment.

Land systems and natural resource management

Land systems and land tenure

The nature of private and communal tenurial rights plays an important role in determining the security of land tenure and also influences poverty alleviation, economic growth, gender equity, and sustainable resource management. Ensuring the rights of mountain communities to access to common properties (e.g., pasture, shrubs, and forests) has a deep-rooted impact on their livelihoods. The case is more so for marginalised farmers whose very survival is dependent on their legitimate access to such resources. However, in a changing context, mountain communities are also faced with issues related to private tenure.

It was realised that improvement in tenurial rights calls for consistency in the functioning of land administration, particularly in updating land records and rapid resolution of land disputes. In addition, the state should have an enabling policy to ensure tenurial rights for socially excluded groups, especially women. Effective implementation of land reform, particularly in securing tenurial rights, can have a far-reaching impact on poverty alleviation, sustainable resource management, and equity. However, there is scepticism regarding the commitment of the state to enforcing new land reforms that focus on improving conditions related to tenurial rights, land ceilings, land consolidation, and abolition of absentee landlordism.

It is worthwhile to mention here that most mountain areas have had customary laws governing land tenure until recently. With erosion of the 'traditional' customary system of natural resource management, many mountain communities are encountering problems in securing their livelihoods because new legislation and introduction of private property rights have restricted their access to the natural resources important for their survival. Not only have the options for earning a living decreased for marginalised farmers, but the creation of skewed land distribution has also contributed to increasing degradation of natural resources.

Given the capacity of community-based organisations to support livelihoods and contain resource decline in mountain areas, enabling legislations are needed to support their roles in managing collective land use. This approach could ensure greater equity, security of tenure, and protection from outside control over land resources. Pre-conditions for collective land use are codification of customary law, extension of usufruct rights (i.e., legal recognition and access to services like credit), provision of incentive and control systems, and appropriate arrangements for equitable benefit sharing. It should be noted that the collective land-use system does not automatically augment positive changes. Some of the above conditions have been noted. The system, in fact, could result in adverse impacts such as low productivity, over-exploitation of resources, appropriation by the powerful rural elite, and no incentive/motivation for investment if rewards are not in line with the efforts made by different households.

It appears that, in the HKH region, both the individual and collective systems are going to prevail simultaneously for a long time to come. Nonetheless, proper regulative

mechanisms, such as clear incentive and control systems, are required to prevent misuse and misappropriation of natural resources. The state should enforce land tenure legislation so that powerful groups and individuals are prevented from misusing land and other natural resources. Codification of the rights of all stakeholders and primary users is essential to ensure usufruct rights. Implementation of collective land use can thrive only in the presence of strong local institutions and a decentralised governance system.

Forest management

In managing forests, a significant trend over the past decade has been an increasing acceptance of community participation as the preferred mode of management rather than exclusive management by the state. Various forms, such as Joint Forest Management, Community Forestry Management, Social Forestry, and management by Forest User Groups, have evolved in different countries in the HKH region. It has also been demonstrated in a number of cases that management by communities has resulted in checking denudation of forests and in an increase in forest cover. The system is still evolving and, in the process, new problems about sharing benefits and power are also emerging. In some cases, the official forest managers are still rather diffident about sharing power with the people.

The advantages of participatory forest management are seen in improvements in the bio-physical environment, meeting community needs better, effective resource generation, and community development and poverty alleviation. Realisation of these advantages is, however, contingent upon a number of factors such as clearly defined and stable policy support translated into appropriate rules and their timely implementation, recognition of people's capabilities, effective participation of stakeholders and involvement of communities, appropriate institutional arrangements both in government and in communities, human resource development in both technical and social aspects, and a continuous process of learning and communication. These conditions are often not obtained in all situations. As a result, there is also a danger of participatory management falling into disrepute. It is, therefore, necessary that an appropriate environment is provided simultaneously with the introduction of participatory forest management.

Accessibility, equity and linkages

Accessibility

Remoteness, with tough terrain and consequent limited accessibility, is one of the common characteristics of mountain areas, and it acts as a severe constraint on development. Increasing accessibility in mountain areas means expanding road construction, linkages to markets, and social service outlets (e.g., schools, health posts, and other service delivery centres). Accessibility is more than just developing physical infrastructure. Breaking the isolation of any 'closed society' by exposure to wider market linkages and social and economic exchanges is an essential ingredient.

Improvement of accessibility in mountain areas that have been isolated for centuries can lead to both positive and negative impacts. It is necessary to define the need for accessibility clearly. It has been recognised that increasing accessibility facilitates activities that result in better incomes. Improved access has made it easier to develop high-value cash crops, agricultural specialisation, tourism, and other mountain enterprises. Furthermore, when physical accessibility is complemented by improved access to other inputs and (e.g., micro-credit, training for skills and entrepreneurship development, improved technologies, and energy), it can also result in faster economic growth and help introduce programmes to maintain equity and improve the overall quality of life.

The high cost of construction and maintenance of transport and communication infrastructure is one of the main constraints in increasing accessibility in mountain areas. There is always the question of the cost involved in terms of the return on investments. Moreover, the fragility of mountain areas makes construction of infrastructure prone to ecological hazards, which can at times have disastrous effects. The technical capacity to cope with such challenges also needs to be developed. Increase in accessibility may also lead to an increased drain on mountain resources with little benefit to local mountain people and a damaged mountain environment. Exposure of mountain communities to the wider market economy has also resulted in a loss of traditional cultural values, and, over time, this could result in changes in customary rules of resource allocation and lead to increasing rural-urban migration.

Any strategy for increasing accessibility in mountain areas should be able to identify potential stakeholders and define their roles clearly, taking into account those likely to benefit the most from the increased accessibility, as well as those likely to lose in the process. Such strategies should also facilitate marketing and value-addition for local niche-based products. It is also necessary to strengthen the technical capacities of stakeholders so that they can also benefit from increased accessibility. It is important, in this connection, to learn from success stories from similar areas. Many mountain areas of the HKH region, for instance, have had positive impacts from environmentally friendly 'green roads' which provide seasonal links to the main highways. Such road construction does not use heavy equipment and environmental impacts are controlled. They are labour-intensive, low-cost technologies in construction and maintenance, providing a great deal of seasonal employment to the poor. Another potential is the use of ropeways for transferring goods and commodities from and to remote areas. Ropeways are environmentally friendly and could be cost effective also. Some communities are also emphasising trekking paths rather than roads because of the role of village tourism.

Decentralisation of management and maintenance of infrastructure can prove very effective in sustaining accessibility in mountain areas. The Food for Work Programme implemented to construct roads, for instance, could be better integrated with local institutions. Social services and support systems should also be integrated with activities and options created by improved accessibility. Some other aspects that

need serious consideration are the preservation of mountain culture, development of village tourism, promoting resource regeneration and renewal to reduce the social and environmental costs of improved accessibility, and developing a system for regular road maintenance.

Gender and social equity

There is a growing recognition that many of the current development policies discriminate against women and reinforce gender inequalities. Persistence of such inequalities is directly related to women's disadvantaged position in access to and control over resources and the decision-making process, including some prescribed roles and responsibilities.

In order to ensure that development strategies and interventions do not reinforce existing gender inequalities and inequities, 'gender auditing', i.e., assessment of any policy or programme in terms of its sensitivity to addressing gender equity issues, for all development interventions is necessary. It should focus not only on women, but also aim to improve the conditions and positions of both men and women on the basis of equal participation and sharing of benefits. Such strategies for gender equity, however, will have to be region-specific due to the variety of socioeconomic contexts. In all cases, however, consideration of equity is essential, given the skewed distribution of resources and services between sexes. A major instrument to bring about gender equity is the provision of special programmes of education and health services for women.

As networks of organisations of women can play an important role in strengthening the process of women's empowerment, facilitating group formation and community mobilisation should be an essential component of any development programme. Any effort to mainstream gender issues and concerns should also include reorientation and change in the existing legal framework (e.g., inheritance of land titles). Economic independence is a major contributing factor in achieving gender equity. Improvement in social equity requires increased access to resources, opportunities, and services for deprived communities.

While there is no denying that women's empowerment is the paramount concern for achieving gender and social equity, the best and proven strategy to do so is to promote gender sensitisation among all parties concerned. Gender sensitisation should be designed in such a way that it becomes relevant to the particular area and context. In certain societies it is possible to promote gender equity by addressing the perceptions of men. It is also necessary that a gender sensitisation strategy include human resource development as an important element.

Highland-lowland linkages and globalisation

The impact of expanding globalisation is experienced virtually everywhere in the world and mountain areas are no exception. Isolated for centuries with limited economic linkages with the outside world, mountain areas are now linked to the

more transformed plains in terms of socioeconomic transactions, political influence, and, most importantly, resource flows. Trade in natural resource flows, exchange of human resources, and transfer of technologies and information are some of the important forms of linkage at present.

One of the principal concerns expressed in the discourse on highland-lowland linkages so far was that mountain communities were in a disadvantaged position because of the 'unequal economic exchange' with the plains. It is a fact that mountain areas are often politically marginalised, as their situation and concerns are inadequately reflected in national policies. There is a continuous outflow of resources from the mountain areas with little value added. The mountain communities, in effect, are not able to benefit from wider market opportunities.

The mountain economies will have to face the process of globalisation. It is, therefore, necessary for mountain communities to prepare themselves as well as possible so that they can also benefit from it. There will be increased trade between mountain areas and the plains, necessitating increasing specialisation of production in mountain areas in order to gain from trade. There will be increasing chances to strengthen the complementarity of mountain areas with the plains. There may also be other opportunities to use the comparative advantages of mountain areas for various tradable products.

It is very likely that the mountain areas will be able to attract increased investment from 'outside' the mountains. There might also be an increase in private investments in infrastructural development and regeneration of resources and more intensive use of natural resources. This could have an adverse impact on mountain communities, insofar as the regular framework and accountable mechanisms continue to be weak in terms of administering use rights and benefit sharing. There are other likely challenges as well such as marginalisation of women (e.g., as a consequence of displacement of traditional handicrafts) and resource competition between mountain areas.

Organisations dealing with the issues of globalisation, especially the World Trade Organisation (WTO), have included natural resource management in their priority agenda, but there is no specific place for mountain areas and products at present. With countries trying to diversify and take advantage of their resource potentials, the political importance of mountain areas may increase in days to come. However it is also important for mountain communities to continuously identify 'changing economic opportunities/niches' to prepare themselves to adjust to the rapid expansion of the wider market economy in line with their comparative advantages. At the same time, it is important to evolve appropriate regulating mechanisms and institutions for guiding investments, avoiding negative external effects, and compensating for displacement and resource degradation.

Intervention mechanisms should emphasise greater value addition to products from mountain areas. For this purpose, regular efforts to prepare an inventory of potential

tradable products are necessary, as are investments in research and development to identify and develop new productive opportunities. In addition, effective supportive structures and institutions (e.g., availability of credit for small producers) are needed to strengthen production and marketing of niche-based products of mountain areas. The mountain communities will also need to foster cooperation among themselves, creating horizontal synergy. Mountain communities will need assistance in development of human resources and entrepreneurial skills that eventually can harness indigenous skills/knowledge for profitable use.

1.4 Main Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentations and discussions in the plenaries and detailed work in the working groups, the Conference arrived at the following conclusions and recommendations during its concluding session.

The context

- The Conference noted that mountain areas, including those in South Asia, have emerged as a significant item on the agenda of discussion at national and international levels, particularly after the 1992 United Nations Rio Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and adoption of Agenda 21, Chapter 13 which deals with Fragile Mountain Ecosystems. Concern and awareness about environmental conservation have increased over the past decade.
- Problems and concerns of mountain people have, however, remained, by and large, neglected mostly because of their political marginality and inadequate appreciation of the specificities of their situation. Development and conservation efforts have mostly taken place in isolation from each other.
- As a result, neither of the two goals — poverty alleviation or environmental conservation — has been achieved; poverty has persisted and environmental degradation has continued unabated. Both these phenomena have been accentuated by increasing population pressure. Food security for mountain people is under severe threat. Extension of cultivation on to marginal lands and fragile slopes has led to degradation of resources and the overall environment.
- On the other hand, improvement in access is leading to rising aspirations. The crisis that has been ‘silent’ so far is rapidly becoming more visible and noisier both in the sociopolitical economy and natural environment, leading to ‘violent’ action in several areas.

Some hopeful signs

- At the same time, the Conference recognised that there have been instances of successful fusion of environmental and development goals; and an increasing reflection of the mountain specificities and concerns of mountain people in national-level policies.

- Some mountain areas have undergone economic transformation based on their comparative advantages, at the same time ensuring conservation and regeneration of natural resources, with strong national and local policy support. Mountain tourism and profitable use, with regeneration, of bio-resources have, for example, been suitably used in some cases for income generation and augmentation of resources.
- Accessibility has improved as a result of expansion of transport and communication networks, even though, in many cases, this has arisen as the result of the security concerns of nation states.
- There has also been greater recognition of mountain people as custodians, users, and preservers of resources, and there have been several successful experiments in devolution of power and effective use of participatory approaches for conservation and poverty alleviation.
- There has been increasing recognition of the value of mountain resources for global genetic diversity, and this has led to programmes combining conservation and people's well-being in some cases.
- There is now increased recognition of the importance of indigenous knowledge and practices in the areas of both conservation and sustainable use of local resources by mountain communities.

Concerns and constraints

The Conference expressed concern over the widespread evidence of threats to the livelihoods of mountain people and to the mountain environment as well as lack of adequate recognition of and appropriate policies and interventions for dealing with these threats.

- It was observed that mountain production systems are becoming increasingly unsustainable both economically and ecologically. Yet, national policy-makers have not been sufficiently sensitive to the specific mountain conditions and constraints faced by mountain people in coming out of the 'poverty trap'.
- There has been a general lack of recognition of the niche that mountains offer in certain productive activities that can increase incomes without any serious damage to the environment. As a result, there has been a lack of appropriate policies to promote their sustainable and profitable development and use.
- There has often been indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources with very little economic advantage for local communities, for the poor in particular. On the other hand, local communities have been denied access to resources for their basic livelihoods in the name of environmental concerns without offering them alternative opportunities.
- Traditional local institutions of governance, management, and benefit sharing, which have successfully functioned for sustaining livelihoods and the environment in the past, have often been disregarded and replaced by 'modern' institutions that are more inequitable and patronage oriented.

- There has not been enough recognition of the plight and potential of women and, consequently, they have been further marginalised in the already marginalised mountain economies, communities, and households. Disregard of the indigenous knowledge and practices of mountain people, particularly women, has resulted in further erosion in the livelihood bases and disuse of potentials, particularly in the case of women.
- The fact that mountain people are subject to ‘unequal exchange’ and unfavourable ‘terms of trade’, because of market imperfections and market failures and because of their disadvantageous location in the flow of commodities and natural and human resources between the highlands and lowlands is hardly recognised. As a result, any suggestions about compensatory mechanisms are treated with indifference.
- Programmes are mostly formulated and implemented in a fragmented manner and are partial in character. They may succeed in the plains because of the easier access to infrastructure, inputs, and services, but they generally fail in mountain areas.
- Development of infrastructure is often undertaken by considerations other than the development and welfare of the mountain people and is of the type and form that bring little benefit to isolated communities.
- There are apprehensions that globalisation and further penetration of markets may result in increased resource drains and other adverse impacts on the livelihoods and environment of mountain areas; but there is a general lack of preparedness and policies to enable mountain people to prevent further erosion of their livelihood base and environment and to equip them to benefit from the opportunities globalisation might offer in the areas of comparative advantage.

Recommendations

The Conference made the following recommendations.

- National and sub-national governments should evolve specific strategies, policies, and programmes to foster faster growth by facilitating diversification of mountain economies from subsistence food crop-centred production patterns to production for the market based on comparative advantages.
- Food security should be ensured through improvements in infrastructure, public distribution systems, and/or a fair trade regime to facilitate such diversification.
- Increased investments are needed in infrastructure—both physical and social—to improve the accessibility of mountain communities in a manner compatible with the fragile environment of the mountains (e.g., off-road transportation and use of information technology to improve access to knowledge about markets).
- Appropriate revenue-sharing/compensatory mechanisms should be developed for mountain areas to benefit mountain people where mountain resources are used in a manner that mostly benefits the lowland areas and people.

- Changes need to be made in the legal framework where it denies/restricts access to and use of local resources that are basic to the livelihoods of mountain people, particularly mountain women.
- The gender dimension needs to be incorporated into strategies and programmes for development in such a manner that not only ensures women's participation but, given their proven potential in mountain areas, also provides scope for them to act as change agents and fully share in the benefits and empower themselves in economic, social, and political spheres.
- All policies and programmes need to be integrated instead of being women exclusive; although this may, no doubt, be required to supplement the general programmes in some sectors/areas.
- Mechanisms should be developed to facilitate effective decentralisation of power and promotion of the use of participatory and collective approaches to resource management and social and economic development.
- The existing and potential niche of mountain areas should be identified through focused efforts in documentation and classification of mountain resources.
- Transfer of knowledge, technologies, and successful institutional mechanisms/practices should be promoted across the mountain areas in different countries and locations in the region.
- Concerted research and development (R&D) efforts are urgently required to develop products and technologies in which mountains have unique or comparative advantages.
- There should be an appropriate combination of use and regeneration of natural resources rather than imposing a ban or giving free licence to the use of mountain natural resources.
- High priority should be given to efforts to develop human resources appropriate to use of the opportunities offered by improvement in access and greater penetration of markets in mountain areas in the process of globalisation.

Roles of different actors

The Conference emphasised the following.

- Governments will have to continuously play a pro-active, regulatory, and promotional role in mountain areas even in this age of, and probably because of, the ideology of the supremacy of market forces; and not only in development of infrastructure but also in:
 - putting appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks in place,
 - generating and disseminating knowledge and R&D,
 - rescuing local institutions and enterprises in times of crisis, and
 - enabling local institutions to function effectively,

- Non-government organisations (NGOs) and international non-government organisations (INGOs) have a significant role to play as catalytic, facilitating, and supportive organisations; and they as well as government agencies should emphasise local capacity building by providing support for development of community-based organisations, especially producers' own organisations, to access markets, inputs, and technology.
- Research and training institutions working in or for the development of mountain areas should reorient and strengthen their training and research programmes to more specifically relate their outputs to the needs, problems, and opportunities in mountain areas.
- Multilateral and bilateral organisations should reorient their efforts, resources, and investments towards filling the gaps in basic requirements of development and environment in mountain areas, including building infrastructure and environmental conservation, as investments needed in such areas could very well be beyond the capacity of mountain areas, mountain states, and mountain countries.

Concluding observations and follow-up

These conclusions and recommendations were adopted after some discussion. With regard to the follow-up action, several suggestions were offered, particularly by the representatives of ICIMOD, DSE, and the Chairperson of the Conference. The Director General, ICIMOD, Mr. E. Pelinck, noted that the country overview and sectoral papers had helped identify key environmental and livelihood issues and challenges and set the agenda for informed analyses and interactive discussions not only in the parallel working groups and plenary sessions in the Conference, but also for further exercises in various academic and policy-making for different countries. He hoped that participants would take a lead in their respective countries and organisations to carry out exercises that would contribute to:

- enabling policy formulation and legislation for informed mountain development strategies;
- strengthening institutional mechanisms and support structures;
- introducing programmes for the sustainable livelihood of mountain people which are targeted to promote diversification of livelihoods and economic opportunities; and
- encouraging consistent efforts towards gathering knowledge and addressing the knowledge gap.

He mentioned that ICIMOD was privileged to accumulate the knowledge generated from the Conference which would be helpful in developing the future strategies and programmes of the Centre. For this purpose, he hoped that the fruitful partnership with and support from DSE would continue in future.

Appreciating the contributions made by the Chairperson of the Conference, policy experts, paper contributors, the participants, and ICIMOD, especially the Conference Coordinator and the facilitators who had made the organisation of the Conference a success, Mr. Richter, the Representative of DSE, observed that the Conference had justified and strengthened the commitment of DSE in putting mountain areas on its priority agenda.

In his closing remarks, Dr Sainju, the Chairperson of the Conference, suggested that different institutions working in the HKH region, including the governments, should develop a shared vision and strategies for mountain development as it is only through collective efforts that issues related to mountain development can be addressed. He emphasised the use of the available information and knowledge effectively for mountain development. Given the growing recognition and mainstreaming of mountain-related issues on the sustainable development agenda, synthesis of research results dealing with mountain development was essential. ICIMOD had been contributing significantly in this respect and other institutions should also become partners in this endeavour.

Dr. Sainju urged all the participants and institutions concerned to advocate for a concrete action programme for mountain development with political leaders. It was recognised that there was an enormous need for continuous research on the mountains and on widespread poverty; and especially was there a need for disaggregated data. Emphasising the role of the people in mountain development, he suggested that social mobilisation and empowerment should be essential ingredients in the development strategy for mountain areas.

In concluding, it was decided to remit the recommendations of the Conference for consideration and use in policy and programme formulation to the following sectors.

- The central and relevant provincial governments in the countries of South Asia
- Relevant institutions—academic, training, policy influencing, NGOs and INGOs—working in the HKH region
- Bilateral agencies/donors
- Multilateral organisations, particularly FAO, the agency responsible for implementation of Agenda 21, Chapter 13, for possible use in preparation for the International Year of [the] Mountains, 2002

Participants also suggested that ICIMOD, in addition to remitting recommendations, should take more proactive initiatives such as organising and/or facilitating interactions on the subject at national level in the region.

