

PROCEEDINGS OF THE

Hindu Kush Himalaya Ministerial Mountain Summit 2020

15 October 2020

ICIMOD, Kathmandu, Nepal (Online: MS Teams)

HINDU KUSH HIMALAYA REGIONAL MEMBER COUNTRIES



AFGHANISTAN



BANGLADESH



BHUTAN



CHINA



INDIA



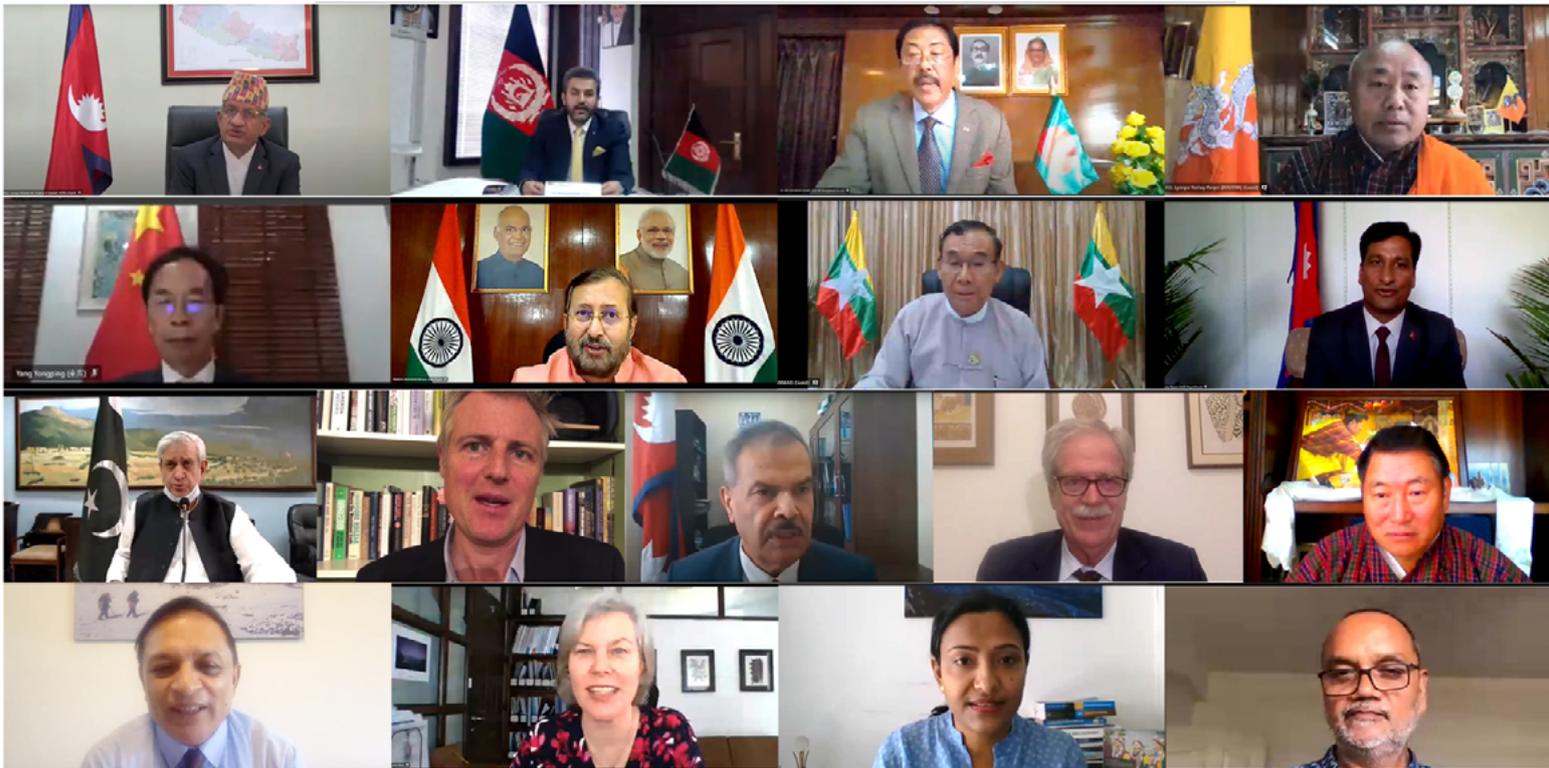
MYANMAR



NEPAL



PAKISTAN



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Mohd Abdul Fahad (Design officer)

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H.E. Lyonpo Yeshey Penjor, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests

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H.E. Prof. Zhang Yaping, Vice President, Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS)

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H.E. Mr Prakash Javadekar, Minister, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change

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The HKH Call to Action

Background and context

An emerging regional consensus

In 15 October 2020, ministers from the eight Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) countries came together to sign a landmark declaration and endorse the [‘HKH Call to Action to sustain mountain environments and improve livelihoods in the Hindu Kush Himalaya’](#).

The HKH Ministerial Mountain Summit 2020 was unprecedented in many ways. It resulted in the signing of a historic declaration to strengthen regional cooperation, present a unified voice for the HKH at global platforms, assess the feasibility of establishing a regional institutional mechanism and, most importantly, enhance the uptake of scientific evidence for improving policies in the region.

“The climate crisis you haven’t heard of”

What brought these countries together to commit to coordinated climate action?

The dearth of information from the HKH region in the fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) made clearly evident a ‘data gap’. The governments of the HKH countries, already reeling from the impacts of climate change, also wanted a comprehensive assessment of the region’s mountains, environments and livelihoods, their status, and their future.

In response, ICIMOD – the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) – through its long-term, integrated science-policy initiative known as the Hindu Kush Himalayan Monitoring and Assessment Programme (HIMAP) – led the first comprehensive assessment of the region. Over 350 leading researchers, practitioners, and policy specialists working on the HKH, from 22 countries and 185 organizations contributed to the production of the report. This massive effort took five years of research, review, and analysis.

The report *The HKH Assessment: Mountains, Climate Change, Sustainability and People*, published in early 2019, received widespread regional and global recognition. It not only addressed the gap indicated by the IPCC, but also underscored the significance of the HKH as a vital regional lifeline and global asset, and

highlighted the threats to livelihoods, biodiversity, and sustainable development.

Above all, it provided actionable information for the governments in the region.

A global asset in peril

The global significance of the HKH is indisputable. Extending 3,500 km over eight countries, from Afghanistan in the west to Myanmar in the east and crossing Pakistan, India, China, Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh, the HKH is one of the world’s greatest, youngest and most fragile mountain systems.

As the source of 10 major Asian rivers, the HKH provides essential resources, especially water, to 1.9 billion people, and nourishes the grain baskets of Asia. It is also the largest reservoir of freshwater outside the two poles – referred to as the ‘Third Pole’. It also presents the paradox of widespread poverty within a region of rich ecosystems and abundant natural resources.

The HKH is the ‘pulse of the planet’. Being at the top of the world, changes to its cryosphere and biodiversity are a barometer of climate and environmental change across the world.

The HKH Assessment clearly highlighted the threats to this global asset. It noted that even the global 1.5 degree target is too hot for the mountains, due to elevation-dependent warming, and that one-third of HKH glaciers will melt by the end of the century even if that target is met. If global climate efforts failed, leading to five degrees of warming in the HKH, two thirds of the glaciers could be gone by 2100.

Country consultations, and a call to action

The next step was to take the HKH Assessment to the countries.

Through a series of consultative processes in all eight HKH countries in 2019, the key findings of the report and a draft HKH Call to Action were shared with government agencies, civil society, academia, and other stakeholders to build momentum for more robust regional cooperation and a roadmap for achieving the

UN Sustainable Development Goals in the mountains. The broad-based consultations led to greater ownership of the report at the country level and provided a fresh impetus for regional cooperation.

Country-specific actions and solutions were discussed, and six urgent actions were identified, tailored to the local, national, and regional contexts, resulting in a roadmap for collective ownership by the eight countries and coordinated actions at multiple scales.

From science to more robust regional cooperation

The HKH Call to Action and the commitments through the Ministerial Declaration are essential instruments in translating science into key national policies and programmes and will guide coordinated regional actions on the ground. Together, they envision a prosperous, peaceful and poverty-free region that is food, energy and water secure, as well as climate and disaster resilient, and call for a resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The HKH Ministerial Mountain Summit was a landmark event for accelerating coordinated action to address the climate crisis in the HKH and amplifying mountain voices to ensure that the pulse of the planet is healthy and vibrant.

Statements from ICIMOD



OPENING AND VISION

Dr David Molden, Director General, ICIMOD

Honourable Ministers from the HKH region, Excellencies, Ambassadors, Honourable ICIMOD Board Members, ICIMOD Support Group Members, Distinguished Dignitaries, Colleagues and Friends,

Today is a landmark day for the people and mountains of the Hindu Kush Himalaya Region, for Asia, and the world. Today is the day that our mountains bring us together to address many of the global challenges facing humanity.

The Hindu Kush Himalaya – the HKH – is the pulse of the planet. When the pulse is strong, we know humanity is healthy, but when the pulse is weak, we know we have problems in the world. And while today we feel a weak pulse in the HKH, we also feel today is a turning point to strengthen cooperation and prosperity in the region.

We know the challenges: the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, disasters, biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation, and the SDG challenges of poverty, inequality, and hunger. It is also a rapidly changing mountain world with migration, growing towns and cities, globalization, and connectivity.

We also know where hope lies: in the incredible strength and resilience of mountain women, men and children; and in the diversity of mountain cultures with their traditional knowledge that have managed to thrive in unique and difficult mountain environments. Hope also lies in the willingness of governments to address these challenges as we are witnessing here today.

ICIMOD, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, was formed 36 years ago with its eight member countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan with its headquarters in Kathmandu, Nepal. ICIMOD's mission is to enable sustainable and resilient mountain development for improved and equitable livelihoods through knowledge and regional cooperation. This mission is now even more important than ever.

ICIMOD recognizes that it is a mission that can only be achieved by working together in partnership with all of its member countries and with many stakeholders.

We have been working together with researchers, practitioners and policy makers to shed more light on and enhance science on this remote mountain area. I am happy to say that our science is rapidly advancing in the fields of climate change, glaciers and snow, air, water, biodiversity, and also the social and economic dimensions of mountain areas. Importantly, we have been working together to develop solutions to new and different sets of problems – in mountain farming, in biodiversity conservation, and in empowerment of women and other marginalized groups. Years of work and experience from the region has been captured in the HKH Assessment which brought over 350 researchers and practitioners from the region and the globe.

We recognize that the unique yet fragile Hindu Kush Himalaya are shared among eight countries. Water and air move across borders. Plants and animals know no boundaries. Mountain countries share common concerns about the severe impacts of climate change. Sharing knowledge and experience across countries can only help to address the enormous challenges we face today. We know that the cost of non-cooperation between countries is far too high – for example the floods, disasters, and conflicts that are known to the region. We know that the benefits of cooperation are huge: better management of natural resources, sharing ideas and solutions, promoting trade, and advancing our science. Cooperation and joint action will lead to an HKH region in which its societies and its people – its children, women and men – are:

- Food, energy, water, and environmentally secure; and, ultimately,
- Prosperous, healthy, peaceful, and poverty-free.

That is why we are together today. Together with our

ICIMOD Board of Governors, and stakeholders in all of the eight Regional Member Countries, a HKH Call to Action was developed, and is placed on the table today for endorsement – calling for urgent action through cooperation from community, business, civil society, government, the region and the world; recognizing the uniqueness of mountains; addressing climate change; increasing the resilience of people and ecosystems; increasing knowledge sharing; and urgent action to fulfil SDGs in the HKH. With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we can see how much more urgent these actions are since they all help to pave the way towards a more inclusive, green recovery for the HKH region.

The Ministerial Declaration tabled today recognizes and supports the HKH Call to Action, a biennial Ministerial Mountain Summit, and regular Science Policy Forums to formulate evidence based programmes and policies for sustainable mountain development.

Importantly it calls for a united voice on the HKH to give a much stronger voice to the mountain agenda and bring issues of the region more prominently onto the global stage. We have the power of eight countries. With a united mountain voice, due attention will be given to mountain issues at global events such as the UNFCCC and CBD COPs and thereby bring in increased investments on mountains for sustainable

development.

Where can this Call to Action go? This is an important first step to a long-lasting and growing cooperation among the regional member countries of ICIMOD. We are inspired by the eight countries who formed the Arctic Council and the eight countries forming the Alpine Convention. There is great potential that this summit can evolve in its own way into a more formal relationship between our eight HKH mountain countries – eight countries working for one HKH. ICIMOD with its regional mission will be there to support by maintaining its status as a neutral regional platform, and enhancing its role in generating evidence based knowledge and solutions to benefit the region and the world.

This day, which has brought Ministers together from our eight countries, is an historic day to remember.

On another note, this is my last moment as Director General of ICIMOD, and I have been honoured and inspired to serve the HKH for nine years. Today I would like to pass the responsibility to Dr Pema Gyamtsho, a mountain champion from the region, who has great knowledge, experience, passion and drive to take the agenda forward. I will remain in support of the HKH agenda.

Thank you!



CONSULTATION PROCESS

Mr Brij Mohan Singh Rathore, Chief Policy Advisor, ICIMOD

Honourable dignitaries, please allow me to share the process of getting the HKH Call to Action document in place. This has an interesting story line, in two parts.

The first part of the story concerns with knowing the HKH, as the evidence tells. So was born a mammoth

effort of over 350 scientist some 5 years back to produce the HKH Assessment report. The report was released early last year. It looks at the uniqueness of HKH, the drivers of change, the impacts, and the way forward. The first two decades of the 21st century have witnessed significant research on the regional, as well as on the national scale to better understand the HKH region.

The second part of the story is about doing, or actions around the key findings from the HKH Assessment. How was this scripted? Beginning in April last year and spread over eight months, consultations were held in each of eight regional member countries to define the actions. The process was supported by the national governments and the nodal ministries. These were multistakeholder consultations attended by policy makers, senior government officials, academics, civil society, donors and business representatives. The HKH Call to Action is an outcome of an extensive process of consultation and co-creation by eight countries.

A significant milestone in the journey has been the ICIMOD Board of Governors meeting in Gangtok,

in India last year. The Board leadership endorsed a) hosting of the first HKH Ministerial Mountain Summit in 2020, and b) setting up an interim task force drawn from the senior officials from the eight countries to draft a ministerial declaration and advise on preparation for the summit.

The interim task force held two meetings to have the draft declaration in place. It also advised on the logistics of the meetings. But for their ownership and support, the draft declaration would not have been possible.

Today's Ministerial Summit is a very significant milestone in the ongoing process of shared ownership and co-creation; now the time has come to step up actions at national, regional and global scale. The power of eight being seen today has all the necessary wherewithal to script the most important chapter of the story line – the one that contributes to a prosperous and poverty free HKH, with secured environment.

Thank you!



THE HINDU KUSH HIMALAYA ASSESSMENT AND
HKH CALL TO ACTION

**Dr Eklabya Sharma,
Deputy Director General, ICIMOD**

Dr Eklabya Sharma provided the background on the initiation of the HKH Assessment process, country consultations, and shared the key six urgent actions identified in the [HKH Call to Action](#).

The six urgent actions for the HKH include



Cooperate at all levels across the HKH region for sustainable and mutual benefits



Recognize and prioritize the uniqueness of the HKH mountain people



Take concerted climate action at all levels to keep global warming to 1.5 °C by 2100



Take accelerated actions to achieve the SDGs and 9 Mountain Priorities



Enhance ecosystem resilience; halt biodiversity loss and land degradation



Regional data and information sharing and science and knowledge cooperation

A summary of his presentation is contained in the 'Background and context' section at the beginning of this document.

Statements from ministers of eight HKH countries



WELCOME REMARKS

H.E. Mr Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Government of Nepal

Honourable Ministers,

Excellencies,

Board of Governors and Director General of ICIMOD,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen!

Namaskar and greetings from Nepal!

At a time when the world is confronted with an unprecedented crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have gathered virtually in today's Summit.

First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the ICIMOD in organizing this important Summit. It is a timely initiative in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic to deliberate on the impacts of the pandemic to the people of Hindu Kush Himalayan region and reaffirm our collective resolve and further strengthen cooperation among the member States.

Excellencies,

The Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region represents the largest reserve of ice and snow on the earth outside the polar regions. It serves as a fountain for fresh drinking water for billions of people, an indispensable water reservoir for the major river systems, and an important source of clean, green, and renewable energy in the region.

Likewise, the HKH region treasures a variety of herbs and plants having medicinal and aromatic values. It also caters to the genetic diversity of crops, contributing to the food security and nutrition, and preserves mountain resilient indigenous knowledge and technology, among others. It is estimated that nearly 1.9 billion people are directly or indirectly dependent on the region for the fulfilment of their requirements of food, water, and energy.

The region is blessed with spectacular mountains, lush green valleys, picturesque lakes, alpine meadows, and emerald grasslands; a true heaven on the earth that one could imagine. Culturally, it is one of the most diverse regions in the world. It has been a unique laboratory and true source of knowledge for many scholars, disciples, and researchers due to its richness in natural and cultural heritages, biodiversity, and flora and fauna, many of which are yet to be discovered.

The ancient Silk Road and trails passing through these Himalayas speak louder than words in today's intensely globalized world order. These ancient mountain heritages have witnessed our prosperity in the form of business and trade, knowledge and innovation, arts and crafts, and friendship and shared prosperity across the Himalayas and among the societies.

Excellencies,

The HKH region houses the 14 highest mountain peaks above 8000 meters, among many others. Out of them, Nepal is the custodian of the eight highest peaks, including Mount Everest – the top of the world. Nepal highly values mountains as these are the lifelines of our people to earn livelihood and to lead lives. Mountains are the sources of freshwater, diverse flora and fauna, and natural and cultural heritages coupled with mountain resilient indigenous knowledge and traditions. Let's not forget that these mountains have been crucial in stabilizing global climate change which bear organic, intrinsic and natural connections with sea level rise.

Located in the lap of the Himalaya, we have inherited mountain resilient cultural heritages from our forefathers and have been working with the international community in conserving mountains

and their ecosystems and preserving mountain-based civilization. Therefore, mountains are our unique identity as well as the core elements of our development aspiration towards “Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali.”

It was natural for Nepal to have played a leading role to establish the ICIMOD in Kathmandu. Our predecessors visualized the importance of such a regional organization long back, which has made tremendous progress since then to grab the opportunities and address the challenges confronted by us all. At this opportune moment, let me also mention here that Nepal had decided to convene the first episode of Sagarmatha Sambaad, a global dialogue forum in April this year under the theme of ‘Climate Change, Mountains and the Future of the Humanity’ but had to postpone it due to the outbreak of COVID-19. We are determined to organize it next year.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Mountains have been facing immense challenges over the years. The rising temperature and extreme weather conditions have caused a depletion of snow, disappearance of grasslands, meadows and wetlands, and negative impacts on natural and cultural heritage, among others. Global warming and climate change have been rapidly changing the socio-cultural and ecological landscapes of the region.

The degradation of habitats has endangered thousands of our rare and endemic species, many of which are on the verge of extinction. Reports have shown that the temperatures of Himalayan region have increased at a rate three times higher than the global average.

As a consequence, the region has experienced an increased occurrence of natural catastrophes and extreme weather conditions, severely impacting the lives and livelihood of our people. Nepal’s mountain-based ancient civilization, including the ethnic lifestyles, traditional knowledge, and unique practices are immensely threatened.

Amidst these challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic is another wake-up call for us to understand the potential consequences, which might occur if we continue to ignore these ground realities and place relentless pressure on nature and ecosystems. We cannot afford to waste any more time. This is a time for collective action and renewal of our commitments in building a resilient mountain ecosystem for the safety and benefits of humanity.

We have to realize the challenges and devise our strategies accordingly. Let us mark the year 2020 as the decade to translate our collective commitments into concrete actions that could strengthen the resilience of mountain people and environment as envisioned in

the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Let us call together for the full and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement along with commensurate climate financing to deliver better results in the spirit of regional cooperation. Together, we can save our planet and people both from the climate change as well as the COVID-19 pandemic. Having said so, I once again reaffirm that Nepal attaches a high priority for the conservation of mountains and their ecosystems and look forward to work closely with the ICIMOD member states in the days ahead.

Dear friends,

Before I conclude, let me once again welcome you all to this important Summit. I hope that the Summit will act as a platform to facilitate the exchange of information, scientific knowledge, research, and the best practices that would be crucial in translating our commitments into actions.

I am confident that the Ministerial Declaration of the Summit to be adopted will be helpful in charting out the joint actions and promoting cooperation at regional and global levels in line with the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

Let us not allow the on-going pandemic to weaken our collective resolve and endeavours to protect and conserve the Hindu Kush Himalaya. As a mountainous country rich in natural and cultural diversities, Nepal remains committed to work together with the concerned stakeholders in the region and beyond to mitigate the challenges of climate change and their adverse effects.

I, once again, commend the leadership of ICIMOD for organizing such an event of global significance, and for the support and contributions it has made in the conservation of mountains and their ecosystems over the years. It is my earnest hope that this Summit will make substantial contribution towards addressing the climate change and sustainable mountain development issues in the Hindu Kush Himalaya region and beyond while keeping people’s lives and livelihood at the centre. I am confident that the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration on the HKH Call to Action would go a long way towards meeting these shared objectives. I wish the Ministerial Mountain Summit all the success.

I thank you all for your attention!



AFGHANISTAN

**H.E. Mr Anwarul Haq Ahadi,
Minister, Ministry of Agriculture,
Irrigation and Livestock**

*On behalf of the Minister, the statement was made by H.E.
Hashmatullah Ghafoori, Deputy Minister of Irrigation and Natural
Resources*

(Bismillah-Alrahman-Alrahim)

Excellencies,

Honourable Ministers and delegates from the HKH
regional member countries,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Asalam O Alaikom Wa Rahmatullah Wa Barakato and
very good morning

It is a place of honour participating in today's Hindu
Kush Himalaya (HKH) Ministerial Mountain Summit
to put in place unity of action for the wellbeing of our
people. The Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) is one of the
largest mountain systems in the world, and everyone
knows that the future of the HKH matters to over two
billion people on the earth.

Let me express my deep appreciation for the works of
ICIMOD and experts from regional member countries
for their generous efforts for the undertaking of a
comprehensive HKH Assessment, the HKH Call to
Action and preparing of a policy paper on COVID-19
impact and policy responses, and now to further
strengthen the mountain agenda and emphasis on
the ownership of regional member countries, for
organizing of the HKH Ministerial Mountain Summit
in 2020.

The Hindu Kush Himalaya region has always
been a fragile ecosystem, and protecting it is our
shared concern, and the keys are cooperation and
responsibility. Therefore, I congratulate ICIMOD and
all the HKH member countries for organizing this
virtual meeting.

Today is a remarkable occasion, and the initial step for
a new beginning to move forward and urge for taking
practical actions at the national and regional level, and
to have a unified voice at the international scale.

We all know the HKH region is not only the water
tower with wild nature and beautiful mountain
landscapes. It is also a region very much defined by its
diversity, culture, and its people living there.

The HKH Assessment presented science-based
evidence about our region of continued challenges and
change. And yes, the scientific findings are robust. This
region is experiencing rapid change, driven by climate
change, disasters, economic growth, globalization,
land-use change, migration, and urbanization, which
will continue to have significant consequences not only
for people living in the region but globally.

The IPCC reports speak volumes. Moreover, all studies
demonstrate the importance of facts and science for
the urgency of action. To a large extent, climate change
could be a human-made phenomenon. So, it should
logically give room for some optimism that it's in
women and men's hands to do something about it.

The 2030 Development Agenda is a milestone to
overcome the socio-economic, environmental
challenges, and countries are required to align
their national policies for development. The HKH
Assessment and the subsequent consultations on
HKH Call to Action have identified the priorities for
mountain regions of HKH, with its linkages to the
regional and global actions.

In Afghanistan, four decades of conflicts resulted in
the loss of life, insecurity, and widespread damage
to the environment and natural resources. Similarly,
reports indicate that being one of the most vulnerable
countries in the region, Afghanistan is facing the real
impacts of climate change. Hundreds of people lost
their lives, and thousands were displaced by floods just
a month ago in 15 provinces.

Moreover, ICIMOD's recent study has shown that
Afghanistan lost 406 sq. km (13.8%) of glacier area
in 25 years from 1990 to 2015. These changes in high
altitudes have pressing impacts on water resources,
agriculture, and ultimately on livelihoods of the larger
population living downstream.

Recognizing the importance of taking action on time,
the Government of Afghanistan has made conscious
efforts towards addressing these changes over the past
decade. However, walking alone on this journey will
take us nowhere. Therefore, I would like to commend
ICIMOD's efforts to bring all the countries from the
Hindu Kush Himalaya to join hands together for
collective actions at national and regional levels to
promote the HKH Call to Action.

In our history, we have been witness that renowned regional and international cooperation networks were born, and most of them were born out of a crisis, with the spirit of solidarity, collective action, and collective leadership, to offer solutions.

We should not let this uncondusive situation to prolong; therefore, we need to take many determined steps towards a sustainable future. Our healthy environment and ecosystem is our wealth. No one is safe until everyone is safe.

The urgent action 1, which calls to promote and strengthen regional cooperation at all levels across the HKH Region, is the entry point. It can further facilitate collaborations for the remaining actions, and the opportunities this cooperation creates is the great potential inherent in this region.

Our common goal, to save the HKH, requires further scientific research, business innovation, shared priorities, and a political will. Let us work together to strengthen our capacity and ensure that we will build back better towards a much healthier and more productive region.

I think a periodic assessment every five years of the change in the HKH region would offer a better

understanding for policy purposes, and to further enhance sharing and prioritizing of actions.

I am sure this Ministerial Mountain Summit will be listed as the first milestone towards our shared concerns and determination to make collective efforts. And we look forward to a robust regional collaboration for meaningful and productive actions that will make the HKH Mountains a better place for coming generations.

Once again, I would like to congratulate ICIMOD and express our full support for this initiative. I also wish to convey my sincere thanks to all those experts and partners that made the HKH Assessment Report, the HKH Call to Action, and the HKH Ministerial Mountain Summit, possible to happen.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Excellencies - the Ministers, and ICIMOD Board Members for the great dedication to the wellbeing of the HKH region and people, and for dignifying this virtual gathering with the signing of a declaration.

Thank you!



BANGLADESH

**H.E. Mr Bir Bahadur Ushwe Sing,
MP, Minister, Ministry of Chittagong Hill
Tracts Affairs**

H.E. Mr Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, Honourable Foreign Minister of the Government of Nepal, Honourable Ministers from Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan, the Director General of ICIMOD, distinguished guests, officials and media, a very good morning to all of you.

Let me first extend my thanks to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development

(ICIMOD) for organizing this meeting in this difficult time.

Excellencies,

The Year 2020 is a very special year for us as we are celebrating the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who was the architect of the sovereign and independent Bangladesh. Our reflection on his life, struggle and sacrifice is a constant source of our encouragement for a brighter future of Bangladesh and celebrating his achievements gives us the hope and strength to cope with the challenges and adversities such as COVID-19 health risks and climate threats. We had planned many events for the year to observe and reflect on his life, struggle, and sacrifice and celebrate his achievements, but unfortunately due to the global pandemic, our Prime Minister decided to hold the events virtually. I would like to start by paying my deepest homage to our Father of the Nation, who had realized the importance of regional and global cooperation and called for a greater international cooperation to mitigate natural calamities effectively, in his very first speech at the United Nations General Assembly in 1974.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are passing through an unprecedented crisis in the history of humankind due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The wave of COVID-19 has affected Bangladesh like all other countries of the world. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, Bangladesh has also been suffering from floods and was hit by the cyclone Amphan. Thanks to the Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's timely and decisive actions, we have successfully managed to contain the spread of the COVID-19 infection and its fatality. The government provided food and other forms of social protection immediately for approximately 10 million people who lost their jobs due to the pandemic. The government also provided cash incentives to five million people including farmers, workers and labourers affected by the pandemic. The Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs has also taken a number of measures, including provision of food aid and cash delivery in CHT to support the poor people of CHT. A PCR lab has been established in Rangamati to provide fast and accurate COVID-19 test result for the three hill districts. Fortunately, the COVID-19 infection has shown a declining trend and our economy is also showing some positive turns gradually.

Dear friends and colleagues,

We all know that the whole planet is at risk of global warming and climate change. Like other countries in the region, Bangladesh has been facing serious challenges due to climate change. Although Bangladesh has not been a major contributor to global warming, we are one of most vulnerable countries in the world. We have been facing a multitude of challenges due to climate change. Increasing floods, droughts, cyclones, sea level rise, saline intrusion – all of these calamities have been affecting us severely. As Bangladesh is a downstream country and drains water from two mighty rivers, Ganges and Brahmaputra, we face recurrent floods. Given our common vulnerabilities to the vagaries of the changing climate, it is important that we come together on building a future that is resilient to climate change. We welcome ICIMOD's Hindu Kush Himalaya Assessment report which urges collaborative action for adaptation and mitigation of climate change. The report was shared in Dhaka in October 2019.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Bangladesh is at the forefront in combating the climate-induced disasters through the implementation of various mitigation and adaptation programmes. The Bangladesh government has been implementing many programmes to mitigate impacts and vulnerability of climate change. Our scientists have developed saline, flood and drought resistant crops, and floating

agriculture technology. We have been expanding the construction of cyclone shelters in the coastal areas, first introduced by our Father of the Nation 45 years ago. For adaptation to climate change, the government has been spending an average of US\$ 2 billion per year since 2010.

Just last month, on September 7th, Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the Bangladesh regional office of the Global Centre on Adaptation (GCA) for South Asia. This is a milestone for our partnership and hopefully the Global Centre on Adaptation office in Bangladesh will identify and promote sustainable solutions and innovative adaptation measures in the region. It is also important for us to work together at the regional level, exchange ideas and best practices and use them for a safer and shared future. Bangladesh is ready to share its experiences and best practices regarding adaptation and disaster management.

Excellencies,

Bangladesh is committed to regional and global cooperation. Bangladesh actively participates in SAARC, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), and sub-regional cooperation of BBIN-Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal to strengthen connectivity and economic cooperation. Bangladesh contributed USD 1.5 million to SAARC Initiatives on COVID-19 to fight the corona virus pandemic.

The pandemic is a stark reminder that our fates are interconnected and that no one is secure until everyone is secure. We must all walk together in collaboration and in partnership to save our planet. The cause of climate change is global, so along with national and regional action, a global commitment and action for mitigation is also urgently needed.

We appreciate the efforts of ICIMOD for organizing this meeting. Bangladesh is committed to strengthening regional cooperation and connectivity in the region for mutual benefit of all the countries. I, hereby express my agreement with the Ministerial Declaration on the HKH Call to Action and urge ICIMOD to organize this meeting on a regular basis to strengthen regional cooperation and collaboration on climate change adaptation and mitigation.

I thank you all.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu!

May Bangladesh live forever!



BHUTAN

**H.E. Lyonpo Yeshey Penjor,
Minister, Ministry of Agriculture and
Forests**

Honourable Ministers from the Hindu Kush
Himalayan Region,

Your Excellencies and ICIMOD's Board of Governors,

H.E. Dr Pema Gyamtsho, DG, ICIMOD,

Dr David Molden, Former DG, ICIMOD

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to convey the warmest greetings from His Majesty the King, the people, and Government of Bhutan.

At this significant and auspicious event, it is my great privilege to deliver the country statement on behalf of the Royal Government of Bhutan.

Let me extend my heartfelt appreciation to ICIMOD for hosting this important HKH Ministerial Mountain Summit 2020 amidst the current COVID-19 pandemic situation. It certainly is a historic moment for the peoples of mountains as millions of people depend on various ecosystems services within the region and beyond. The deliberations and decisions from this summit will go a long way in preserving, protecting and for sustainable use of HKH mountain assets for all times to come.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank Dr David Molden, former DG of ICIMOD for his outstanding contribution to the mountains and its communities. Under your leadership, ICIMOD could deliver and achieve many milestones including the HIMAP report, which has increased the ownership by member countries, and most importantly you leave behind the legacy of a strong team that is capable of addressing the many challenges that HKH Mountain continues to face.

Let me also extend warm welcome Dr Pema Gyamtsho

as the new Director General. We certainly look forward to ICIMOD growing from strength to strength and be able to respond to the emerging needs and priorities of the RMCs, raise mountain voice at the global forums, and draw increased investments for HKH Mountains and communities.

I also wish to put on record the leadership provided by the ICIMOD board of Governors for providing strategic guidance and particularly wish to thank members of the ICIMOD Support Group for their continued support in terms of financial resources. And as we move forward, the need for your continued support would be felt even greater and we look forward for your continuous indulgence in the HKH region.

Excellencies,

I would like to begin by stating that Bhutan has some of the best policies and practices in terms of its environmental conservation efforts. We are blessed to have farsighted monarchs, who had carefully put in place sound environmental policies within the overarching philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH). The GNH framework continues to guide Bhutan's development path of balanced socio-economic development with optimum environment and biodiversity conservation. The constitution of Bhutan requires that 60% of the country should be under forest cover for all times to come. The current forest cover remains at 72%. Also, Bhutan has committed to remain carbon neutral, currently being one of the only carbon negative countries in the world.

Despite being one of the champions on the environmental front, Bhutan remains as one of the most vulnerable countries in the HKH to the impacts of climate change. With nearly 69% of population dependent on subsistence agriculture farming practices, we have already seen disturbing trends affecting its food production due to shifting monsoon patterns and drying of spring sources across the country. Also as the country is dependent on hydropower as its main source of revenue, the high weather variability as well as risk of GLOF continue to pose significant threat to loss of its revenue streams and its ramifications on the economic progress. Landslides and flash floods continue to remain as major threats to its infrastructures as well as human lives. All these natural and manmade disasters continue to impede various socio-economic progress in Bhutan.

Excellencies,

Indeed, the impact of climate change transcends beyond national boundaries. No country, despite its best efforts, can be immune to these impacts as drivers of change are global in nature. As the global leaders debate and negotiate around implementation

of Paris agreements, people in our parts of the region are already struggling to deal with the impacts of climate change. Sadly, the mountain voices are rarely heard at the global negotiation platforms, and as a consequence, global funds for adaptation and mitigations to the HKH mountain states still remains inadequate.

It is in this context, that I would like to applaud ICIMOD for timely production of the assessment report of the Hindu Kush Himalaya that has generated robust science-based evidence on impacts of climate change and its various drivers. The report has not only filled the much need data gaps on the Himalaya in the IPCC reports but also recommends urgent action, now detailed in the HKH Call to Action. These reports were supplemented by the policy paper on impacts of COVID-19 in the HKH and its policy response. These knowledge products served as strong, science based rationale for this august gathering of HKH Ministerial Mountain Summit.

Excellencies,

The need for regional cooperation is more urgent than ever before. The current COVID-19 pandemic has certainly disrupted achieving SDG goals across the globe, but it has also reminded us of the need to care and nurture our mother nature. Unless countries work together and put concerted effort for post COVID-19 green recovery pathways, the business as usual attitude will only accelerate the impacts of climate change as well as make the globe much vulnerable to many more such pandemics and disasters at unimaginable scale.

Therefore, it is the most auspicious and opportune moment that ICIMOD has provided this unique platform for our eight HKH mountain nations to come together to save this Himalayas – which ICIMOD aptly termed as the ‘pulse of the planet’. On behalf of Bhutan, I wholeheartedly announce our endorsement of the HKH Ministerial Declaration and urge that the HKH Ministerial Mountain Summit be organized on a regular basis. Bhutan fully recognizes and supports the vision of the HKH Call to Action – which calls for a prosperous, peaceful and poverty-free region that is food, energy and water secure, and climate and disaster resilient communities in the mountains, downstream, and beyond.

Furthermore, I entrust ICIMOD to play an active role as a secretariat to coordinate the HKH Ministerial Mountain Summit, and urge ICIMOD to enhance and strengthen resource mobilization and help the member countries implement the HKH Call to Action. I also suggest that the outcome of our deliberations at this Summit should feed directly into the ICIMOD Board of Governors to develop required support to

the member countries and aim to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Let me also pledge all our HKH member countries to support this unique and historic declaration, and commit ourselves to put this declarations into action. It is time for our region to take full ownership of mountain affairs and be responsible and committed to secure our valuable living Himalayan heritage – the water tower of Asia and the Third Pole. Let us all join hands in partnership to play a key role in promoting stable, inclusive and sustainable green growth through close cooperation within the HKH region for the benefit of mountain communities and the mountain ecosystem.

Thank you and *Tashi Delek!*



CHINA

**H.E. Prof. Zhang Yaping,
Vice President, Chinese Academy of
Sciences (CAS)**

On behalf of the Vice President of CAS, the statement was made by the Vice Director Yang Yongping, CAS.

Dear Ministers,

Dear ICIMOD Board of Governors,

Dear Dr David Molden and Dr Pema Gyamtsho,

Dear colleagues and friends, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning!

It is a great pleasure for me to meet you all and attend this HKH Ministerial Mountain Summit today. On behalf of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and China, I would like to express my highest appreciation to ICIMOD for arranging this special event and its long-term efforts to enable sustainable and resilient mountain development for improved and equitable livelihoods in the HKH region.

The HKH Assessment published last year presents a comprehensive understanding of the past course, current situation and future scenarios of the region's unique mountain environment, peoples and socioeconomics. It helps us to further recognize the significance of the HKH region as a vital lifeline not only for the region but also globally. It calls our attention to the immediate threats the region is facing including climate change, demographic changes, increasing demand for natural resources, drive for fast economic growth, rapid urbanization, poverty and inadequate governance systems. It highlights the need for regional collaboration and global efforts for the conservation and development of the region. The Assessment has laid a solid foundation for the HKH Call to Action. China strongly supports the vision set out in the HKH Call to Action. We are committed to cooperating with the member countries to implement this call to action.

The philosophy of ecological civilization has been enshrined in China's Constitution and inducted into its national policies and strategies as well as international cooperation programmes and initiatives including the Belt and Road Initiative. By hosting the CBD COP15 in Kunming, China is determined to work with the international community, including our ICIMOD member countries, to conserve the fast declining global biodiversity.

The 2020 is an important year for China's history as it aims to eradicate all forms of absolute rural poverty under current criteria as part of its pledge to the UN SDGs. Mountains, especially the HKH region, are home to most of the poverty-stricken population of China. Integrating conservation and local development has always been the challenge and policy focus for the governments of China at all levels.

While addressing the recently concluded UN Summit on Biodiversity, Chinese President Xi Jinping stressed that China, guided by the vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind, has been actively participating in global environmental governance and pledged that China is prepared to take on international responsibilities commensurate with its level of development. President Xi promised that China will continue to make efforts to scale up its nationally determined contributions toward the goals of the Paris Agreement and that China will strive to peak CO2 emission before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060.

China has been attaching great importance to the conservation and development of the HKH region. China regards ecological safeguards as an integral component of its national security. In its national spatial planning, Tibet Plateau and its adjacent area are all designated as areas of national importance for ecological functions. Targeted policies, special financial mechanisms, technology innovations and development modalities were designed for the region to achieve the double goals of conservation and development.

China has been actively cooperating with member countries in the HKH region in various fields including scientific research, technological transfer, capacity building, development assistance and investment. Meanwhile, we also realized that more regional collaboration is needed to effectively address the challenges of the region.

The on-going global COVID-19 pandemic further reminds us that we are living in an interconnected global village with a common stake. As a member country in this region, we are glad and honoured that we have the shared vision and position with all other seven countries for the future development.

We are facing similar regional and global challenges; therefore China will continue to work closely with ICIMOD and all member countries to have more robust regional and multinational cooperation to tackle these common challenges and achieve the goals of common prosperity.

To conclude my remarks, I would like to state that we welcome and support this declaration and stress that, as the largest national research and development body in China, CAS will continue to play a unique and important role in this process.

Thank you!



INDIA

H.E. Mr Prakash Javadekar, Minister, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change

At the outset, Honourable Union Minister of Environment, Forests and Climate Change Shri Prakash Javadekar highlighted the importance of the six urgent actions outlined in the HKH Call to Action for India and stated that India fully supports the HKH Call to Action. The Honourable Minister stated that India is committed to cooperate at all levels across the HKH region for sustainable and mutual benefits.

India recognises and prioritises the uniqueness of HKH mountain people, their culture, and heritage.

India has pledged for restoration of 26 million hectares of degraded land.

The forested landscapes of the Himalaya act as a major carbon sink with a total carbon pool of over 2.5 billion tons. The region has large water reserves in the form of glaciers covering approximately 37,000 sq km. The value of ecosystem services from Himalayan forests are estimated at about Rs. 1 trillion/yr.

Indian Himalayas are a treasure house of traditional knowledge and practices. Communities use over 675 wild plant species as food and nearly 1750 plants are known to have medicinal values.

The flora and fauna and the genetic diversity of crops and ecosystems are being impacted at a fast pace. There is increase in the frequency of disasters and

extreme events. Also, about one third of Himalayan springs are reporting reduced water discharge. Frequency of human-wildlife conflicts are on increase.

Speaking about the *HKH Assessment*, the Union Minister said that the new study gives new hope.

India accords very high significance to the Himalayan region. Besides a dedicated Institute for Research and Development in the form of GB Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment, National Mission on Himalayan Studies (NMHS) has been taken up to enhance ecological, cultural and socio-economic assets and values of the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR). The Honourable Minister also underlined the significant achievements made under NMHS, stating that 190 projects have been sanctioned and more than 250 institutions and organizations are participating in the programme.

The government has also launched National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem (NMSHE) to contribute to India's climate action for mitigating likely impacts of change due to natural causes, and human activities in the Himalayan Region in a coordinated manner involving all possible stakeholders.

Many of the issues like atmospheric pollution, biodiversity conservation, water-induced disasters, conservation of biocultural heritage, food and nutritional security of mountain communities, and trade and tourism cut across boundaries.

There is need to have a better understanding of common challenges and opportunities in the entire Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region. The HKH Assessment report, developed by over 350 scientists from the region and coordinated by ICIMOD is a step forward towards integration of scientific evidences and the policies and practices in the HKH countries.

The HKH Call to Action developed in consultation with eight HKH countries will help in laying the roadmap for strengthening our quest towards prosperous, peaceful Himalayan region that is food, energy and water secure with built-in environmental and social safeguards.

The disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted to a certain extent but India is recovering fast and the opportunities lost in tourism and other areas will get back by next year.

The HKH Ministerial Summit will lay the foundation for improved cooperation among HKH countries based on good scientific evidences to tackle serious environmental issues in this significant region of the world. The HKH is a unique region which cannot be compared with any other region in the world and therefore we have to keep our treasure intact and develop it in a sustainable way.

India fully supports the HKH Call to Action and is very happy with the forum of Ministers of HKH countries. The Honourable Minister urged all countries and ICIMOD to make such interactions a regular feature and suggested to continue this as a biennial effort to strengthen cooperation.

The Honourable Minister thanked ICIMOD for organising the event to help strengthen collaborative actions across HKH region and expressed the hope that this will go a long way in contributing to the wellbeing of the people and environment of the Himalayan region which is critical for food, water and energy security. He suggested that the countries must hold a multi stakeholder HKH science-policy forum on a regular basis in order to enhance the uptake of scientific evidence for improving policies in the region focusing on mountain environment and livelihoods and that they must constitute a task force for this purpose.

In closing, the Honourable Minister further added that the agreement of all countries will reflect in the Ministerial Declaration and thanked everybody for their active cooperation in sustainable development of Hindu Kush Himalayan region.



MYANMAR

H.E. U Ohn Win, Union Minister, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation

Excellencies, honourable Members of the Board of Governors, distinguished Members of the ICIMOD Support Group, Dr David Molden, Director General of ICIMOD, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

First and foremost, I would like to extend my warmest greetings to you all on this auspicious occasion. May you all be blessed with physical and spiritual wellbeing. Taking this opportunity, I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), particularly Dr David Molden, the Director General for convening this Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) Ministerial Summit virtually amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. I thank you for the kind invitation

extended to me to participate in this important forum. I consider it a privilege and honour to represent Myanmar at this meeting. I welcome the opportunity to exchange views and experiences on our endeavours to achieve sustainable development of our mountain communities.

This Summit is no doubt a reflection of our region's strong interest to share our views, experiences and thoughts on the key findings of the HKH Assessment and the HKH Call to Action as well as for the strengthening of science-based regional cooperation, and the lending of our unified voice for mountains on the global stage.

It is in this context that I wish to express my belief that this Summit will provide the impetus needed for the Regional Member Countries to be able to move forward in the implementation of the collaborative programmes and partnership pertaining to the sustainable development of mountain communities and mountain ecosystems. I am confident that this Summit will be able to develop synergies and initiate regional cooperation that can grow from strength to strength in the years to come.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Myanmar, as one of the founding members of ICIMOD, has been collaborating with the Centre for over three decades in various development programmes, including the Landscape Initiative for the Far-Eastern Himalaya (HI-LIFE), the Himalayan University Consortium (HUC), the Himalica programme, and the REDD+ Himalaya Initiative.

Myanmar and ICIMOD have been working closely in the area of enhancing the resilience to climate change and other changes in vulnerable communities through the programme of support to livelihood improvement and diversification, and to related capacity building and institutional strengthening. We have also been cooperating with regard to a wide range of activities that include internships, research and demonstration, regional and international workshops, and conferences.

Myanmar has also participated in various project activities which include remote sensing and GIS, biodiversity conservation, watershed management, ecotourism, community forestry, livelihood improvement, REDD+ and climate change mitigation and adaptation in the mountain region. Myanmar has gained substantial benefit from the ICIMOD regional programmes as they contribute to the sustainable development of the mountain communities and the sustainable management of forests.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to express our deep appreciation to ICIMOD for its enduring commitment not only to facilitate the collaborative programmes among partners but also in the supporting capacity development of our peoples through various channels.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to take this opportunity to share with you the progress Myanmar has achieved in forestry and environmental sector. Myanmar as a signatory to international conventions, agreements and treaties such as the UNFCCC, the UNCBD and the UNCCD has been striving ceaselessly to promote climate change mitigation, biodiversity conservation, to combat desertification through sustainable forest management, restoration of degraded forest ecosystems and to combat Drought, Land Degradation and Desertification (DLDD).

Myanmar, as a party to the Paris Agreement, has also developed policy instruments, action plans and set-up sectoral coordination mechanisms to play its role in the global efforts on climate change. Myanmar is developing a new action plan, Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) which will be submitted to the UNFCCC. Despite being a relatively low greenhouse gas (GHG) emitter and being a net GHG sink, Myanmar has itself affirmed its willingness to undertake a series of actions to demonstrate its commitment to climate change mitigation and highlight options for adaptation.

Myanmar recognizes the importance of creating harmony and balance between economic development and environmental sustainability. Accordingly, the National Environmental Policy (2019), the Myanmar

Climate Change Policy (2019), the Myanmar Climate Change Strategy (2018-2030), and the Myanmar Climate Change Master Plan (2018-2030) have been endorsed and launched to further provide strategic direction to the country. The Forest Law (2018), the Conservation of Biodiversity and Protected Areas Law (2018) and the Community Forestry Instructions (2019) are in place, and are being exercised as legal frameworks for the forests, biodiversity and livelihood improvement of the local communities.

In order to reduce deforestation and forest degradation as well as to strengthen sustainable forest management, the Government of Myanmar has initiated important actions that include the Log Export Ban, the Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEG-T), the Myanmar Timber Legality and Assurance System (MTLAS), REDD+, and the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI).

In addition to the aforementioned measures, the nationally funded Myanmar Rehabilitation and Reforestation Programme (MRRP) (2017-18 to 2026-2027) and the Re-introducing Natural Habitats for Wildlife Programme (2019-2020 to 2028-29) were also initiated to strengthen sustainable forest management, restore degraded forests, accelerate biodiversity conservation, improve rural community and, importantly, mitigate climate change.

In this regard, I am very pleased and happy to learn about the key findings of the HKH Assessment and “The HKH Call to Action” which outlines six urgent actions for the environmental sustainability and the improvement of people’s well-being and prosperity in the HKH Region.

The HKH Call to Action is very much in line with Myanmar’s efforts of sustainable development. Accordingly, we would like to welcome the HKH Call to Action and we are keen to extend our cooperation to implement the measures in collaboration with ICIMOD and the Regional Member Countries.

Here, I would like to touch upon the challenge posed by the worldwide spread of COVID-19. Myanmar has not been spared the devastating effects of the pandemic. Like in other countries, COVID-19 has caused a series of negative impacts and compounded the vulnerabilities of mountain communities already impacted by climate change and natural disasters such as landslides, floods, and earthquakes. The HKH Call to Action as well as the preparation of the recovery packages of COVID-19 will be helpful for all of us to address the structural drivers of vulnerabilities, to conserve our forests and to build inclusive and resilient societies. We need to value our natural resources and ecosystem services to better inform policy and decision-making particularly as the HKH Region is a

hotspot of unique biodiversity and ecosystems. With this, I strongly recommend moving forward so that we would be able to translate policy into sound actions employing approaches that are inclusive and nature-based.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

In conclusion, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the ICIMOD Secretariat, the Board of Governors, the development partners, all the speakers and task force members for their tremendous efforts to ensure the success of this summit. My thanks also go to all the leading researchers, practitioners and policy specialists who shared their expertise, experiences

and precious time in the preparation of the HKH Assessment and the HKH Call to Action.

I firmly believe that we will be able to achieve result oriented outcomes at the end of the summit and build upon the momentum for more robust regional cooperation and a roadmap for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Member Countries.

I wish the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) Ministerial Mountain Summit 2020 every success.

Thank you very much!



NEPAL

**H.E. Mr Shakti Bahadur Basnet,
Minister, Ministry of Forests and
Environment**

Honourable Fellow Ministers,

Excellencies,

Director General of ICIMOD,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen!

I begin by thanking and congratulating ICIMOD for organizing this important Hindu Kush Himalaya Ministerial Summit 2020.

I feel honoured and privileged to be here with you today in this summit 2020.

We must look now at where our antecedents, civilization, culture, religion and societal values originated from. We must not forget that we originated from mountains and mountains live in our lives and vice versa. Our mountains matter more than we know.

The Hindu Kush Himalaya is the youngest and highest mountain system of the world that provides invaluable ecosystem services to the vast population in this region.

Nepal is a mountainous country, with the mid-hills and mountains making up 64% and 17% of Nepal's total area, respectively. For Nepal, mountain resources are a lifeline. They provide fresh air, clean water, food and livelihood, mineral and medicine, and help to sustain human life and economy. Nepal accords high priority to mountain conservation and has made a good progress on community-based resource conservation.

Climate change, one of the most pressing global environmental challenges facing humanity, has implications on food production, natural eco-systems, fresh water supply and health in mountains. Mountain ecosystems are highly sensitive to climate change and are being impacted faster and disproportionately than other terrestrial habitats.

The rise in air temperature is leading to rapid melting of glaciers and increment of glacial lakes. Hence, the threat from melting glaciers, glacial lakes and possible outburst is posing serious concern to lives and property in the downstream. Major river systems of this region which are linkage and lifeline of upstream and downstream are being severely impacted. At this point, we must not be further late to handle this scenario.

Extreme climate events due to climate change such as heavy rainfall, flooding, droughts, heat wave and cold stream are also posing challenges in the mountains. Moreover, Nepal is largely dependent on climate-sensitive sectors for its economy such as rain-fed agriculture; its fragile mountain ecosystems and dramatic topography make the country prone to

flooding. Due to such events, agricultural productivity is declining with increasing problem of food security in mountainous regions.

Similarly, exploitation of natural resources associated with growing population has led to increasing pollution, declining water quality, and land degradation.

In recent years, the signs of such changes are being observed and may become more prominent over next couple of decades. Many rural communities are struggling through different adaptation measures as an attempt to reduce the risk of climate change vulnerability.

Mountains are not only threatened by climate change, but also deforestation, mining, tourism, unsustainable farming and population growth – these all increase erosion and desertification, threaten biodiversity and trigger floods and landslides. In addition, hunger, malnutrition and poverty are rising in mountain areas.

Over the last decade, the Government of Nepal has taken a number of concrete steps to ensure that our development pathway is resilient to climate change and inclusive through policy formulation, institutional arrangements and strengthening, programme development and implementation.

The Government of Nepal, with the goal of contributing to socio-economic prosperity by developing climate resilient society, has developed and implemented Environment Protection Act, 2019 and Regulations 2020; National Climate Change Policy, 2019; and LAPA Framework, 2019 and several climate change projects under international climate finance.

Nepal, by the end of 2020 or soon thereafter, will have Gender and Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, Resilience Planning Guideline, a well-structured climate change planning process; Nepal's Long Term Strategy on Climate Change, an enhanced NDC Report submitted and a NAP formulated; third national communication report submitted, priority measures addressed from the international funding mechanism; and concrete ground results in building adaptive capacities.

Nepal is already experiencing significant social, environmental and economic shocks due to COVID-19. Going forward we need to focus on nature-based solutions, transitioning to a green economy and a green recovery in the context of post COVID-19.

At this juncture, I would like to highly commend the efforts of ICIMOD on climate change and environment as an intergovernmental knowledge and learning centre in developing and sharing research,

information, innovation and providing science-based evidences required for our policy processes.

Protecting mountains constitutes a critical component of our national aspiration of “Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali”.

I sincerely believe that a regional cooperation with strong national initiatives, backed up by effective collaborative partnership will go a long way in overcoming the adverse effects of climate change and sustainable development pathways. The Government of Nepal fully recognizes and supports the six urgent actions outlined in the HKH Call to Action and we should collectively strive to work together to mainstream these actions into policies and programmes.

I consider this Ministerial Summit a significant milestone for us. Let us muster requisite political will, promote ideas and innovations and act robustly to conserve our mountains. Let's unite and work together to protect mountains for the future of humanity!

Thank you!



PAKISTAN

**H.E. Mr Syed Fakhar Imam,
Federal Minister, Ministry of National
Food Security and Research**

Honourable Ministers,

ICIMOD Board Members,

ICIMOD officials,

Ladies and gentlemen, my greetings and appreciation to all the participants.

I am really delighted to be part of this Ministerial Mountain Summit today through a virtual platform.

I congratulate ICIMOD for hosting such an important high-level summit at a time where unprecedented climatic and non-climate changes are impacting millions of lives more than ever – not - only in mountains and countries alone but also across the world.

It is also an important and a timely conference especially given the pandemic situation the world is going through. This pandemic has challenged our social, economic, ecological and governance systems to the extreme and at the same time it has given us an opportunity to learn from each other experiences and plan jointly going beyond individual, community and national borders across the globe to address this challenge.

Pakistan is fortunate to be home to a very rich and diverse natural resource and biodiversity. Mountains are very important as they embody most important natural resources and ecosystems services. Pakistan still being a predominantly agricultural economy, it is the glaciers that provide water to the great Indus basin that is the food basket of 220 million people. The mountain resources are not only important for food security but equally for energy, industrial production and modernization of goods and services, including tourism.

Honourable excellencies,

It is important to note that climate change not only adversely impacts lives, environment, and adaptive capacities of the people and natural systems but also offers an array of opportunities – it may be in the form of crops, livestock, fisheries, forests, products, processes and technology. It is in this context that we all must come together to develop comprehensive and sustainable solutions for mountain people which are critical in achieving sustainable development goals at the national, regional, and international levels.

I am pleased to mention that Pakistan is fully aware of the challenges and is developing its strategies, and policies to overcome the growing challenges.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Given the agenda of the conference and the declaration that has been presented for strengthening regional efforts for the HKH region, I believe that HKH region is a vital regional lifeline for livelihoods, biodiversity, and sustainability.

In this backdrop, I would like to reiterate Pakistan's commitment in joining hands with other neighbouring countries who are present here to envision a prosperous future and sustainable strategic roadmap for regional cooperation for the HKH region. In this regard, Pakistan endorses the HKH Call to Action agenda and the constitution of a task force to suggest an institutional mechanism for strengthening science-based regional cooperation.

At the end, once again, I would like thank you all for having such a successful Ministerial Summit.

Last but not the least, I heard that there are changes in ICIMOD's senior management. I would like to welcome the new Director General Dr Pema Gyamtsho and assure Pakistan's fullest support to his leadership. I would also like to give my highest appreciation to the outgoing Director General Dr David Molden for his remarkable services to this region during his tenure.



AFGHANISTAN



BANGLADESH



BHUTAN



CHINA



INDIA



MYANMAR



NEPAL



PAKISTAN



Ministerial Declaration on the HKH Call to Action

We, the Ministers of the eight Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) countries, recognise that urgent steps are required to sustain mountain environments and improve livelihoods in the HKH. Extending 3,500 km over eight countries, from Afghanistan in the west to Myanmar in the east and crossing Pakistan, India, China, Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh, the HKH is one of the world's greatest mountain systems: home to the world's highest peaks, unique cultures, diverse flora and fauna, and a vast reserve of natural resources. The HKH directly supports the livelihoods of over 240 million people living in its hills and mountains, and it yields many benefits to the nearly two billion people living in the mountains and downstream. The HKH is a vital regional lifeline, but human drivers, climate change and presently the COVID-19 pandemic pose grave and immediate threats to livelihoods, biodiversity, energy, food and water security, and ultimately sustainability.

In support of the recent United Nations General Assembly resolution on Sustainable Mountain Development, which recognises the importance and multidimensional contributions of mountains for sustainable development.

We appreciate the efforts of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), an intergovernmental organization of the eight HKH countries, for its service to the mountains and people of the HKH over the past 36 years.

We welcome the publication of the first *HKH Assessment*, which assesses the state of the HKH and its future prospects. The report was produced by the Hindu Kush Himalaya Monitoring and Assessment Programme (HIMAP), a long-term, integrated science-policy initiative coordinated by ICIMOD, and engaged over 350 leading researchers, practitioners, and policy specialists working on the HKH.

Guided by the country consultations on the *HKH Assessment* and the HKH Call to Action, which serves as a roadmap for the future of the HKH, and the decision taken at the meeting of the ICIMOD Board of Governors on 17 September 2019 in Gangtok, Sikkim, India to explore the possibilities of organizing an HKH Ministerial Mountain Summit.

We recognize and support both the vision of the HKH Call to Action – which calls for a prosperous, peaceful and poverty-free region that is food, energy and water secure, and climate and disaster resilient communities in the mountains, downstream and beyond – and the ICIMOD policy paper “COVID-19 impact and policy responses in the Hindu Kush Himalaya” which calls for a resilient recovery from the pandemic.

We appreciate that the HKH Call to Action highlights the urgent local, national, regional, and global actions needed to sustain this global asset, through substantially increased investments from business and government

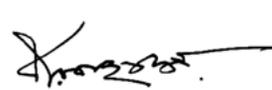
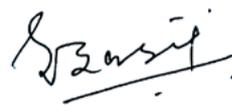
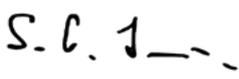
and more robust regional cooperation for sustaining mountain environments, raising awareness across multiple stakeholders, improving livelihoods, taking concerted actions as per the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to well below 2 °C and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5 °C by 2100, and achieving the SDGs.

We, the Ministers, agree:

- to hold a biennial HKH Ministerial Mountain Summit to take joint actions for strengthening regional cooperation in the HKH and to review and discuss emerging issues;
- to promote a united voice for the HKH at regional, global and UN platforms;
- to hold a multi-stakeholder HKH Science-Policy Forum on a regular basis in order to enhance the uptake of scientific evidence for improving policies in the region focusing on mountain environments and livelihoods;
- to constitute a Task Force with high-level representation from the eight HKH countries to assess the feasibility of establishing a regional institutional mechanism. The Task Force should assess similar regional collaborative platforms/institutions from different parts of the world and recommend a feasible configuration for the HKH region in a report to be submitted to the next HKH Ministerial Summit. The Task Force would also monitor the progress of the “HKH Call to Action”.

We, the Ministers of the HKH, agree that ICIMOD will serve as the Secretariat to the HKH Ministerial Mountain Summit, the HKH Science-Policy Forum and the Task Force, and coordinate HKH-level monitoring and assessments on a regular basis.

Signed on 15 October 2020 by Ministers of eight Hindu Kush Himalayan countries:

| | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
|  <hr/> <p>AFGHANISTAN H.E. Anwarul Haq Ahadi Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock</p> |  <hr/> <p>BANGLADESH H.E. Bir Bahadur Ushwe Sing, MP Minister, Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs</p> |  <hr/> <p>BHUTAN H.E. Lyonpo Yeshey Penjor</p> |  <hr/> <p>CHINA H.E. Zhang Yaping Vice President, Chinese Academy of Sciences</p> |
|  <hr/> <p>INDIA H.E. Prakash Javadekar Union Minister, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change</p> |  <hr/> <p>MYANMAR H.E. U Ohn Winn Union Minister, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation</p> |  <hr/> <p>NEPAL H.E. Shakti Bahadur Basnet Minister, Ministry of Forests and Environment</p> |  <hr/> <p>PAKISTAN H.E. Syed Fakhar Imam Federal Minister, Ministry of National Food Security and Research</p> |

During the meeting the Declaration was read out by *Dr Amina Maharjan*, Senior Livelihoods and Migration Specialist, ICIMOD.

The signed version of the [Ministerial Declaration](#) was displayed to all the participants, and ‘[The HKH Call to Action](#)’ document was virtually launched.

Video message from Rt Hon Lord Goldsmith,

Minister of State for the Pacific and the Environment, Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office and Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs, UK



Source: [UK Parliament](#)

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to address the first Hindu Kush Himalaya Ministerial Mountain Summit. I would like to thank ICIMOD for hosting us today.

The water tower of Asia is the source of ten major rivers providing water for nearly two billion people. It is almost impossible to exaggerate its importance for humanity. The mountains (in the HKH region) also contain four global biodiversity hotspots, and much of that biodiversity is yet to be discovered. Around 35 new species were found every single year in the Eastern Himalayas between 1998 and 2008. The UK is proud to have supported ICIMOD in delivering the Hindu Kush Himalaya Assessment – the first comprehensive analysis of the global importance of this region, the threats its environment and people face, and the action needed to save it; and it makes sobering reading.

The region is expected to lose up to 87% of its original habitat by the end of this century, and because of its high elevation, these mountains are absolutely on the frontline when it comes to the impacts and threats of climate change. Because, even if the world manages to keep global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees – which we absolutely must – that nevertheless translates to more than 2 degrees for the mountains. Now, on current emissions trends, temperature will greatly exceed 1.5 degrees, and the impacts on these mountains – the worlds’ Third Pole – will be utterly devastating. Perhaps, most worryingly, its glaciers are projected to decline by 90% this century. So, it is imperative that we take action now. And this summit is an important step on that path.

As a long-standing partner of ICIMOD, the UK both

supports and is ready to be a part of the Call to Action. And as COP26 president, we are absolutely determined to deliver the highest possible ambition globally. We are asking countries to produce strengthened Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). We have identified five core campaigns: clean energy; clean transport; finance; adaptation and resilience; and nature. And it is ‘nature’ that I want to briefly focus on today. Because we cannot tackle climate change without both protecting and restoring nature on an unprecedented massive scale. Nature-based solutions could provide around a third of the cost-effective climate change mitigation that we need over the next decade, while also helping reverse nature destruction, preventing poverty, and enabling communities to adapt and become more resilient. But despite that huge contribution, they currently attract just three percent of global climate funding. So, governments clearly need to step up.

The UK prime minister announced last year that we are doubling our international climate finance to £11.6 billion. He also announced that we would be allocating much of that additional funding to nature-based solutions like forests and mangroves, protecting and restoring peatlands. In the run-up to COP26, we are asking other donor countries to do similarly.

Then, at the UN last month, the leaders of 76 nations including the UK signed an unprecedented, powerful Call to Action to reverse the decline of nature by 2030, and to put wildlife and climate at the heart of post pandemic planning. I’m proud that the UK was a leading voice in helping to craft that undeniably powerful pledge. But we have a duty now to turn those powerful words into meaningful action. The HKH Call to Action makes the same critically important links between people, climate, and nature. It emphasizes the need for solutions that deliver both for people and the planet. It makes plain the importance of cross-border cooperation, and I believe this region can be a shining example of that. So, I would like to invite the ambassadors of the HKH countries in the UK to an event in London, to build a consensus for COP26, on the critical importance of mountains in climate change. The meeting will take place in February 2021, and my officials will follow up with you directly with

the details.

So, let me end by reiterating that as COP26 president, the UK stands ready to work with you and our global partners to deliver the meaningful, measurable action in response to this Call to Action. The world is

absolutely counting on us.

Thank you very much indeed.

The full recorded version of the speech is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLePVkAhIPo>

SECTION 6

Remarks – Dr Puspa Raj Kadel, Member, ICIMOD Board of Governors from Nepal



Honourable Ministers from the Hindu Kush Himalaya countries,

High-level dignitaries and Your Excellencies,

ICIMOD Board of Governors; ICIMOD Support Group,

Director General of ICIMOD Dr David Molden and incoming Director General Dr Pema Gyamtsho

Distinguished delegates, and ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me immense pleasure to give remarks on this auspicious occasion of the first ever Hindu Kush Himalaya Ministerial Mountain Summit 2020 being held virtually on behalf of ICIMOD Board of Governors and National Planning Commission, Nepal.

As we are facing unprecedented challenges of COVID-19, this is truly an unusual time. Like in many other countries, Nepal faced colossal disruption and impacts due to COVID-19 pandemic on the socioeconomic landscape. We would have much liked to hold this summit face-to-face in Kathmandu and welcome all of you to Nepal but that could not be

possible. Nonetheless, we do hope we can convene such an event in future.

As a board member of ICIMOD, I have followed the launch of the HKH Assessment report and the preparations of urgent HKH Call to Action closely. I would like to thank Dr David Molden, Director General of ICIMOD and his team for a remarkable job and making it possible to hold this historic event in a short span of time.

As you all know, the HKH region has become more interdependent, and interconnected than ever before. This growing interdependence has unleashed both opportunities and challenges besides the enormous impacts of COVID-19 that we are facing.

The UN has put forward the blueprint for 17 Sustainable Development Goals with 169 targets and 232 indicators to be achieved by 2030 and Paris Climate Agreement to limit temperature rise to a specified limit. Climate change and now the post-pandemic situation, is not only jeopardizing our efforts to achieving the SDGs but also reverses development gains attained earlier rendering the millions of poor to the brink of further marginalization. This has made the situation even worse with widespread impacts on our dwindling economy and with deep-rooted negative impacts on poor people. Hence, building resilience and reducing vulnerabilities are thus our common agenda for sustainable mountain development by exploiting cutting edge science, technology and innovation. This is beyond the reach of one country per se and calls for a robust regional cooperation than ever before among the Hindu Kush Himalayan countries to meet the needs and aspirations of mountain and downstream communities. Our success and failure will be determined by our collective efforts to manage

the challenges and changes in a positive and impactful way.

With the signing of the Ministerial Declaration and a clearly laid out blueprint for the HKH Call to Action, ICIMOD can amplify its work and bring positive impacts to sustain mountain environments and improve livelihoods in the Hindu Kush Himalaya countries. Furthermore, this will provide an impetus to green recovery efforts.

I would like to assure that the Government of Nepal as a host country of ICIMOD will be happy to take the leading role in this regional alliance of the HKH countries to give continuity to a political dialogue for greater recognition of the vulnerabilities of mountain communities and raise the mountain voice and agenda at the regional and international levels. We remain committed to mutual cooperation and support.

It has been a pleasure to be part of this forum among the honourable ministers, prominent personalities and dignitaries and I would once again like to thank ICIMOD for convening this first-ever HKH Ministerial Mountain Summit.

Lastly, on behalf of the ICIMOD Board of Governors, the ICIMOD Support Group and the entire ICIMOD family, we express our solidarity and commitment to work collectively in meeting the aspirations of the Ministerial Declaration and towards a more prosperous HKH region.

At this juncture, I would also like to warmly welcome the incoming Director General Dr Pema Gyamtsho to ICIMOD and Nepal and wish him all the success for his tenure and leading ICIMOD to newer heights.

Thank you.

SECTION 7

Statement from Dr Pema Gyamtsho, incoming Director General, ICIMOD



Honourable Ministers from the ICIMOD Member Countries,

His Excellency, Minister Rt. Hon. Lord Goldsmith, of the UK,

Distinguished Chairman and Members of the Board of Governors of ICIMOD,

Distinguished Members of the ICIMOD Support Group

Dr David Molden, Director General and Convener of the Ministerial Summit, and

My dear colleagues at ICIMOD.

It is a great honour for me to give the closing remarks at this landmark event. I couldn't have asked for a better platform to begin my tenure and step into the large shoes of Dr David Molden as the new DG of ICIMOD. This historic event gives me further strength and confidence to take forward the unique mission of ICIMOD as the first Director General from the region.

At the onset, let me congratulate our eight regional member countries for taking this very bold step in coming together to demonstrate their political will and commitment for the protection of the HKH mountain region and for securing the livelihoods of millions of people dependent on them. The declaration signed by the honourable ministers from our eight member countries heralds a new beginning for the region, and, augurs well for the future of our mountains and mountain people. I am deeply inspired and motivated by the statements of the honourable ministers and their pledges of renewed political commitment to ICIMOD. At the same time, I have become even more conscious of the magnitude of the responsibility that I am about to shoulder in taking forward the process.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

A meeting at this high level is long overdue. All of us know that the HKH region is experiencing monumental changes due to climate change, natural disasters, globalization, urbanisation and many other drivers as documented in the HIMAP report. For instance, the impact of global warming is much more rapid and pronounced than in other areas. Our snow-cover is receding; our glaciers are melting; our lakes are bursting; our rainfall patterns are erratic; our river flow patterns are changing; our streams are drying; our biodiversity is decreasing; our environment is degrading; our people are experiencing multiple disasters and hardships; their livelihoods and way of lives are threatened; and, new unexpected challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic are emerging. As Dr Molden already mentioned, these are facts that we all acknowledge, just as we acknowledge that the challenges are common and doesn't recognize political boundaries and therefore require regional and international cooperation to address them. In this regard, we may have the science, we may have the technology, and the resources and the capacity, but without the political will and commitment of our governments to work together and acknowledge that the issues and challenges cut across borders, and that we share common goals and aspirations, we may end up being mere observers to a rapidly unfolding turn of events for the worst.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

We may accord grand references to the HKH as the 'Third Pole', the 'water towers of Asia', the 'pulse of the planet' etc., but our actions so far have not been commensurate with these grand nomenclatures. The HKH Call to Action endorsed at this meeting through the Ministerial Declaration is a giant step forward in "walking the talk". We hope that we will be able to rapidly move towards establishing an institutional mechanism similar to the Alpine Convention and the Arctic Council to provide political oversight to ensure the future of the HKH region.

Personally, it will be my aspiration to achieve this important goal for ICIMOD. I think of the HKH mountains as the 'bosoms' of mother earth, breastfeeding thousands of children both within and downstream areas. The 10 major rivers that originate from the region sustain the lives of over 1.9 billion people either directly or indirectly, and support a diversity of other life forms, including rare plant and animal species. Imagine, life without these rivers! Therefore, we cannot just stand by and watch the region suffer from breast cancer inflicted by climate change and other drivers. So this is a clarion call from our region not just for a cure from cancer by treating the symptoms as diagnosed by the HIMAP but also to

prevent the underlying causes as prescribed under the six urgent actions outlined in the HKH Call to Action.

History has brought us together today and in spite of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic that disabled us from meeting in person, we have achieved our goal to agree on this historic pact. I hope that one day, many years down the line, you can proudly share with your children and grandchildren, that "I was there", and in turn, they would share with their children that "you were here".

May I also take this opportunity to acknowledge the wholehearted support and guidance provided by our regional and independent members of the ICIMOD Board of Governors. ICIMOD's standing and efficiency as an apolitical international centre for mountains will continue to depend on not only your official and professional guidance but even more importantly, on your personal passion and commitment. I look forward to receiving even more support and advice as we embark on the journey ahead to respond to the HKH Call to Action that our honourable ministers have signed today.

It goes without saying that nothing much could have been done or could be done without the financial support and goodwill of our donors and partners. In this regard, we owe much to the ICIMOD Support Group for their unstinted support to the Centre. I know that individual members of the ISG have gone out of their way to source financing for the Centre and hope that their passion and dedication for the mountains will be further rekindled with the successful conduct of this historic meeting. The message that we heard today from the Rt. Hon. Lord Goldsmith was not only inspiring but stands testimony to the international community's love and concern for the HKH and its people.

Before I conclude, I would like to place on record the enormous contribution that Dr David Molden has made, in not only steering the process that has brought us here on this day, but also to ICIMOD and the region as a whole. With his quiet efficiency, he has put ICIMOD on a sound footing and oversaw the rapid growth of the Centre both in scale and scope. I would like to assure you David, that I will commit myself to further build on what you have done and, strive to take ICIMOD to our shared vision of a globally recognized centre of excellence. I know that you will always be there to guide us and wish you and Karen once again a very happy and healthy life ahead.

I would also like to acknowledge the tireless efforts put in by Dr Eklabya Sharma, Deputy Director General, in making this event a reality. I am sure he will continue to be associated with our journey on the roadmap outlined in the HKH Call to Action even after his

retirement in December this year. Let me also thank all my other colleagues at ICIMOD for the commitment and professionalism you have shown in supporting the process. I will rely on you to taking forward the movement. Our country focal persons deserve special mention for the efforts they have made to liaise with

the respective governments. To the hundreds of scientists from our regional member countries and from other countries involved in HIMAP, I wish to thank you and assure you that your efforts will not go in vain.

Thank you and *Kadrinche!*

Annexures

Annex I: Press release

The press release of the event is available [here](#).

Annex II: Recording of the event

The full recording of the event is available [here](#).

Annex III: Ministerial Declaration on the HKH Call to Action

The digital copy of the signed declaration is available [here](#).

Annex IV: The HKH Call to Action

The full copy of the HKH Call to Action is available [here](#).

About ICIMOD

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), is a regional knowledge development and learning centre serving the eight regional member countries of the Hindu Kush Himalaya – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan – and based in Kathmandu, Nepal. Globalisation and climate change have an increasing influence on the stability of fragile mountain ecosystems and the livelihoods of mountain people. ICIMOD aims to assist mountain people to understand these changes, adapt to them, and make the most of new opportunities, while addressing upstream-downstream issues. We support regional transboundary programmes through partnership with regional partner institutions, facilitate the exchange of experience, and serve as a regional knowledge hub. We strengthen networking among regional and global centres of excellence. Overall, we are working to develop an economically and environmentally sound mountain ecosystem to improve the living standards of mountain populations and to sustain vital ecosystem services for the billions of people living downstream – now, and for the future.

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International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
GPO Box 3226, Kathmandu, Nepal
T +977 1 5275222 | **E** info@icimod.org | **www.icimod.org**