

Opening Remarks by

Dr. E.

Right Honourable Prime Minister
Honourable Ministers
Your Excellencies
Distinguished Representatives of ICIMOD Member
Countries
Distinguished Representatives of the International Council
and Research Communities
Ladies and Gentlemen

I have great pleasure in welcoming you all to the
activities and meetings on the occasion of the
Anniversary of the formation and establishment of the
International Council for Mountain Development (ICIMOD) as

More specifically, I welcome you to the event of today and
tomorrow, the Tenth Anniversary Symposium on the
Symposium on the theme "Mountain Environment and
Development: Constraints and Opportunities"

Background to ICIMOD's Establishment

ICIMOD was established in December 1983 against the
background of a sharply growing concern about the
dramatic deterioration of the mountain environment and
resource base and the concomitant impoverishment of
mountain populations. This concern was for the hill and
mountain regions of the world, in general, but in particular
for the Hindu Kush-Himalayas - the world's largest and
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When these matters were discussed in the 1970s, it was
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link between

PART A

The Inaugural Session

ICIMOD's Tenth Anniversary Symposium was inaugurated on the 1st of December, 1993, at the Nepal Administrative Staff College, Jawalakhel. The programme commenced with opening remarks from the Director General of ICIMOD, Dr. E.F. Tacke, followed by remarks from Dr. I.P. Upadhyay, Chairman of the ICIMOD Board of Governors, and from Dr. H.P. Maag, Chairman of the ICIMOD Support Group.

The Prime Minister of Nepal, the Rt. Honourable Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala, then inaugurated the Symposium and delivered the inaugural address.

Following the inauguration, Dr. Klaus Lampe, Director General of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and a Founding Member of the Board of Governors of ICIMOD, delivered the keynote address. The morning session then concluded with country statements from representatives from each of the eight ICIMOD member countries.

Addresses and statements in their entirety are included in this section.

Mountain Environment and Development: Constraints and Opportunities

Opening Remarks by the Director General,

Dr. E.F. Tacke

Right Honourable Prime Minister
Honourable Ministers
Your Excellencies
Distinguished Representatives of ICIMOD Member Countries
Distinguished Representatives of the International Donor and Research Communities
Ladies and Gentlemen

I take great pleasure in welcoming you all to this week of activities and meetings on the occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the Inauguration and establishment of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (or ICIMOD as it is generally known).

More specifically I welcome you to the event of today and tomorrow, this being the Anniversary Symposium -- the Symposium on the theme "**Mountain Environment and Development: Constraints and Opportunities**".

Background to ICIMOD's Establishment

ICIMOD was established in December 1983 against the background of a sharply growing concern about the alarming deterioration of the mountain environment and resource base and the concomitant impoverishment of mountain populations. This concern was for the hill and mountain regions of the world, in general, but in particular for the Hindu Kush-Himalayas-- the world's largest and tallest mountain range and among the geologically youngest and most fragile mountain systems. Increasing population pressure and the fragile and complex nature of the mountain bio-system were identified as the main underlying causes for the deterioration.

When these matters were discussed in the 1970s, it was concluded that, considering the complexities of the issues, a holistic and integrated approach to development was needed. There were also strong recommendations for the establishment of a regional institution focussing on integrated mountain development and covering both environment and development aspects, and cutting across all the sectors.

The proposal for a regional institution was discussed and endorsed at the regional UNESCO Meeting in 1975 when Nepal offered to host the proposed institution. The recommendation was subsequently endorsed by the UNESCO General Conference in 1976, and, in 1981, an agreement providing the legal basis for this autonomous international Centre was signed by the Government of Nepal and by UNESCO. Finally, with the support of the two original sponsors, Germany and Switzerland, ICIMOD came formally into being at its Inauguration on the 5th of December 1983 - ten years ago.

ICIMOD's Mandate and Functions

The dual mandate for environment and development given to the Centre is appropriately reflected in Article 1 of ICIMOD's Statutes which reads :

"The primary objective of the Centre shall be to help promote the development of an economically and environmentally sound mountain ecosystem and to improve the living standards of mountain populations of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Area which, for the purpose of these Statutes, includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal, and Pakistan".

In pursuing its mandate, the role of ICIMOD is not that of a traditional research institute nor that of an implementor of development. Its role can best be defined as that of a **facilitator of development** operating at the interface between research and development activities.

The **specific objectives and assigned functions** of ICIMOD (as set out in its Statutes) are to serve as

- a multidisciplinary documentation centre on integrated mountain development based on the systematic exchange of knowledge and experience through an organised information network;

- a focal point for the mobilisation, conduct, and coordination of applied and problem-solving research activities;
- a focal point for training on integrated mountain development with special emphasis on the assessment of training needs and the development of relevant training materials for the training of trainers; and
- a consultative centre to provide expert services on mountain development and resource management to the HKH countries.

ICIMOD's Mode of Operation

Compared to the range and complexity of ICIMOD's mandate, its financial and staff resources are extremely limited. This can only be overcome by collaborative arrangements, and ICIMOD's strength lies in the mobilisation of the existing national institutions and professionals in the HKH Region rather than in relying on its own limited manpower and resources. Therefore, its declared policy is to carry out its programmes in collaboration with national institutions. Furthermore, stronger linkages with national institutions not only help to mobilise useful knowledge but also facilitate the translation of such knowledge into meaningful action programmes. In its operations, ICIMOD follows a consultative style for programme development and a collaborative style for programme implementation.

Equally important are strong linkages with international research and development organisations. This includes international research centres specialising in the management of commodities (such as specific crops and livestock) and resources (such as soils and water) which can provide advice and support in the areas of their responsibility, including germplasm of strains suitable for higher elevations. ICIMOD also maintains close linkages and collaboration with bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, specialised agencies of the UN system, and NGOs.

Status Report on Mountain Environment and Development

If one takes stock now - two decades after the alarm was first raised and one decade after ICIMOD's establishment - it must be concluded that, from the overall point of view, nature has lost and continues to lose in this struggle: clearing of forests and felling of trees exceed regeneration; steep hills are encroached and fields are cropped too intensively, resulting in decline in soil fertility and in soil erosion and landslides; the depletion of plant cover in turn causes accelerated water runoff and flooding during the rainy season, and the drying up of springs during the dry season.

As a result of these trends, for large parts of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Region, the deterioration in the quality of life of the population and in the production potential and soundness of natural resources and environment continues.

Fortunately, there are also some areas where, as a result of successful research and extension efforts, the productivity of traditional farming systems has been sufficiently enhanced to feed the present population while, at the same time, sustaining such potential for the future. Furthermore, there are other areas in which additional income-earning opportunities have been developed, and yet others in which a complete revamp of production systems, based on comparative advantages, has been undertaken, leading to greatly enhanced income earning and population carrying capacities. What is needed is that these positive trends, which are an exception now, become the general rule in future.

The 10th Anniversary Symposium

The Symposium on Mountain Environment and Development: Constraints and Opportunities, which is about to be inaugurated, will be the main 10th Anniversary event.

Based on extensive working papers prepared by the concerned programme staff, which were circulated to participants several weeks ago, and the presentation of major highlights and selected action spots by the authors, during the Working Sessions, an intensive review of the major trends and factors in mountain environment and development will be undertaken. This will involve interaction between representatives from the HKH countries and from the donor community, including their field staff; it will also involve independent experts in mountain research and development.

The Working Sessions of the Symposium will be structured under five major topics, viz.,

- Sustainable and More Productive Mountain Farming;
- Population and Employment Challenges in the Mountains;
- Management of Mountain Infrastructure Development;
- Natural Resources' Management in a Mountain Environment; and
- Integrated Planning for Environment and Development of Mountain Areas.

The sixth and last working session will elicit and summarise the main conclusions from the Symposium for consideration by the ICIMOD Support Group and the ICIMOD Board of Governors which will hold their meetings later this week.

The Working Sessions will commence this afternoon. During this morning's Inaugural Session, the Chairman of the ICIMOD Board of Governors and the Chairman of the ICIMOD Support Group will first present the views and positions of their respective bodies. This will be followed by the inauguration ceremony and address by the Rt. Honourable Prime Minister, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala, which will conclude the first part of the Inaugural Session. The second part of the Inaugural Session, which will be chaired by Dr. Ram Saran Mahat, Vice Chairman of the

National Planning Commission of Nepal, will commence with the delivery of the Keynote Address by Dr. Klaus Lampe. Subsequently high-level representatives of individual ICIMOD countries will deliver statements on the mountain issues and policies of their respective countries and ICIMOD's role in this context as they see it.

In concluding, I wish the Symposium every success in its proceedings and deliberations for the greater benefit of the HKH Region and its population.

Remarks by the Chairman of the Board,

Dr. I.P. Upadhyaya

Right Honourable Prime Minister
Honourable Ministers
Excellencies
Distinguished Representatives of ICIMOD Member Countries
Distinguished Representatives of the International Donor and Research Community
Ladies and Gentlemen

First of all, on behalf of the ICIMOD Board of Governors and myself, I would like to extend to you all a warm and hearty welcome to this inaugural ceremony of ICIMOD's Tenth Anniversary Symposium. We indeed feel very honoured and privileged by the gracious presence of the Right Honourable Prime Minister and other distinguished guests on this eventful day. I would therefore like to express the Board's deep and sincere gratitude to him and also to all other guests for taking time off to participate in this auspicious occasion of ICIMOD's 10th Anniversary.

During the past ten years, the centre has gone through different phases of institutional development. Being unique in many respects, there were few readily available models to serve as a guideline for the Centre's development. Much of it has had, therefore, to be learned the hard way-through experience and practice and constant review of its activities. In bringing about various changes, the Board's main concerns have always been to improve internal management, to help develop more realistic and effective programmes, and to diversify and broaden the sources of financial support.

The Centre launched its initial work programme in 1984, and the objective was not only to begin a systematic

assessment of key problems concerned with mountain development but also to establish working relationships with different national, regional, and international agencies. These first activities assisted the Centre in initiating a significantly broader phase of research, training, documentation, and networking which is currently organised under different thematic research and development programmes, including selected action and demonstration activities.

Quinquennial Review and Restructuring

A Quinquennial Review of the Centre was completed in 1990 and made some important recommendations regarding the Centre's governance, organisation, and programme thrusts. Based on consideration of recommendations by the Board and subsequent revision of the Statutes, the ICIMOD Board of Governors now consists of representatives from the eight HKH countries and of seven independent experts. This reorganisation has resulted in the strengthening of the programming process.

An ICIMOD Support Group has been established as a separate entity and is comprised of members from the regional countries, UNESCO, and contributing donors. The Support Group serves as the main link and forum for interaction between the Centre and the donor community.

Strategic Plan and Its Implementation

A draft Strategic Plan was prepared with identified priorities and approaches for the future and was subsequently presented, discussed, and approved by the Board. In its

implementation, the Centre follows a consultative style of programme formulation and a collaborative mode of programme implementation with the active involvement of national institutions. This operational style has hitherto worked well and is appreciated by the ICIMOD member countries. During ICIMOD's second quinquennium a strong shift in emphasis has taken place from the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and practices to their dissemination; including trial and demonstration activities.

ICIMOD's Achievements

ICIMOD was established with the objective of operating as a development think tank for identifying viable solutions to the problems of integrated mountain development, focussing on information exchange, problem-solving research, undertaking training, and providing expert services. The activities undertaken thus clearly demonstrate the progress the Centre has made in all these different areas. Without going into detail for any one, I would, on behalf of the Board, like to point out that recent initiatives in the areas of policy and institutional analysis and training and field demonstrations promoted by the Centre are being very well received in the member countries. The Board hopes that this Symposium will not

only examine these activities but will also provide guidelines on making the Centre's activities even more practical, useful, and relevant in the future.

Financial Support to Facilitate Future Expansion

In spite of some degree of financial stability attained by the centre in recent years, the achievement of ICIMOD's future goals will require greater commitment, contributions, and support from all concerned - the ICIMOD member countries and international donors. This partnership, which started ten years ago, must be further strengthened in order to help ICIMOD play a more active role in the future towards promoting the integrated development of mountain regions. Before I close, I would once again like to welcome you all and express my grateful thanks to you for accepting our invitation to participate in this important function, and your presence here, we believe, reconfirms the growing concern about mountain development and about the potential role of institutions like ICIMOD for improving the living conditions of the mountain people.

Thankyou all

Thankyou very much

Remarks by the Chairman of the Support Group,

Dr. H.P. Maag

Right Honourable Prime Minister
Honourable Ministers
Your Excellency
Distinguished Representatives of ICIMOD Member Countries
Distinguished Representatives of the International Donor Community
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the ICIMOD Support Group and myself, I welcome all the distinguished guests and participants to the opening of ICIMOD's Tenth Anniversary Symposium. I would like to express the Support Group's sincere appreciation to the Right Honourable Prime Minister of Nepal and all the other distinguished guests for marking and honouring with their presence this historic event of the Centre. Last, but not least, I would also like to express my

sincere appreciation and admiration of the generations of people who have eked out a living in and cared for the Hindu Kush-Himalayan mountain environment, which is of prime importance for the survival and prosperity of people far beyond the mountain range itself.

Increasing population and pressure on the mountain environment triggered off the first resource management attempts in the late sixties and early seventies in the form of watershed conservation projects. As the focus on conservation did not really provide for a more productive yet sustainable resource utilisation, this type of project was superseded by the so-called integrated rural development projects, or IRDPs in short. Despite their substantial emphasis on technological productivity improvements and on synergism amongst different activities, their impact generally remained substantially below expectation. Environmental, resource management, and subsistence

problems kept on increasing, not only in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Region but also worldwide, as evidenced by the Rio Conference in 1992.

Against this background, ICIMOD had no easy start, as expectations were high. ICIMOD responded to the heterogeneous expectations of its client system as well as to those of its donors with an impressive array of activities, which are part of a systems' approach and supposed to bring about synergism. ICIMOD has also been cognisant of the fact that mountain economies particularly depend and thrive on interlinkages between space and time. In the identification of constraints and opportunities, however, the importance of the sociocultural, economic, institutional, and political domains is often underestimated. Retrospectively, it would look as if enough has not yet been invested into researching the policy and institutional

interventions crucial to achieving sustainability goals while concurrently meeting the economic and social aspirations of the people. Similarly, I believe that neither ICIMOD nor the regional member countries have committed themselves sufficiently to regional networking and an effective pooling of already existing national resources and experiences. Therefore, I do hope that this symposium will help to provide additional impetus to ICIMOD's programme and contribute to sharpening its methodological and operational focus so that chances for ultimate impact at the people's level is further enhanced.

In conclusion, the 10th anniversary of ICIMOD should not only be a milestone in the history of the institution, but it should also be (and even more so) a token of all our renewed commitment to the future of the people in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan area.

Remarks by Rt. Honourable Prime Minister,

Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala

Your Excellencies
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all here today and to inaugurate this Symposium on the occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development.

The development challenges in the hills and mountains are enormous. With increasing access to the outside world through transport and communication there has been an upsurge of rising expectation from mountain people. In every place I visit in these mountain areas, I hear demands for more roads, electricity, improvements in basic services, and for increased employment and income-generating activities. At the same time, development efforts for improving the resource base, increasing economic opportunities, and promoting the use of improved technologies have not been able to keep pace with the population growth.

Resource Degradation and Need for Rehabilitation

The history of most mountain areas, including the Himalayas, shows that environmental problems of one type or another are not a new phenomenon for mountain communities. Substantial amounts of energy and resources have been regularly devoted to environmental

rehabilitation and coping with the after-effects of natural hazards. In the past, adjustments and responses to these challenges were made over prolonged periods, and this worked reasonably well because the overall pressures were relatively small. Today, these pressures are much larger in scale and consequently traditional adaptation mechanisms, despite their effectiveness in the past, have become inadequate.

As available resources are used too intensively and carrying capacities sharply deteriorate, the compulsion for survival forces people to clear and farm more and more fragile and marginal land. The processes underlying widespread resource degradation in mountain areas, however, cannot be tackled effectively if we perceive them only as a physical chain of cause and effect in isolation from social, economic, and institutional frameworks. Thus, if today's widespread deterioration in mountain environments is seen as a failure of past socioeconomic development processes, tomorrow's development cannot be conceived without a major all round effort to correct the environmental failures of today.

How to bring about a change in the lives of already hard-pressed mountain people is the most difficult development and environmental question before us today. It is, also, the most critical question on ICIMOD's agenda. The inability to identify workable solutions will mean greater failures in future that could easily affect much larger

mountain communities. It is our collective responsibility to prevent this from happening by not only understanding what has gone wrong but also by doing what is right and workable.

I perceive the following three major challenges before us.

1. Human Resources' Development

The first major challenge is that of harnessing the human resource base and bringing about improvement in the productive capacity of mountain people.

If, on the one hand, we are alarmed by unprecedented increases in the numbers of people, the ingenuity of the hard-working mountain folk in adapting to a difficult environment has also many important development lessons for us. Education is the most important asset the present generation can give to the next, and this is also the main mechanism by which we can harness our human resources more fully.

2. Sound and Sustainable Utilisation of Natural Resources

Our natural resources are the main biophysical asset for our survival. How do we continue to benefit from these natural resources without degrading or destroying their resource base? This has become the most critical question, not only before mountain areas but also before the whole of humanity. ICIMOD can play a major role in identifying appropriate solutions to meet this challenge.

Land, water, and forests must be properly managed and utilised. Our forests have suffered tremendously, and their regenerating capacity and role in climate and water regulation need to be restored. Finally, the Hindu Kush-Himalayas, while still counting among the world's major reservoirs of biodiversity, have already lost a considerable part of this wealth and urgent action for preservation and restoration needs to be taken.

3. Institution Building and Decentralisation

The third area of challenge is in the field of institutions needed for the proper development of human and natural resources. Rather than telling people what to do, the biggest problem for development institutions has been to find effective methods for supporting and facilitating their efforts. More effective partnerships among government, private sector, and community-based organisations are needed to promote and facilitate conditions whereby people can actively create their own development responses.

Integration of environment and development is best achieved through a decentralised system of planning, management, and decision-making and it is here that

government must play the principal role in developing stronger capacities at the lower levels. Past experience with decentralisation shows that this is easier said than done, because the need is not only for willingness on the part of the government to delegate authority and resources but also for development of the local capacity to undertake these responsibilities.

ICIMOD's Role and Achievements

I have been informed that ICIMOD has introduced a number of highly relevant and useful programmes for mountain development. More recently, it has also taken the initiative of promoting practical demonstrations in the sustainable use of land resources. Its training programmes in a number of areas are also considered to be very useful. These are very encouraging developments, and I earnestly hope this practical focus will occupy an even more important role in its future activities. ICIMOD's comparative advantage lies in enhancing our awareness about different mountain development options relevant to the region, and it is in this context that I also see ICIMOD as an important facilitator of regional cooperation in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas.

International Cooperation

Establishing and operating an international centre such as ICIMOD becomes feasible only with strong commitment from the different partners involved. Despite many problems and handicaps, ICIMOD represents a unique effort of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan countries at regional cooperation. Without this agreement, ICIMOD might have remained only as an interesting concept. However, ideas will not come to fruition on their own and require substantial support. In the case of ICIMOD, the support provided by UNESCO and the governments of Germany and Switzerland, the original sponsors of ICIMOD, and the ICIMOD member countries is sincerely appreciated by my government. Their role in the development of ICIMOD has been crucial.

I also take this opportunity to record our sincere appreciation as the host country to all the other supporters of ICIMOD and its programme activities. I earnestly hope that they, along with others, will continue to support ICIMOD in the future.

I welcome once more all the distinguished delegates to Nepal and to this important symposium. I wish the symposium every success. I close with the conviction that we are all strongly committed to the overall development of mountain people and of their environment. I thank you all for your attention.

Keynote Speech by

Dr. Klaus J. Lampe

ICIMOD -- after 10 years

A decade in the life of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan mountain range is almost no time at all. The last ten years in the history of environmental degradation of this unique mega-ecosystem has most definitely been a crucial timespan that we cannot afford to see multiply much longer, unless we are prepared to see the future of several hundred million people severely affected.

The creation of ICIMOD 10 years ago was long overdue. Of that there is no doubt. And taking into consideration the agreements signed by a united world leadership at UNCED in Rio, ICIMOD's creation demonstrated a vision that was ahead of that of the rest of the world. There is no doubt, too, that, given all the constraints it has faced, the Institute can look back proudly over a remarkable record of success.

Unfortunately, what is also not in doubt is that I cannot see much enthusiasm for its work in the global community -- and I cannot see enough impact.

The exploitation of the natural resources of our mountains is going on at even greater speed than 10 years ago, before ICIMOD. The important functions of a mountain range like the Himalayas, and its multi-faceted influence on a major sub-continent, are ignored now as they were before.

The cultures of mountain people, those who still live in their traditional way, are neglected, discriminated against, and, at best, exploited for the tourism industry.

We know that all the necessary economic factors for development and growth are not present in the hill and mountain ecosystems. Education, health, information, and transportation services are poor, or non-existent, in the mountains. Employment opportunities are rare. Is it any wonder that the more active members of the younger generation are being lured to the lowlands by radio and television? Governments of the region are, only too often, concentrating on industrial growth and urban development. The more obvious failures of rural development programmes are being used as arguments for the neglect not only of the so-called marginal mountain regions, but also of rural areas in general.

The international cry for environmental protection is being used by the traditional donor community as a reason to discontinue the painstaking, risk-prone financing of

programmes related to agriculture in favour of programmes that **seem** to protect the environment more directly.

Surely such dramatic misunderstanding must be obvious. Poverty alleviation and environmental protection must begin in the most vulnerable ecosystems -- the mountains -- if the catchment areas of water and the hillside forests are to have any chance to survive. Only **their** survival will ensure water supply in the hinterlands of the Himalayas.

All this has been known for decades, if not centuries, and still the destruction goes on, the neglect continues -- not so much by the people for whom the mountains are home, but by those who, legally or illegally, invade from the lowlands to make quick profits from indiscriminate exploitation.

Common sense alone should dictate that those whose future depends on a protected environment are the best guardians against its misuse and destruction. Building on the responsibility of these communities, developing new policies, strategies, and programmes for integrated development were among the original aims when it was decided to create ICIMOD. That decision was also taken in the belief - some of us today might call it an illusion -- that the value system of mountain life, deeply rooted in traditions of protecting, and of harmony with, nature, could be mobilised for a programme based on the sustainable use of fragile resources.

Population pressure and poverty, those two most destructive "Ps", might now finally overpower all efforts at protective and environment-friendly production efforts. We are, however, not going to be allowed to escape from the responsibility that our generation must accept.

The Ownership of ICIMOD

First, we have to ask if the idea of ICIMOD has been accorded the sense of ownership, the stewardship, from political leaders that it really needs and deserves in order to be able to prepare for and introduce change. Are short-term interests being allowed to dominate the longer-term perspective and the responsibility to care now for the generations to come?

Political boundaries are still dominating political decision-making, despite the common understanding that resource management on the macro-level, especially in

mountain areas, has to take care of geographic boundaries in the first place.

Finally, we have to admit that national political priorities have taken precedence over a shared regional responsibility.

In retrospect, it has to be admitted that, under geopolitical circumstances, an international centre for mountain development can only function properly with full independence when recognised as an international centre or as a private non-governmental organisation (NGO). Independent of ICIMOD's development over the last 10 years, the world has become aware that non-government organisations have, in principle, a higher chance for successful interaction with the rural, and sometimes even the urban communities', shrinking resources. The results of progress reviews have contributed to a growing willingness of government institutions to share responsibilities not only with the private sector but with NGOs as well.

ICIMOD's future, aside from the quality of its R&D programme, depends fundamentally on the willingness of the countries of the region to own, to protect, and to develop the philosophy, the principles, and the strategy of the only research centre for mountains in the world.

The Role of ICIMOD as a Change Agent

Given the accelerated degradation of the mountain areas, ICIMOD must, even more than in the past, be a centre of excellence for new vision, improved policies, and approaches that will make life in these ecosystems more attractive for coming generations and which will stabilise the region's physical and social infrastructure.

First and foremost, ICIMOD has to become the intellectual centre for the protection of the hill ecosystems and their interlinkages with the plains which depend on the water resources protected by them.

In doing so, ICIMOD must serve as a clearing house, independent and neutral, for policy dialogues on land, forest, and water misuse; transmigration; employment; and hill-plains relationships. It must serve as a promoter to interest and involve political leaders worldwide, to get their support, and to benefit from their influence, in the protection and sound development of mountain ecosystems in general.

A tough question must be asked: Has political interest increased over the last 10 years or not? In 1984, the Director General of UNESCO and Dr. Maurice Strong, the pilot of what became UNCED in 1991, gave keynote addresses at ICIMOD's inauguration. Who are the patrons

of ICIMOD today? The Centre itself will only have the opportunity to be a change agent if it is capable of identifying world leaders willing to lend their voices in support of its ideals, its strategies, and programmes.

The Scientific Niche

No doubt, there are still good reasons to create ICIMOD today if it did not already exist. We know that, on the national level, not many countries have resources to accumulate knowledge -- old and new -- related to ICIMOD's objective. Such knowhow is scattered all over the world.

But ICIMOD's role cannot only be to collect and document traditional and non-traditional knowledge. It can also promote the application of such knowledge in national, bilateral, and multilateral projects. Beyond this function as an information centre, it can initiate and facilitate co-operation among national systems and donor institutions.

Organised according to ecosystems/zones based on altitude, ICIMOD could avoid sector-discipline specific activities for which resources and comparative advantages will be difficult to document. At the international as well as at the national level, specific research institutes exist that are most definitely capable and willing to cooperate with ICIMOD. For IRRI this is -- beyond any doubt -- very much the case.

ICIMOD's Resource Base

The present financial base, core and non-core, is not only insufficient, it does not reflect the priorities that the international community has set for the 1990s and beyond. In contrast to many other sector-specific international research undertakings, the Centre is in a position, given its mandate and objectives, to seek for funding with excellent possibilities for support, as long as the programmes meet the needs of the target group and the donors alike. However, ICIMOD has to be more than a project-executing agency, one among many others. Its niche has to be clearly defined, fully filled, and protected -- through excellence in all its undertakings.

Based on a well-conceived and clearly articulated strategy, a convincing work plan, and stimulating leadership, ICIMOD will attract an innovative core group of highly qualified people. It will, without any doubt, find the political and financial support it requires. And it will serve the needs of the people of the mountains who have learned over time to gain a living from, and to live with, one of the most precious, fragile, and stimulating ecosystems in the world, the Hindu Kush-Himalayan mountain range.