

Dear Friends of ICIMOD,

This issue constitutes a follow up to the international symposium 'Benefiting from Earth Observation: Bridging the Data Gap for Adaptation to Climate Change in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Region' organised by ICIMOD in 2010, and coincides with the Climate Summit for a Living Himalayas organised by the Royal Government of Bhutan in November 2011.

ICIMOD has the following grounds for promoting the development of Earth observation.

- Earth observation bears special significance in a mountain environment like the Hindu Kush-Himalayas (HKH) with its remoteness and rugged terrain. It allows a first interpretation and analysis in a situation where in situ analysis is excessively time consuming or impossible. Where good case studies and individual field work have been conducted, Earth observation allows cost effective scaling up and generalisation.
- Geo-coded information based on Earth observation makes it possible to show a complicated situation in an illustrative, graphic way, which can replace long text explanations.

In this context ICIMOD is putting together a comprehensive side event for the Bhutan summit under the title 'Earth Observation and Climate Change in the Eastern Himalayas'. A wide variety of applications showcased at the Bhutan summit are presented in this periodical. The articles demonstrate the practical applications of Earth observation and related technologies for mountain development policies and practices. For instance, satellite observations provide information in near real time about the direction of movement of plumes of smoke from forest fire, or about weekly snow coverage to assess water availability in a catchment. Articles in this issue address the use of Earth observation to assess decadal changes of glaciers, carbon in the community forests of Nepal, cropping systems to support food security, natural disasters such as floods for early warning and response, land cover change, and many more.

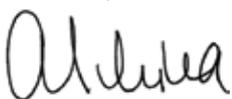
ICIMOD partners with regional and international centres of excellence and space agencies to advance the application and practical use of the instruments of Earth observation. We are working with an international network of scientific and research organisations related to geo-information and Earth observation to benefit the HKH region. ICIMOD has become a partner in the Group on Earth Observations (GEO), a voluntary partnership of government and international organizations formed to coordinate information gathered from different space agencies worldwide.

Among many international partnerships, ICIMOD collaborated with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to launch the SERVIR-Himalaya programme in 2010 for improved environmental decision making. Likewise, ICIMOD partnered with the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) to establish a WINDS (Wideband InterNetworking engineering test and Demonstration Satellite) receiving station for emergency response in disaster situations. ICIMOD plans to increase its satellite receiving capacity and mainstream Earth observation in its strategic programmes.

Our aim is to provide an effective regional platform on Earth observation for mutual sharing and learning among regional experts, scientists, policy makers, students, and researchers, as well as to strengthen regional and international networking so as to customise internationally available knowledge for the region. Wherever possible, ICIMOD works with and through national institutions. We also engage in building national capacities, especially for those of our Regional Member Countries that are weaker in this area.

I hope the present issue on Earth observation gives an engaging overview of these efforts.

Sincerely,



Andreas Schild

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