

# Chapter 6

## CLOSING

In the closing session, chaired by **Mr. Egbert Pelinck**, Director General, ICIMOD, the resource persons from technical Sessions 3 and 4 made presentations (as presented earlier) of the highlights and conclusions, followed by closing remarks by Mr. Pelinck.

Mr. Pelinck said it was clear from the presentations that the emerging trends in the mountain energy system were not encouraging, be they in terms of heavy dependence on biomass fuels and overcutting of forest resources or in terms of the transition from fuelwood to inferior quality biomass fuels or to non-renewable fuels. We should not lose sight of our goal of poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability and we should remember that poverty tends to further degrade the surrounding environment due to the search for food and income. The energy system should provide an opportunity to increase the productivity and incomes of the mountain population besides providing sufficient energy for them to cook their daily meals. It was important to make the right choice of energy mix to meet the energy demand of the mountain population. It was equally important to ask ourselves what the energy sector could offer to the mountain population to alleviate poverty.

The adoption of appropriate energy policies not only at the national level but also at the operational level might be instrumental in the sustainability of these trends. Suitability of technological options played an important role. Given the mountain specificities and the fact that mountains were scale-sensitive, it was obvious that decentralised energy systems were more viable. At the same time, the development of large-scale hydropower might be considered for generating more income and employment for the mountain population. However, the environmental implications of these large-scale interventions should be properly addressed. The choice of decentralised energy systems favoured participatory institutions rather than bureaucratic institutions. In this context, the role of NGOs could not be overemphasised for implementing small-scale energy technologies as well as for being a watchdog for internalising environmental and gender concerns. The mountain population was averse to taking risks because of poverty, so all renewable energy technology intervention programmes should be accompanied with

appropriate financing schemes whereby credit institutions would play an important role.

Looking at ICIMOD's mandatory functions, the core area of concern would be to fill the gaps in knowledge of mountain-specific energy issues and to document and disseminate these at wider levels. At the same time, there was a need to raise awareness and build capabilities at policy-making levels.

Proposing a vote of thanks, Dr. Rijal voiced the general opinion of the participants about the need to understand, comprehend, and assess technologies that were or would be suitable in different areas of the HKH Region in terms of: a) policy issues and desired interventions, b) suitability of scale of technologies and their reliability; c) scale of institutions, d) economic acceptability, and e) social and cultural acceptability. It was hoped that ICIMOD, with the cooperation and collaboration of those present and others, would facilitate the understanding of these issues.