

# The SUDEMMA Call to Action

## Preamble

From December 13-15, 1994, representatives from 20 Asian countries and more than 10 international agencies, over 60 participants in all, met in Kathmandu, Nepal, for the first-ever discussion on the Sustainable Development of Fragile Mountain Areas of Asia.

The Conference was organised by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) at the request of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, the Task Manager for Chapter 13 of Agenda 21: "Managing Fragile Ecosystems: Sustainable Mountain Development". The financial support was provided by the Swiss Development Cooperation, UNEP, FAO, and the United Nations University.

- ▶ The Conference was inaugurated by the Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr. Manmohan Adhikari, who also gave the inaugural address.
- ▶ The keynote address was delivered by Mr. A.Z.M. Obaidullah Khan, Assistant Director General of FAO and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific.
- ▶ Ms. Savitri Kunadi, Vice-Chairperson of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, also spoke at the inaugural session on behalf of the Commission.
- ▶ Delegates expressed their gratitude and appreciation to the Prime Minister, Mr. A.Z.M. Obaidullah Khan, and Ms. Kunadi for their valuable contributions to the Conference.
- ▶ Efforts made by ICIMOD to bring together the delegates and make possible this first-ever discussion on the fragile mountain areas of Asia were appreciated.
- ▶ In 11 sessions 22 presentations were made on major subjects affecting sustainable mountain development in Asia.
- ▶ All country delegates gave short presentations on country-specific priority problems and issues.

Based on the presentations and discussions held, the Conference delegates made the following recommendations.

## A. FIELD-LEVEL ACTION

The Conference agreed that urgent action was needed to commence and accelerate activities in mountain areas that would lead directly to the improvement of the livelihoods of mountain people and their environment. More specifically, the Conference recommended

1. Poverty eradication and economic development through:
  - the development of the comparative advantages of mountain areas for the production and provision of mountain-specific goods and services;
  - the promotion of sustainable mountain farming systems, including locally-sustainable measures for the adoption of traditional and improved technologies for soil conservation, soil nutrient and fertility management, water management, and biomass management;
  - improved access to extension and other services for rural areas;
  - planning and development of urban centres for marketing of goods and provision of centralised services; and
  - the development of mechanisms that will ensure that reasonable benefits derived from mountain resources accrue directly to the mountain people.
2. Sustainable management of natural resources through:
  - the integration of indigenous knowledge in mountain development processes;
  - the enhancement of local capacities for mountain resource management;
  - the restoration of ecologically-degraded lands; and
  - the conservation and sustainable use and management of biodiversity.
3. Gender-balanced decision-making in environment and development policies and programmes through:
  - equality before the law;
  - the recognition of the economic value of women's work;
  - joint ownership of resources; and
  - sustaining the relatively high status of mountain women.
4. Preservation of cultural heritage.
5. Reducing the vulnerability to mountain disasters through:
  - the generation of global awareness;
  - technical assistance; and
  - rehabilitation programmes for the people affected.

## B. SUPPORT MECHANISMS

The Conference noted the lack of a cohesive focus on sustainable mountain development at different institutional structures with a (potential) mandate in this field and agreed that efforts should be made to put the issues raised in Chapter 13 of Agenda 21 and those identified at this Conference higher up on the agenda of institutions with a major responsibility for implementing Agenda 21. More specifically, the Conference recommended

1. The establishment of National Mountain Task Forces/Commissions/Focal Points for:
  - examining the issues raised by this Conference in the context of Chapter 13 of Agenda 21;
  - developing National Plans of Action for Mountain Areas in their respective countries;
  - helping to integrate these national action plans into national development programmes;
  - conducting basic research to generate mountain databases;
  - developing linkages and networking between national/local agencies, including NGOs, concerned with the management of mountain environments and improving the economic conditions of mountain people;
  - sensitising policy-makers and the general public about the role of sustainable mountain development and its problems and opportunities and developing a mountain perspective in different development activities;
  - helping to mobilise the support needed to undertake these activities; and
  - helping to sensitise private-sector activities to the sustainable development of mountain areas.
2. Designation of focal points for mountain development by subregional, regional, bilateral, and multilateral agencies to:
  - reinforce and emphasise a mountain development orientation in the respective agency;
  - form collaborative linkages and partnerships; and
  - prioritise mountain development issues.
3. Stronger collaboration among the mountain countries of Asia in order to share experiences, data and information, policies, technologies, methodologies, and management systems related to the sustainable development of mountain areas through:
  - the establishment of an Association of Asian Mountain and Upland Institutions;
  - intensifying linkages among (sub) regional institutes for mountain development; and
  - ICIMOD taking a leading role in Asian collaboration in sustainable mountain development.
4. Capacity-building through:
  - adapting educational systems at school and university levels to mountain development needs;
  - teaching about 'own' environments at different levels;
  - reorienting extension systems to mountain people; and
  - developing human and institutional resources.
5. Financing through:
  - increasing resource allocation within the national budgets for mountain areas;
  - mechanisms for reimbursement of mountain services rendered to lowland areas (e.g., by exploring introduction of innovative tariff systems);
  - mobilising local financing mechanisms;
  - the Global Environmental Facility (GEF); and
  - creating special funds for the education of mountain people.

Chairperson of the Dhaireni Pakha Forest Users' Group, Mr. B.L. Shrestha, describing the rehabilitation activities undertaken during the past two years in a degraded site with some support from ICIMOD



Mr. P.B. Shah, ICIMOD, explaining the effects of rehabilitation strategies

The District Forest Officer, Mr. A.R. Sharma, introducing the district and the forestry-related activities undertaken

