

## Dear Friends of ICIMOD,

I am pleased to introduce issue No. 53 of our newsletter, *Sustainable Mountain Development*. This issue's theme is **Climate Change and the Himalayas: More Vulnerable Livelihoods, Erratic Climate Shifts for the Region and the World**. We are honoured in this volume to have the insights and views of eminent scholars and authorities from a host of regional and international organisations including the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and representative perspectives and experiences of governments and research and educational institutions in five of our eight member countries. Our distinguished panel of contributors have covered the broader issues of water, the environment, climate change and livelihoods, and poverty reduction.

The Hindu Kush-Himalayan (HKH) region is an integral part of the global ecosystem. This mountain region is rich in biological and environmental resources and serves as a water reservoir and a regulator of climate for the region and the world. The Himalayan environment supports more than 1.5 billion people and the global environment through environmental services. This environment is under constant stress as a result of environmental degradation and climate change. A key challenge facing policy makers is how to mitigate the impacts of climate change and enhance the adaptation and resilience of mountain people.

The papers in this issue address specific aspects of this challenge. By putting the mountain agenda in a wider development context, I have tried to identify in an overview paper emerging development and environmental issues and challenges in the HKH region, highlighting the role ICIMOD and partners will play in addressing them. Regional cooperation will continue to be a vital element in addressing the critical issues of poverty, sustainable management of natural resources, and cross-border issues of ecosystem services and disaster risk reduction. His Excellency, Mr. Chenkyab Dorji, SAARC Secretary General, highlights some of the potential areas for collaboration and ICIMOD's part as a non-political regional knowledge centre in facilitating this process.

Available and useful knowledge and information about and within the region should be the bedrock of our interventions. Dr. Jian Liu, Deputy Secretary of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, draws our attention to some data and knowledge gaps in the Himalayas, particularly in the areas of climate, hydrology, and meteorology. ICIMOD and other regional and international organisations can contribute to reducing this scientific uncertainty by building regional knowledge at ICIMOD. Prof. Vinod Kumar Gaur of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, urges a collective initiative to preserve this global heritage region, the Himalayas.

Dyutiman Choudhary



ICIMOD Director General Andreas Schild at the India consultation. Sitting next to him is Dr Pradipto Ghosh, India's former environment secretary and a member of the committee advising the Indian Prime Minister on climate change issues.

Drawing from experience in Bangladesh, China, India, Nepal, and Pakistan, our other contributors present the programmes and priorities of each country. Dr. N.C. Saxena, former Secretary of the Planning Commission, Government of India, highlights the need to integrate environmental concerns into development planning and programming, and urges better integration among ministries and departments as well as more clear-cut policies on environmental management. Prof. Jahir Uddin Chowdhury, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, argues for an integrated approach

to water management, while Dr. Amir Muhammed, Rector, National University of Computer and Emerging Sciences, Islamabad, outlines a strategic framework for alleviating poverty in mountain areas based on his professional career and practical knowledge of Pakistan. Prof. Zuo Ting, China Agricultural University, describes China's policy and programme priorities for promoting mountain development as envisioned under China's current 11th Five-Year Plan.

The remaining contributors are our own staff at ICIMOD. Recognising the critical role of policy and the institutional environment, Dr. N. S. Jodha explains the Centre's evolving role in providing policy inputs to the regional member countries. Dr. Golam Rasul and Dr. Madhav Karki sketch a framework for our policy work in order to support the strategic goals of poverty alleviation, resource conservation, and climate change mitigation and adaptation in the HKH region.

My special thanks and profound appreciation to the authors for their valuable contributions to this issue. I believe that the insights and experiences brought out will not only shed light on ICIMOD's future course of action, they will also stimulate further discussion and cooperation among the scientific community and development organisations, and will lead to new research and action. Dr. Rasul, Dr. Karki, and the editorial team deserve special mention and appreciation for putting this issue together. The contributors have set the stage well for the work that ICIMOD will be doing in the coming years. We are presently fleshing out more concrete programmes together with our regional stakeholders. The coming edition will highlight how we hope to have an impact on the sustainable management of key resources, the regular provision of ecosystem services, and the wellness of the people. I hope you will not miss the appointment.

Sincerely,  
**Andreas Schild**  
November 2007



Joyce M. Mendez

Sisha Pangma (8012m) viewed from the the Tibetan Plateau