

Sponsor Statement

Dr. P. Weinard

Counsellor, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, Kathmandu

I have the honour and privilege, on behalf of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, to congratulate His Majesty's Government of Nepal and to simultaneously express our sincere thanks to all the governments of the region, the international organizations, and the individuals who have helped during recent years in establishing what we call ICIMOD today.

The new acronym stands for an idea and a philosophy which has been neglected during the last several decades in which macro-technology and industrialization have dominated our globe, a period when man has started to behave as the master and manipulator of his environment instead of recognizing that he is a part of it. The results are apparent everywhere. Most of the decision-making parts of our global society are heavily influenced by an urban oriented leadership. Under such circumstances, it is not easy to find support for neglected areas such as the mountain ecosystems of the world.

The history of man is everywhere the history of misuse of natural resources. The present Mediterranean ecosystem is but one obvious example of the consequences of human misuse in the past.

But there is no need to go back to the Greeks and the Romans. In a time when mankind feels more and more unsafe under the deterrent atomic umbrellas, the basis for our life is endangered more seriously by our misuse and destruction of natural resources. But the conflict between technological progress and the destruction of the ecosystems is old.

In my home country, for example, development and environmental protection were in conflict many times. The first railway construction in 1835 was linked with the first public protest movement of people concerned with environmental protection.

Only 150 years later we are confronted with what will be called the most radical change in our ecosystem. Industrial pollution and the acid rain phenomena, with their implications, is linking the European fate with that of the Hindu Kush-Himalaya region. The reasons for the growing fragility of our ecosystems are different. The effect is finally the same. And here is exactly where ICIMOD has to find its role. And here is simultaneously the justification for an international approach.

Throughout the symposium, nearly every speaker has stressed the need for a catchment area or a natural boundary approach.

These boundaries are different from the man-made political ones, perhaps the first step towards destruction. ICIMOD's primary task is to transcend political boundaries and contribute to the economically, as well as ecologically, sound development of mountain systems, so that a rapidly growing human population can live in dignity and peace.

The international status of the Centre will ensure that success and failure in rural development of hill regions in others parts of the world will be shared with the primary mandate of ICIMOD.

Simultaneously, we hope that from the roof of the world, under which ICIMOD has found its place, messages will go out which may encourage and help others to safeguard their mountains and hills in Africa, Latin America, or Europe with the understanding that the hill and mountain regions of this globe provide the resource upon which nearly half of the world's population is dependent.

This is the very basic reason for the involvement of the Federal Republic of Germany in creating ICIMOD. There have been, as you know, several changes in our government following elections during recent years, but it is necessary to state that there was never a change in the understanding that international co-operation should concentrate predominantly on the development of rural areas and the protection of natural resources and ecosystems, altogether linked with the basic aim to contribute to employment and better employment distribution.

We hope to share the obligation of supporting ICIMOD in the near future with other countries and organizations within and outside the region. On the basis of national independence, unquestioned equal rights, scientific objectivity, professionalism, and dynamic leadership, ICIMOD will serve in the Hindu Kush-Himalaya area as a big learning machine, a place of sharing experiences, and a creative starting point for new ideas for an ecosystem approach that will allow mankind to live in the mountains as an area of great beauty, as well as a cradle of human creativity, not only beyond the year 2000 but for the centuries to come.

In all modesty, my home country and its citizens, through the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, will try to contribute to that as best as we can.

Statement

His Excellency Peter S. Erni Ambassador of Switzerland

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me say what a great privilege this is to be able to bring to you the wishes and the greetings of the Swiss Federal Council and the people of Switzerland. The President of the Swiss Confederation, Pierre Aubert, whom you have invited in his capacity as Foreign Minister, has asked me to express his regrets for not being able to enjoy the immense pleasure of a journey to beautiful Nepal and, in particular, to Kathmandu, and he sends you warmfelt congratulations for the inauguration of ICIMOD.

We Swiss feel very happy that a long association with the Himalayas has created a strong friendship with each of its communities. These close links will certainly surprise nobody. Mountain people have special relations. They know well what is behind their tanned faces, their rugged fingers, and their slow steps. They know all about the hard struggle for their well-being and the spiritual satisfaction of reaching the highest peaks. It is therefore only natural that Switzerland felt honoured to be called upon to participate in this multi-national developing scheme for the improvement of living conditions and the environment in the magnificent world of the Himalayas.

The basis of this Swiss co-operation is, in fact, a very simple law which has been accepted by the Swiss people about 10 years ago, called the Development Co-operation Law.

It stipulates that the assistance provided by public funds must profit the neediest—the grassroots. No doubt that ICIMOD aims primarily at decent living conditions of a group of people who have, one might say, a much steeper approach to prosperity than those in the fertile plains and lands.

We Swiss appreciate in ICIMOD particularly the goal of the integrated global mountain development. Our present economic achievement with one of the highest GNP per capita is the result of centuries of hard labour and of a harmonious co-existence among the several valley communities with different languages

and cultures. The historians will agree when I say that the need to help each other, the solidarity among the valley communities leads to a compact, socio-economic structure with all its advantages and influences in favour of the integration of private and public initiatives as well as its influence on civic behaviour.

We heard from Dr. Strong today, and yesterday from Prof. Rosser, that when there is need for co-operation of this kind we must mobilize the intellectual talents, all available intellectual knowledge, to assure the success of an organization like ICIMOD. Prof. Rosser added rightly that there is a huge potential of this intellectual talent in this very region. We can certainly agree, this is the most important point of your co-operation. This Swiss Law, which I mentioned just a while ago, states in this respect that the benefits of development co-operation must promote self-reliance and that is what we have in mind when we co-operate in ICIMOD.

A harmonious development, of course, is the function of a balanced integration of all factors involved, across the borders as well as across non-relevant reservations of minds. And we from neutral Switzerland hope sincerely that the non-political multi-national approach to improve the economic stability with all the forces concerned might further contribute to the mutual confidence in this region and in the world.

At this point, I would like to thank very much His Majesty's Government of Nepal for the warm hospitality extended to the Swiss in general and to us in particular. We are enjoying it very much and, I am sure, that this is only a token for what you are going and to provide for the infrastructure of ICIMOD in the seat agreement and I am sure this warm hospitality will be instrumental for success of this endeavour. Be assured, Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, of the sympathy of Switzerland for this organization and for all of us.

Thank you very much.



Inauguration of ICIMOD, the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister of Nepal Sri Lokendra Bahadur Chand.



The Hon. Fatteh Singh Tharu, Minister of Education, welcoming Director-General of UNESCO, His Excellency Dr. Amadou—Mahtar M'Bow.



The Rt. Hon. Prime Minister of Nepal and H.E. Dr. M' Bow after Inauguration.



Dr. Rama S.J.B. Rana, Chairman, and Dr. Maurice Strong at the Inaugural tree planting ceremony.