

# Dear Friends of ICIMOD,

The present issue of our periodical *Sustainable Mountain Development* is devoted to two events in our institutional life: we celebrated 25 years of ICIMOD in December 2008 and as part of this we organised a regional conference with impressive regional and global participation on *Mountain Biodiversity*.

A 25th anniversary is often used to review what has been achieved over a quarter of a century. Having done this five years previously, we preferred to emphasise the new challenges emerging globally and regionally, and to look ahead and plan to fulfil the mandate handed to us a quarter of a century ago. We are convinced that climate change and its influence on biodiversity will have a significant impact not only on the lives of mountain people in the Himalayas but also on the role and perception of the Himalayas in the region and the world. Not only are the Himalayas a source of freshwater and provider of ecosystem services for close to one fifth of the world's population living in the downstream river basins; this massive barrier also has a direct influence on regional and global climate, which will become ever more apparent with the increasing change.

The awareness among the scientific community about the growing importance of the Himalayas needs to be made clear to decision makers and opinion leaders; thus we have to develop active communication and information policies among all stakeholders. For regional organisations it will be essential to have access to relevant information; to governments it must be made evident that the ecosystem services of the Himalayas are an important backbone of sustainable development; and to the global community we have to make it clear that what is happening in the Himalayas in terms of climate change, and the potential ecological, economic, and cultural consequences, is of serious concern to us all. Communication is essential to make all this possible. I am, therefore, happy to present you in this issue with the results of two events that took place during our anniversary year. The first is the development of a [new brand look](#) for ICIMOD, which provides a basis for the change in our communications approach. The second provides the theme for this issue.

In November ICIMOD, together with global and regional partners, addressed one aspect of these issues by bringing together scientists and planners from across the region and around the world to an [International Mountain Biodiversity Conference \(IMBC\)](#), with pre-conference workshops on [Mountain Transboundary Protected Areas and Linking Geodata with Biodiversity Information](#), and a post-conference workshop on [Research Strategy on Global Change in Mountain Biosphere Reserves](#). Participants discussed ways to fill the gaps in our knowledge and tackle the conservation of biodiversity in the HKH, especially in the light of climate change and its associated impacts. These fora provided a venue in which experts and representatives of global programmes could discuss selected issues with representatives from the countries of the Himalayan region. During the conference and workshops, there were intensive discussions on how climate change is affecting mountain biodiversity, how biodiversity can best be managed for supplies of economic goods and ecosystem services from the mountains, and



how to achieve long-term continuity in mountain research programmes. What would a common future strategy for mountain biodiversity conservation look like and how would it work? The Himalayas are too big for any group to study the whole area. So how can we coordinate the diverse contributions and provide information relevant to the varied aspects of this mountain system?

Professor Bruno Messerli, together with the team at ICIMOD made a tangible proposal for the long-term preservation of Himalayan genetic heritage: to select four representative 'transects' or north-south 'corridors' at different locations from east to west across the HKH and encourage everyone to focus their efforts on these sites. This would increase the pertinence of coordinated, comparative, and collocated information and provide a basis for analysis, understanding and planning. The transect concept was enthusiastically received and both representatives of global programmes and regional experts agreed that by coordinating efforts all the information produced could be made available not only for regional decision making and planning but also for the worldwide study of climate change.

This workshop provides the theme for this issue of [Sustainable Mountain Development: Biodiversity and Climate Change in the Himalayas](#). We are pleased to present here a series of short articles contributed by many of the same biodiversity, climate change, and conservation experts who made the journey to Kathmandu to present their scientific papers at the IMBC. We would like to thank them for taking the time to prepare these short articles for this newsletter so that their valuable knowledge can be disseminated to a wider audience.

Sincerely,



Andreas Schild,  
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