

ICIMOD

STRATEGY 2030

MOVING MOUNTAINS



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International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)

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Published by

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)

GPO Box 3226, Kathmandu, Nepal

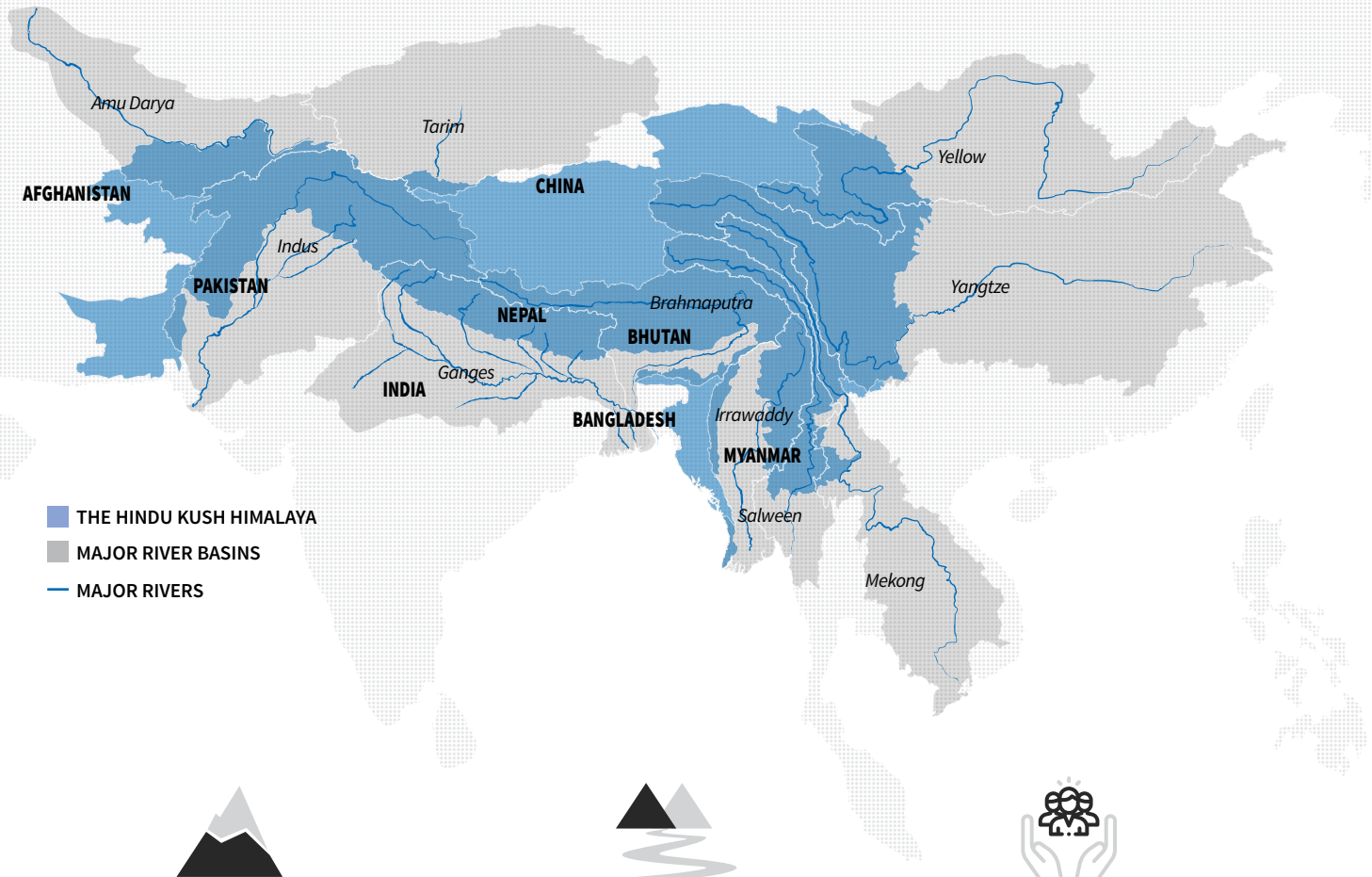
ISBN 978-92-9115-761-7 (electronic)
 978-92-9115-762-4 (print)

Citation

ICIMOD (2023). *Strategy 2030: Moving mountains*. ICIMOD.
<https://doi.org/10.53055/ICIMOD.1027>

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MOVING MOUNTAINS

THE HINDU KUSH HIMALAYA



760,000 km²

of snow cover (18% of the total HKH area) and the largest ice reserves (6,101 km³) outside the polar regions



10

major Asian river systems originate in the HKH region



>3 billion

people benefit from the food produced in the HKH river basins



4 of 36

global biodiversity hotspots and 330 Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas



240 million

people live in the HKH and depend on its resources for their livelihoods



>1,000

languages are spoken across the region

PREFACE

This is a pivotal moment in our history. The world around us is changing and here, at the top of the world, things are changing fast. We are witnessing rapid climate change, biodiversity loss, increased disaster risk, and rising inequality. In today's vulnerable and interconnected world, the Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) region needs evidence-based action through ambitious partnerships that address the region's needs like never before. This strategy charts the path and role that ICIMOD will undertake to meet this imperative.

In our Strategy 2030 we have built on ICIMOD's strengths. As a generator of knowledge serving our eight Regional Member Countries (RMCs) – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan – with strong links to a wide range of other partners across the HKH and beyond, we have challenged ourselves to go further, with a primary focus on delivering tangible outcomes to help meet the challenges the region faces. The result is Moving Mountains, a strategy with high ambition, a more focused set of priorities and new approaches to our work, all of which we will support with the necessary resources and institutional change.

The words that follow represent a set of choices over where our focus will lie and the ways in which we will act. They will guide and shape our activity until 2030, and are the product of our staff's expertise as well as extensive consultations from the many partners we are privileged to work alongside and serve.

Our purpose for 2030 is articulated in our vision: to work towards a greener, more inclusive, climate-resilient HKH, delivered through our mission: to build and share knowledge that enables regional policy and action, whilst also attracting investment to the HKH to deliver on our vision. We hope you will join us on the journey.

SECTION 1

Why a new strategy?

1.1. The time for action is now

The HKH extends over 3,500 km, from Afghanistan in the west to Myanmar in the east and crossing Pakistan, India, China, Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh. It is home to the world's highest peaks, unique cultures, diverse flora and fauna, and a vast reserve of natural resources. As the source of ten major Asian river systems, the HKH provides essential resources, especially water and biodiversity, to nearly 2 billion people, a fourth of humanity. Its waters irrigate the food baskets of Asia.

However, the HKH has experienced rapid and extensive change over the last two decades, and the impacts are projected to only get worse. The escalating effects of climate change, water insecurity, increased disaster risk, biodiversity loss, and widespread socio-economic change all point to a critical need to support transformative action – at scale and with urgency to 2030 and beyond.

In this rapidly changing context, there has never been a more critical juncture to significantly increase support for the HKH. As ICIMOD hits its fortieth year, through this strategy we respond to this imperative, guided by the [HKH Call to Action](#), to step up our engagement through to 2030.

FIGURE 1

HKH CALL TO ACTION: DEEPENING REGIONAL COOPERATION THROUGH SIX URGENT ACTIONS

The HKH Call to Action is a clarion call for urgent action to protect the health of this global asset and the wellbeing of its people. It aims to enhance regional cooperation and leverage more resources, investment, and technical support – from both South-South and North-South engagement – around six urgent actions. It is based on the [Hindu Kush Himalaya Assessment: Mountains, Climate Change, Sustainability and People](#), which was drafted in response to requests from governments in the region, and reflects five years of research, review and analysis of the state of the region. It was endorsed by ministers from the eight HKH countries in October 2020.



- 1 Cooperate at all levels across the HKH region for sustainable and mutual benefits
- 2 Recognise and prioritise the uniqueness of the HKH mountain people
- 3 Take concerted climate action at all levels to keep global warming to 1.5°C by 2100
- 4 Take accelerated actions to achieve the nine mountain priorities in line with the SDGs
- 5 Enhance ecosystem resilience and halt biodiversity loss and land degradation
- 6 Promote regional data and information sharing and science and knowledge cooperation

1.2. The rapidly changing regional and global context

The HKH is a critical global asset. Being at the top of the world, changes happen here before they happen anywhere else.

Global warming at 2°C, and beyond, will result in the loss of half the volume of the region's glaciers and destabilise Asia's river systems, with significant downstream consequences for billions of people. It will cause severe and irreversible losses of ecosystem services and biodiversity while leading to food and water insecurity. Even a 1.5°C world is too hot for the HKH because of elevation-dependent warming. A 1.5°C rise will increase the risks of extreme weather events, triggering flash floods, altering agriculture, and causing multiple long-term instabilities.

The HKH is also staring at a biodiversity crisis. Some 70–80% of the region's original habitat has been lost since 1500. A quarter of endemic species in the Indian Himalaya alone could be wiped out by the end of this century. Accompanying losses of watershed function will lead not only to more severe impacts on water security but also food insecurity due to agroecosystem instability, soil fertility loss, alterations to the nitrogen cycle, extinctions of endemic and restricted-range species and loss of cultural values.

Air pollution has rapidly increased over the past decades, driven by unregulated development both from within and outside the region. This is one of the most polluted regions in the world, with far-reaching consequences for human and environmental health. Air pollution also affects the cryosphere (with black carbon and dust from the Indo-Gangetic Plain settling on glaciers and hastening their melting), changes the monsoon patterns and rainfall, and impacts agriculture.

The current pace, depth, and scope of adaptation is too slow, small scale, largely incremental, and based on approaches that are no longer effective.

Hampered by policy and institutional inertia, it is – put simply – wholly insufficient to address future risks.

Given the deep interconnectedness of the region's social, economic, and ecological systems, responses must be transformational to be truly successful. This means embracing system-level change, especially at regional and transboundary levels, and embracing innovation – not only technological but also policy and institutional innovation. Cooperation and collaboration across the HKH and internationally, are key to making this happen. We must act decisively now to deliver timely and practical solutions.

Central to our response is to build on emerging opportunities. These include international and regional climate policy commitments, new climate and development finance flows, and green development interests. Mechanisms such as the updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) also commit HKH countries to substantially reduce air pollution, curb biodiversity loss and achieve carbon-neutral societies over the next few decades, if policies can be adjusted and finances can be mobilised.

In the knowledge arena, new approaches to safeguard the HKH's biodiversity and ecosystems are emerging, which also deliver mitigation and adaptation co-benefits. These include mountain-specific Nature-based Solutions and innovative uses of social and economic incentives. We are uniquely situated to build on these opportunities and bring together innovation with the rich natural and cultural heritage of the HKH, to harness the growth of women and youth-led enterprises for greener economies.

We see synergy in our ability to leverage these opportunities, strengthen regional cooperation among our eight RMCs to deliver action at scale and with speed, and increase investment in a greener, more inclusive and climate-resilient HKH.

SECTION 2

Who are we and how are we changing?

2.1. 40 years of ICIMOD

Over the last four decades, ICIMOD has cemented its role in the region. It has built on its visionary founding mandate to facilitate exchange and learning on regional and transboundary mountain issues. The confidence, recognition, and credibility that we have cultivated amongst our eight RMCs and international partners over the forty years, is a testament to the efforts of our founders, governors, regional partners, staff, and funders.

Now established as a leading regional and intergovernmental knowledge and learning centre, we serve our eight RMCs, working regionally for the benefit of the countries and communities of the HKH. We aim to sustain our non-political and neutral status and respect the concerns of our RMCs. As an impartial convenor and coordinator across the region, we value our role in identifying and sharing solutions to the significant issues as they arise from research and evidence and to reinforce the HKH Call to Action.

In our convening and coordinating role, we work to harness the collective strengths of our RMCs to enhance cooperation and collaboration to address regional and transboundary issues that are largely environmental in nature and which have major socio-economic implications for millions of people.

This includes addressing challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, water risk and air pollution – all of which can cause conflicts, loss of life and livelihoods, affect energy and food security, and disrupt trade. We call this regional cooperation and collaboration effort – ICIMOD working with our eight RMCs – the ‘power of 8’ or ICIMOD⁸ (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2 ICIMOD AS THE POWER OF 8



ICIMOD harnesses the power of eight HKH Regional Member Countries to leverage regional and international cooperation to deliver climate and environment action in the region.

Our work supporting RMCs to cope with climate and environmental challenges provides ICIMOD with an opportunity, through knowledge collaboration, to build mutual trust and confidence among member countries, reduce cross-border tensions, enhance regional cooperation, and strengthen the socio-economic security of the region. The rapidly increasing magnitude and complexity of regional and transboundary challenges that present differently across the diverse countries of the HKH, urgently require ICIMOD to scale up the quantity and quality of its contributions, as never before.

To deliver on this, we need to trigger and support urgent action on science, policy, and practice – especially on issues common to the HKH region and transboundary in nature.

2.2. Shifting gears: scaling and prioritising ICIMOD’s contribution

Moving to 2030, ICIMOD holds a pivotal role in supporting our eight RMCs to tackle the multiple challenges of climate, environmental, and socio-economic change. We have the mandate for addressing these issues, many of which can only be fully resolved through coordinated regional responses and collective multi-country action. The commitments enshrined in the HKH Call to Action are evidence of regional demand to engage in such cooperative and collaborative action.

This Strategy 2030 commits us to build further on ICIMOD’s comparative advantage as a regional organisation, working together with our RMCs.

As part of this process, we are reinforcing and building up our core values (Box 1), as well as our key areas of strength, including:

- 1. Delivering information** on key trends, events, and risks across the HKH, as well as situational analyses and syntheses of research and evidence. This will require more rapid and responsive information services as well as moving from diagnostics to building understanding of future implications using new approaches and tools, and enhanced regional and international exchange.
- 2. Identifying, investigating, and testing proven and actionable solutions** with a greater focus on scaling readiness and exchange of learning amongst our RMCs. If these solutions are to trigger action to reduce regional and transboundary risks, they need to be applied collectively across several RMCs and be sufficiently credible to support the design and implementation of regional investments.
- 3. Supporting policy and decision-makers** through policy and scenario analysis, pragmatic decision support systems, inputs to regional and international agreements and negotiations, and support to RMCs on monitoring and reporting against associated targets, as well as engagement in various policy and institutional processes.
- 4. Developing skills and capabilities**, especially focused on facilitating knowledge transfer across and between RMCs. This will include building on the significant potential to learn from each other, as well as facilitating skills transfer and exchange between the HKH and other regions, recognizing there is an equal need for short-term skills development, and integrating such issues into curricula.

To make this happen, we will commit to deeper engagements across the region, as well as internationally, through more strategic, focused, and transformational knowledge and scaling partnerships.

BOX 1

Our core values

These values are an expression of our culture and are central to the guiding beliefs and principles of our work and behaviour. Our core values lie at the heart of ICIMOD operations and delivery. They underpin everything we do and frame how we work with our partners. They reflect our founding intentions and the balances we seek to hold, while equipping us for the future. These core values are:

INTEGRITY

We practice honesty, respect, and consistency. We ‘do no harm’ or, where unavoidable, minimise harm to climate, environment, and people. We are impartial in our research, findings, partnerships, staffing, and interactions. We have zero tolerance for impropriety.

NEUTRALITY

We are politically impartial and respect the sovereignty of our member countries. Organisationally, we play the roles of convenor, facilitator, organiser, or host. As individuals, we seek to dismantle our own biases to embrace neutral approaches.

RELEVANCE

We ensure our priorities are driven by RMC needs while also using evidence to raise awareness of key trends, risks, and opportunities. We seek to respect our partnerships through responsiveness. We aim for our work to be useful.

INCLUSIVENESS

We demonstrate the value of diversity and equality throughout our operations. We bring various perspectives in our evidence building, decision making, and production. We ensure representation and seek opportunities for diverse voices to be heard.

OPENNESS

We promote open sharing and exchange of information. We support open partnerships where risk taking is viewed as mutual. We seek open management where all staff are open to new ideas. We foster a culture of open learning, from failure and success.

AMBITION

We collectively strive for the maximum uptake of our knowledge and judge our work on visible and measurable impact. We embrace innovation, encourage creativity, and seek out the most effective partnerships for science, scaling, and outreach.

SECTION 3

What we will deliver

3.1. Raising our ambition

To respond to the rapidly changing context in the HKH, we have laid out a new vision and mission that ties more closely to our RMC commitments.

OUR VISION

A greener, more inclusive, and climate-resilient Hindu Kush Himalaya

- Resource efficient
- Carbon neutral
- Cleaner
- Nature positive
- Gender transformative
- Youth empowering
- Equal opportunity
- Protected via disaster reduction measures
- Adapted via livelihoods/enterprises
- Transformed via systems (policy, financial, institutional)

OUR MISSION

We build and share knowledge that **enables greener, more inclusive and climate-resilient policy, action and investment** across the diverse countries and communities of the HKH

OUR FOUR LONG-TERM IMPACT AREAS TO 2030

At the highest level, our results are guided by four long-term impact areas (LTIA) which represent strategic choices of where we focus our efforts. Our LTIA align with key HKH challenges and commitments enshrined internationally and regionally but are also areas where ICIMOD holds comparative advantage. They also serve to align our research and action with our RMCs' commitments and help us prioritise.











Table 1 sets out our LTIA and describes some of the critical development and equity challenges within them. We will ensure that we integrate and track progress on gender equality and social










inclusion (GESI) and promote youth leadership since addressing the concerns of women and youth is fundamental to progress. These impact areas are aligned with global goals and targets articulated in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UN Framework Convention On Climate Change (UNFCCC) Paris Agreement, UN Convention On Biological Diversity (UNCBD) Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, the Sendai Framework For Disaster Risk Reduction, the Montreal Protocol and the Malé Declaration. We will assess our progress against these LTIA, as they are our ultimate goals and it is vital for us to track them to ensure and demonstrate the relevance of our work.

TABLE 1

IMPACT AREAS AND GLOBAL TARGETS

LONG-TERM IMPACT AREA	CHALLENGES	GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION
1 Transboundary risk reduction and adaptation: to enhance safety and socioeconomic security 	<p>More than one billion people in the HKH are at risk from increasing natural hazards, many cascading, and one in ten floods are transboundary, responsible for 30% of death and injury, and 60% of human displacements. Climate change is expected to have a significant impact on the HKH's 10 primary river basins, with the Indus, Amu Darya and Tarim basins exposed changes in the cryosphere. Seven of these river basins span multiple countries meaning any impact on one country's basin could have cascading effects on neighbouring countries.</p> <p>The region's river systems have enormous hydropower potential. Up to 70% of dry season flows in these rivers come from upstream basins, while the demand for water and energy is mainly downstream. Across the HKH, there are few systems-level and cross-border adaptation examples. More effective transboundary cooperation can support adaptation and increase communities' access to water and clean energy in this highly climate-sensitive region, there is no formal mechanism to do so.</p>	<p>Women are more affected by natural hazards in terms of the number of deaths, vulnerabilities, and recovery. Young male outmigration can put women, and other vulnerable groups left behind, at even greater risk.</p> <p>This situation is made worse because vulnerable groups have very limited access to information on risks, disaster prevention and preparedness.</p>
Alignment with global 2030 targets	      	 
LONG-TERM IMPACT AREA	CHALLENGES	GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION
2 Biodiversity and environmental health: to restore landscapes and sustain ecosystem services 	<p>Two billion people across Asia depend on the HKH mountain ecosystem for water and a wide range of ecosystem services.</p> <p>Global and regional drivers of change are impacting the HKH with up to 80% of habitat in biodiversity hotspots and over 50% of wild species in decline, undermining vital ecosystem services.</p> <p>Alongside other drivers, climate change is causing further ecosystem instabilities with huge impacts on millions of people: glacier and snow cover losses impacting water flows in transboundary river basins; permafrost thaw leading to slope instability and landslides; agroecosystem disruptions and drying of springs affecting food security.</p>	<p>Changes in biodiversity threaten the livelihoods of up to 85% of marginalised mountain communities. Despite much conservation effort, progress is slow.</p> <p>Given social and gender structures in the HKH, women and girls are impacted most by food and water availability declines or when essential ecosystem services are depleted.</p>
Alignment with global 2030 targets	       	 

LONG-TERM IMPACT AREA	CHALLENGES	GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION
3 Air quality: to reduce adverse health impacts while achieving mitigation co-benefits	<p>Air pollution in the HKH is on the rise and regional air quality has worsened in the past two decades, with the Indo-Gangetic Plain now one of the most polluted regions in the world.</p> <p>The drivers of air pollution in the HKH, also linked to climate change, have multiple negative impacts on human health, the cryosphere, agriculture and water resources. Integrated, regional solutions are urgently needed.</p> <p>While global PM_{2.5} exposure has declined slightly over the last decade, it remains persistently high in South Asia. Ozone-induced decreases in crop yield are predicted to cause devastating loss for staple crops in South Asia.</p> <p>The dominant cause for the decrease in South and Southeast Asian monsoon precipitation since the mid-20th century is particulate pollutants originating from human activities.</p>	<p>Indoor air pollution has emerged as a major contributor to morbidity and mortality incidence, especially among women, children, and the elderly.</p> <p>Rural poor migrating to urban areas in the HKH face exposure to higher concentrations of air pollution because of their occupations and have limited capacity to take coping or preventive measures, with disproportionate negative effects on their health.</p>
Alignment with global 2030 targets	      	  

LONG-TERM IMPACT AREA	CHALLENGES	GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION
4 Green mountain economies: to promote just transitions to green and low carbon enterprises	<p>The HKH has higher poverty rates than the national averages in all eight countries due to remoteness and marginalisation. Nearly 30% of the population suffers from food insecurity and around 50% face some form of malnutrition, with women and children particularly vulnerable.</p> <p>Mountain livelihoods – based predominantly on agriculture and tourism – are highly vulnerable to multiple mountain-specific shocks. There are few viable livelihood alternatives and limited financial services. Progress in developing new and innovative resilient, resource and energy-efficient options is slow.</p> <p>Despite the vast potential in hydropower and other renewables, the HKH remains energy poor. Lack of access to affordable clean energy is widespread, with adverse consequences, particularly for the rural poor and women.</p>	<p>Male outmigration from the mountains is causing women to take up additional responsibilities, but services and technologies are not customised for women and there are few viable livelihood opportunities for youth.</p> <p>Valuable mountain-specific experience and traditional knowhow possessed by Indigenous peoples and disadvantaged groups are being rapidly eroded, reducing important adaptation and resilience capacities.</p>
Alignment with global 2030 targets	       	

3.2. Delivering our ambition

We have committed to the challenging and ambitious task of driving policy and practice change towards greener, more inclusive and climate resilient development in the HKH. To fulfil our aims, we will deploy our strengths to catalyse necessary transitions in policy, investment and action, both regionally and globally.

Delivering ‘green’ ambitions requires policy and practice innovations and solutions that are: environmentally responsible, regenerative, clean and energy efficient, circular or climate neutral. Innovations and solutions that can, for instance, promote socio-economically viable nature-positive enterprises, reduce air pollution and carbon emissions, or protect and regenerate biodiversity, watersheds and other environmental services. Delivering against our ‘climate resilient’ ambitions requires policy and practice solutions that protect communities, developing their ability to withstand and bounce back from shocks and stresses, while enabling them to adapt to change. In every case, we will tackle risks and opportunities that are common to the region and transboundary in nature. We will emphasise the inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised groups and maintain a commitment to just transitions.

As we do so, we will consider the right balance across: (i) short-term measures and long-term transformative approaches; (ii) national, regional and international policy in fostering the enabling environment and reducing negative spillover effects; (iii) relying on existing technologies and approaches and investment in innovation; and (iv) public and private finance to support and sustain these endeavours.

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Our institutional theory of change (Figure 3) describes how we will bring about and trigger changes required to meet our 2030 ambitions, operating within our HKH regional context. It identifies how our strategic objectives, through impact pathways, will contribute to our high-level outcomes and long-term impact areas. This institutional theory of change has steered the design of our six new Action Areas (AA), set out in our Medium-Term Action Plan (MTAP) V (2023–2026). Each AA will be guided by its specific theory of change that will be nested within, and linked to, the institutional theory of change.

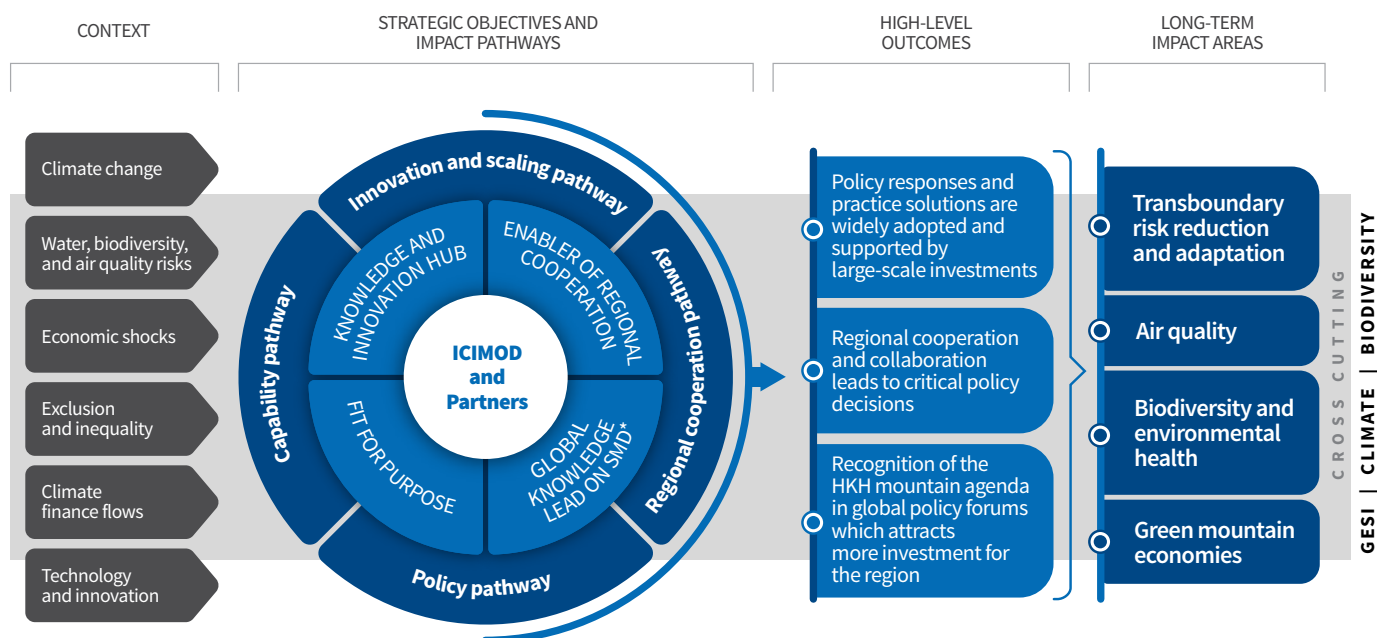
To focus our actions on delivering our vision and mission, we will be guided by four strategic objectives: playing the essential roles of a knowledge and innovation hub, an enabler of regional cooperation and collaboration, and a global knowledge lead and voice for sustainable mountain development, while also ensuring our internal organisation is more than fit-for-purpose to 2030 and anchored in its core values.

OUR HIGH-LEVEL OUTCOMES TO 2030

We will measure progress against three high-level outcomes (HLOs), which are in our ‘sphere of influence’ – that is, not under our control, but potentially attainable, given time and with appropriate partnerships – and serve to keep us focused on achieving outcomes at scale. They ensure that we work at three interlinked levels: national, regional, and global and will be covered in all evaluations of our work. They include:

1. Policy responses and practice solutions are widely adopted and supported by large-scale investments
2. Regional cooperation and collaboration leads to critical policy decisions
3. Recognition of the HKH mountain agenda in global policy forums which attracts more investment for the region

FIGURE 3 THEORY OF CHANGE



*SMD – Sustainable mountain development

OUR IMPACT PATHWAYS

To achieve these outcomes, we will deliver through four impact pathways which will operate creatively together in various combinations:

1. The innovation and scaling pathway fosters collaborative endeavours through co-design and co-creation to build research, evidence, approaches and innovations required for effective proof of concept, such as through translational and implementation science, that will, in turn, lead to the scaling readiness and uptake of viable solutions.
2. The regional cooperation pathway creates formal mechanisms for collective actions on regional and transboundary risks and opportunities such as science-policy dialogues that will trigger the need and demand for regional protocols that will better support the

sustainable management of the HKH region's natural assets.

3. The policy pathway deepens our support to our RMCs on matters of nationally and regionally relevant international policy through the provision of robust evidence from regional monitoring, analysis, and advice on policy responses.
4. The capability pathway develops the understanding, awareness, skills and capabilities of relevant institutions, partners, and communities.

Our creation, brokering, communication, and uptake of knowledge are critical ingredients across all four impact pathways. Combining the scaling, policy and capability pathways will lead to our first HLO on policy and practice solutions. The regional cooperation and policy pathways together

contribute towards our second HLO on regional cooperation and collaboration. The combination of all four pathways will lead to our third HLO that integrates HKH risks and opportunities into global policy fora, which attracts greater global attention and financial resources for the HKH. Our three HLOs will, in turn, focus our contributions to our long-term impact areas: transboundary risk reduction and adaptation; biodiversity and environmental health; air quality; and green mountain economies; whilst paying close attention to our cross-cutting issues: GESI, biodiversity, and climate change, and creating opportunities for youth leadership and digitalisation.

OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Our four strategic objectives lay out what we need to do and become to fulfil our mission and vision and meet our HLOs and achieve our long-term impacts. The strategic objectives are linked to the HKH Call to Action's six urgent actions. Links to these six urgent actions are highlighted under each strategic objective.

HKH CALL TO ACTION'S SIX URGENT ACTIONS

- 1** Cooperate at all levels across the HKH region for sustainable and mutual benefits
- 2** Recognise and prioritise the uniqueness of the HKH mountain people
- 3** Take concerted climate action at all levels to keep global warming to 1.5°C by 2100
- 4** Take accelerated actions to achieve the nine mountain priorities in line with the SDGs
- 5** Enhance ecosystem resilience and halt biodiversity loss and land degradation
- 6** Promote regional data and information sharing and science and knowledge cooperation

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1 ICIMOD⁸ AS A KNOWLEDGE AND INNOVATION HUB

Co-create and share insights, scalable solutions, policy responses and digital tools that catalyse action on regional and transboundary risks and opportunities.

Key strategic actions

Significantly increase our responsiveness and support to regional partners on regional trends and events through introducing new methods, tools and technologies and becoming the leading regional platform for HKH-specific data and information on climate, cryosphere, biodiversity, water, air and society links (HKH Call to Action urgent action 6)

Embed our work directly with HKH's primary policy and practice actors to co-create knowledge and capacity on regionally relevant solutions that will strengthen mountain communities' absorptive and adaptive capabilities to better respond to natural hazards and improve their livelihoods (HKH Call to Action urgent actions 3, 4 & 5)

Establish transformative collaborations with world-class organisations and thought leaders, promoted through regular exchanges of experts, hosting of visiting scholars, practitioners, and investors to facilitate the co-creation and publishing of cutting-edge syntheses and reviews on critical HKH regional and transboundary issues (HKH Call to Action urgent actions 2 and 6)

Strengthen abilities to develop and share innovations by establishing HKH innovation labs and demonstration sites that will act as focal points for exchange and learning on sustainable approaches and technologies, promoting inter-regional technology transfers on green and resilient solutions from the government and private sector of economically strong and technologically advanced RMCs to others (HKH Call to Action urgent actions 1, 3, 4, 5, 6)

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2 ICIMOD⁸ AS AN ENABLER OF REGIONAL COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION

Strengthen regional cooperation and collaboration to create enabling environments for uptake and scaling of solutions to address regional and transboundary risks and opportunities and attract international climate and development finance.

Key strategic actions

Organise biennial HKH Ministerial Summits to discuss and provide strategic recommendations on current and emerging socio-economic, climate, and environmental issues (HKH Call to Action urgent action 1)

Establish a high-level institutional mechanism that will provide policy directions, approve regional approaches and strengthen cooperation towards fulfilling regional obligations under the SDGs, UNFCCC Paris Agreement, UNCBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Malé Declaration and the Montreal Protocol (HKH Call to Action urgent action 1)

Significantly strengthen scaling partnerships with governments, bilateral and multilateral development organisations, and the private sector, and diversify our partnership base to include civil society, with an emphasis on youth and Indigenous, marginalised, and vulnerable peoples (HKH Call to Action urgent actions 1, 2, and 4)

Work with international funders and regional and global financial institutions to create partnerships to attract, distribute and manage regional climate and development finance, significantly enhancing our RMCs' access to climate finance and promoting green banking and mechanisms to assess investments based on 'do no social and environmental harm' and 'carbon neutrality' principles (HKH Call to Action urgent actions 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6)

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3 ICIMOD⁸ AS A GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE LEAD ON SUSTAINABLE MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT

Amplify the voices of mountain communities to build worldwide recognition of the HKH as a critical global asset.

Key strategic actions

Deepen engagement with RMC focal points and other high-level mountain champions to raise the profile of the HKH, advance the mountain agenda, and ensure targeted engagement with international decision-making institutions and policy processes (HKH Call to Action urgent action 2)

Host regular high-level regional science-policy fora on climate and environmental issues in mountain regions with other regional bodies, and science, policy and business communities and establish joint science-policy advisory committees on key focus areas (e.g., cryosphere, disaster risk reduction, air quality, biodiversity and ecosystem conservation) (HKH Call to Action urgent actions 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6)

Deepen existing and build new strategic partnerships with other global and regional organisations leading on sustainable mountain development to strengthen the collective voice of mountain communities across the world; actively seek opportunities to increase our amplification within our existing alliances; reach out to entities representing regional and subregional groupings in other mountain regions; and build stronger connections with our neighbouring mountain countries, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (HKH Call to Action urgent action 1)

In collaboration with others, track progress in the HKH against relevant multidimensional and mountain-specific indicators (SDGs, UNFCCC, UNCBD, Montreal Protocol, Malé Declaration and Sendai Framework) and deliver thematic HKH assessment reports on a regular basis (HKH Call to Action urgent actions 3, 4, 5 and 6)

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

ICIMOD⁸ AS AN INSTITUTION FIT FOR PURPOSE FOR 2030

Make our organisation agile, responsive, robust, and anchored in our core values of integrity, neutrality, relevance, inclusiveness, openness, and ambition.

Key strategic actions

Undertake an organisational change process to review and transform ICIMOD's institutional processes to support the successful delivery of this strategy

Secure a healthy balance of funding and establish a dedicated Business Development and Resource Mobilisation Unit that will work in collaboration across the institution to further institutionalise resource mobilisation; bridge communication, outreach and resource mobilisation; strengthen and diversify the funding base; and broaden financial instruments

Reposition our operations to respond to the needs and priorities of all our eight RMCs more effectively and ensure that we are much more representative of our regional diversity

Ensure GESI is fully embedded within ICIMOD, with gender equality and pay parity across all levels of the organisation and address these issues firmly but with sensitivity in our external relationships through project design, training, and other support

Develop cutting-edge integrated monitoring, evaluation and learning that enables collective and progressive measurement of results and performance progress across our theory of change and facilitates learning and adaptive management

Periodically conduct a light-touch review of our strategy and reflect on our theory of change to allow course correction in a rapidly changing context

SECTION 4

How we will deliver

We will need to work differently to meet our ambitions to 2030. There are many dimensions to this but, first and foremost, this will include ensuring we improve the scale and quality of our contributions to impact while also ensuring that all our work is regionally relevant and needs-driven.

This means triggering institutional changes that make our work more solutions focused and policy relevant. It will require us to put into the heart of our operations new methods and approaches such as comparative policy analysis, scaling readiness, research into use, strategic engagement and policy and practice communications. It will also require making our decision-making, administrative management, and human resources processes and work culture fit-for-purpose while also improving transparency and efficiency.

We have outlined seven key areas of change to make significant contributions to progress along our impact pathways while ensuring we always base our actions on the strong roots of our core values and identity.

1. DEEPER, BROADER AND STRONGER PUBLIC-SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

Our eight governments established ICIMOD and provide the very basis for all that we do. Thus, their ownership is critical to the relevance and effectiveness of all our work and our ability to deliver. Taking guidance from the RMC members of our Board, we will design cost-effective regional

and country-specific mechanisms to strengthen RMC-ICIMOD interaction and engagement. These mechanisms will facilitate stronger connections and better communication between ICIMOD and relevant public and sectoral agencies in the RMCs, while also establishing stronger relationships and ownership at appropriate levels. They will also strengthen our collaboration with our RMCs and their policy and implementing partners to identify and articulate needs and priorities, generate knowledge and develop skills around problem and needs identification and knowledge generation. Regular and sustained interaction between ICIMOD and a greater diversity of RMC policy and implementing partners will be important, to ensure RMC needs and priorities are well articulated, co-designed and co-delivered, and grounded. To these ends, we will firmly establish and sustain proactive and productive two-way exchanges.

We will deepen and broaden our engagement with Country Focal Points to global platforms (e.g., UNFCCC, UNCBD) to be more responsive to and support our RMCs' most critical policy and development priorities. Strengthening our relationship with other relevant sub-regional and intergovernmental organisations will also reinforce relationships with our RMCs' public-sector partners. We continue to be guided by the HKH Call to Action and the ICIMOD statutes in deepening connections and synergies between and among our public sector partners. We will also introduce a secondment scheme between RMC partners

and ICIMOD to ensure more effective transfer of knowhow, and continuity and sustainability of innovations and good practices introduced through our programmes.

2. FOCUSED PARTNERSHIPS FOR IMPACT

Our work has always depended on partnerships, and through our partnership approach we have succeeded in pushing forward our knowledge boundaries and implementing our findings. However, we will require more strategic and selective partnerships to meet our raised ambitions. Building on the partnership approach explicitly embedded in our practice, we will refresh our partnership policy and partnership criteria, as well as update our systems for partner selection and partner engagement. In doing so, we intend to achieve a tighter and more focused set of partnerships that can directly meet the ambitions of Strategy 2030 and build our own capacity and that of our partners for longer-term sustainability.

This will involve adopting a new and more agile typology of partners, with a balance of public, private-sector, non-governmental, scientific, and funding partners, and leveraging the strength of diversity to ensure that it is more than the sum of its parts. This will, for instance, include setting up formal links with the best, and carefully selected, global and regional research institutions and think-tanks to support our thought leadership and to push innovation boundaries or trigger leaps forward in science or fill critical data and information gaps in areas such as GESI, cryosphere and atmosphere. We will also link more closely to international finance institutions, the private sector and enterprise development bodies. Through these partnerships, we will leverage our knowledge value chain to catalyse investments from the private sector and financial institutions and support development of scalable and investable projects that are GESI and youth responsive. We will also find the best-fit organisations for linking us to communities and enable more strategic use of our

knowledge networks, e.g., Himalayan University Consortium (HUC) and the South Asian Network for Development and Environmental Economics (SANDEE).

This partnership diversity will be essential to deliver on our evidence building, solutions development, scaling and investment ambitions and will likely require different kinds of partnership instruments as well as a creative balance of partners for each area of intervention. Finally, we will work to have more frequent, possibly annual, dialogues, with partners on thematic areas to reflect on progress, lessons, and changing priorities.

3. IMPROVED SYSTEMS, PROCESSES, AND STRUCTURES

Having nurtured professional capacities and developed our strengths through our diverse workforce over the past four decades, we have solid foundations upon which we will deepen and broaden our competencies, including developing and strengthening new skills to equip ourselves to undertake new ways of working that reflect our core values and our sincerity of purpose. We will undertake an organisational change process that will include a restructuring to align with the Strategy 2030 in a way that nurtures accountability, efficiency, transparency and integrity and embraces digitalisation. This will also involve building an organisational culture that is in line with our core values, accountable and fair, and systems that are fully focused on quality of outcomes and innovative, as well as evidence-based and scalable policy and practice solutions.

Through investing in learning and development, we will nurture our most valuable assets – our people – fully aligning our staff competencies with Strategy 2030. To this end, we will strengthen skillsets in the areas of policy, economics, social and behavioural science, innovation, business and enterprise, results-based management and evaluation, scaling readiness, and evidence review

and synthesis methods. Building on the unique value and strength manifested in our current diversity of staff, we will focus on the recruitment of staff from underrepresented RMCs while balancing the number of staff from outside the region to have a continuous inflow of diverse expertise and backgrounds. We will also seek to give opportunities to women and others from marginalised groups. We aim to create a vibrant work environment, which combines creativity with commitment and a healthy work-life balance, while reducing our carbon and environmental footprint.

4. POWERFUL AND TARGETED COMMUNICATIONS

Our communications efforts have always been linked inextricably to knowledge production and exchange with an overarching goal of stimulating thought leadership. However, as we move towards providing more relevant and responsive knowledge services to our RMCs and playing a more active role internationally as a convenor, all professional staff members will need to see themselves as communicators and knowledge service providers and we will embed these skills at all levels. There will, nevertheless, continue to be a need and role for a specialised unit that provides communications support to other work areas of the centre. Strengthening and equipping relevant staff with additional specialist skills that better meet the demands of the new strategic objectives, such as policy communications and knowledge brokering, will ensure that our communications work can help our analytical and synthesis work deliver agenda-setting answers.

Given the dynamism of the communication landscape across the globe, our communication strategy will be agile, adaptive, and responsive to the RMCs' contexts, and all events and products will have precise target audiences with whom impact will be assessed. We will pay special attention to integrating communications along our impact pathways and making better use of the growing importance of social media, including triggering

significant growth in our social media following. We will work to establish a network of communication hubs and/or correspondents to increase the volume and quality of our communications products in our RMCs national languages. We will build on our current systems to ensure that we screen our knowledge products and communications materials for quality, relevance, and contribution to impact, and always in compliance with standing ethical norms and policies.

5. AN ADAPTIVE, LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE-BASED APPROACH

We have demonstrated experience in mainstreaming the theory of change as a monitoring and evaluation and learning tool across our programmes and initiatives. We have integrated and applied results-based monitoring and reporting along participatory impact pathways, and our internal planning and review mechanism has helped improve accountability and learning.

Moving forwards, we will adopt an adaptive, learning and performance-based approach that will focus on assessing collective outcomes together with our partners – building on project and output-based monitoring to deliver a stronger and more focused outcome and impact monitoring system. A strategic planning, monitoring, evaluation, and learning system will underpin all our work and results. We will introduce a 'stages to outcomes and impact' monitoring approach to support results reporting and learning, and an evaluation system that meets international standards of transparency and gives confidence to governing bodies, funders, and other stakeholders, thus indirectly helping to attract and retain investment. It will strengthen our impact assessment and complexity-aware planning methodologies and mechanisms and combine reflective learning and exchange with measurement of scaling solutions and policy engagement processes, as well as monitoring stages in our contributions to impact. Such a system will also enable a dynamic, adaptive management approach

that allows for more agility and early course correction, in a complex and changing context. This will continue to require period independent evaluations. We will also track performance progress on our internal organisational strengthening process and seek to cultivate an internal working culture of learning from both successes and failures, drawing on our core values and principles of openness and accountability.

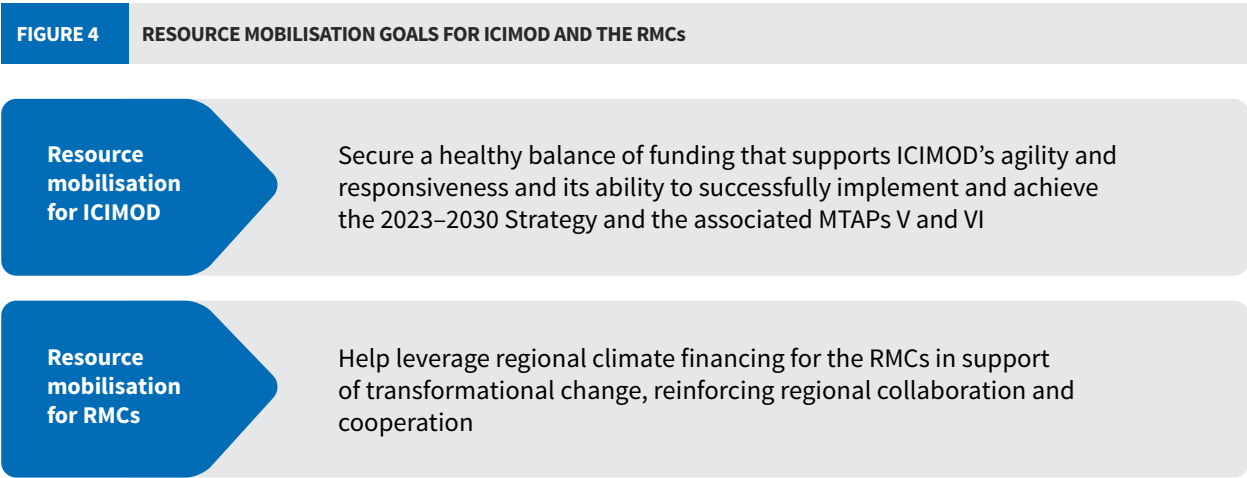
6. RESOURCING OUR AMBITION

Building on the past momentum for fundraising through our strategic and diverse funding partnerships, we will amplify our resource mobilisation endeavours using a collaborative process involving the Directorate, the new Business Development and Resource Mobilisation Unit, the Strategic Groups, Communications and other units. These pursuits are vital and form a collective task for all professional staff at ICIMOD. We will concurrently pursue two resource mobilisation goals: for the institution and for the region (see Figure 4). We will strive to substantially increase and leverage investments to achieve ICIMOD’s ambitions, including growing our cumulative funding to 2030 at a rate of at least 20% compared to MTAP IV levels, while assisting RMCs, as appropriate and with available resources, to pursue additional opportunities.

As part of the resource mobilisation for RMCs goal, we will, in partnership with our RMCs, identify, align and scale-up investments in regional mountain-specific climate priorities for transformational change. This could be in line with the HKH Call to Action’s six urgent actions, RMCs’ NDCs or through other efforts. We will engage proactively with climate financing as it will be crucial for more effective regional responses through our RMCs and partners.

We will apply a prioritised and systematic approach to resource mobilisation, leveraging our core strengths and aligning with our strategic objectives. We will make strategic organisational, partnership and resourcing decisions based on business and funder intelligence, analysis of emerging opportunities, delivery capabilities as well as sound assessments and studies, contributing to a positive return on investment of our time and effort and increasing the value for money that funders derive from their investments. To support these goals, we will act strategically along the following four dimensions:

- Further institutionalise resource mobilisation endeavours by reinforcing standardised processes with clear roles and responsibilities and building capacity within the organisation and with partners to improve their resource mobilisation readiness and quality of proposals



- Bridge communication, outreach and resource mobilisation by aligning efforts in these areas to better articulate the case for financial support to ICIMOD and our RMCs
- Strengthen and diversify the funding base by bolstering our relationships with current funders, securing investments from relevant previous funders as well as attracting new funders to the table, which could include official development assistance (ODA) providers, non-ODA development partners, non-profit and philanthropic organisations, and the private sector
- Broaden financial instruments through global, regional and local entities, and in our role as Regional Implementing Entity for the Adaptation Fund, as well as through other innovative instruments (e.g., payments for ecological goods and services, impact investments, and blended finance), while also engaging in policy processes

7. HARNESSING INNOVATION AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Identifying context and region-specific integrated and innovative solutions for the mountains and their people has been a core element of what we do. In our early work on geospatial technology, we pioneered the use of this technology, applications, and network in the region. Yet the depth, scale and urgency of the challenges facing the HKH today require transformational approaches; business as usual will no longer work. This calls for embracing innovation, exploring, and deploying new ideas and opportunities, while harnessing the opportunities provided by the fourth industrial revolution. This will involve advancing our capabilities in citizen science, artificial intelligence and machine learning, digital twins, and big data analytics,

while also building the capacity of partners and facilitating South–South learning. Fostering innovation and promoting technological solutions for sustainable transitions will be at the heart of how we respond, with equal efforts placed around policy and socio-economic and institutional innovation.

This will initially involve engaging in two areas of institutional change:

- Expanding our capacity to identify, develop and/or modify investable, scalable, and sustainable solutions that are mountain specific and that can attract capital to achieve real impact. This will include collaborating extensively and leveraging our strategic partnerships, including with the private sector. Across the HKH, we see considerable scope for exchange and innovation around green approaches – that is, approaches that are circular, regenerative, clean, low carbon and resource efficient together with nature or bio-based solutions; as well as seeking out the best blend of traditional and new knowledge including local and grassroots innovations.
- Equipping our facility with new and cutting-edge observational, analytical and synthetic methods, tools, and technologies to support development decision making (at multiple levels) in both public and private institutions. We will also promote digital access to knowledge, information and data in key areas of strategic focus (e.g., climate, disaster, water, biodiversity, etc). In so doing, we aim to remain at the forefront of applications of earth observation, geospatial technologies, artificial intelligence and machine learning, in direct response to RMCs’ demands and the HKH Call to Action.

Future forwards

We will take the Strategy 2030 aims and objectives forward into our next two Medium Term Action Plans (MTAP). The MTAP V period covers 2023–2026 and MTAP VI 2027–2030. These MTAPs will spell out how we will deliver our results, our expected financing plans and change processes, and will be accompanied by specific institutional strategies that will support the transition process.

Over this Strategy 2030 period we will track our performance against an agreed set of indicators, and review our changing operating context, in case of any necessary course corrections. Our integrated

approach to performance measurement will ensure that we become an adaptive and learning organisation. We expect there will be a need to revisit and refresh the Strategy 2030 at the transition between MTAPs V and VI.

We will continue to be guided by our Board of Governors, Programme Advisory Committee, ICIMOD Support Group, and Finance Committee in taking this strategy forward, and we acknowledge their valuable advice and inputs in the process of developing this strategy.

Glossary

Adaptation – the modification of systems and practices in response to observed or anticipated changes to reduce adverse impacts, improve sustainability and inclusiveness, and make the most of emerging opportunities

Capacity building – developing skills, knowledge and outlook of individuals, communities, and institutions

GESI – gender equality and social inclusion – ensuring equal opportunities for women, the poor, persons with disabilities, people living in geographically remote areas and people from other excluded or vulnerable groups

Green economy – an economy that fosters circular, regenerative, ecologically responsible, socio-economically viable development, and which supports sustainable value chains

Knowledge – awareness and use of evidence, skills or objects that create shared understanding and judgement, enabling positive societal and environmental change in the HKH

Nature-based Solutions – actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural and modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously benefiting people and nature

Policy – a guiding principle and course of action of stakeholders to achieve shared goals

Political neutrality – the state of respecting sovereign rights and avoiding decisions, actions or positions that may affect the political impartiality of our role as an intergovernmental knowledge organisation

Regional collaboration – the development of political and institutional mechanisms through

dialogue and cooperation that strengthen common ground, promote national interests, and address shared risks and concerns

Regional cooperation – cooperation among and across countries on transboundary issues affecting mountain and downstream communities

Resilience – the ability of mountain communities to withstand and bounce back from adversity and shocks, anticipate and prepare for uncertainties, and adapt to change

Transboundary issues / risks – issues/risks that occur or spread across shared borders and have significant impacts across the HKH (and far beyond), and which can be aggravated by inconsistent policy and action between and across different countries; effective solutions require collective (multi-country) action and regional cooperation

Transboundary opportunities – include opportunities of scale, that can occur over wider and cross-border geographies, like resilient mountain supply chains between upstream and downstream communities; opportunities for knowledge sharing; opportunities to pool and manage risks – like regional risk insurance schemes

Transformational partnerships – where actors bring together essential complementary strengths and resources to deliver systemic change and comprising more than the sum of their parts

Transformative change – lasting change in behaviours, relationships, values and views of the actors in a system, which can together fundamentally change the behaviour of system actors and its variables (and thus the system)



TEXTILE DESIGNS FROM OUR EIGHT REGIONAL MEMBER COUNTRIES LEFT TO RIGHT:
AFGHANISTAN, BANGLADESH, BHUTAN, CHINA, INDIA, MYANMAR, NEPAL, PAKISTAN



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 HKH – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan – and is based in Kathmandu, Nepal. Entering its 40th year, ICIMOD is perfectly positioned to support the transformative action required for the HKH to face the challenges of the escalating effects of climate change, water insecurity, increased disaster risk, biodiversity loss, and widespread socioeconomic changes. Through our new Strategy 2030: Moving Mountains and our Medium-Term Action Plan V (2023–2026), we seek to raise our ambition to support the required transformative action, guided by the HKH Call to Action, to step up our engagement through to 2030.

REGIONAL MEMBER COUNTRIES



AFGHANISTAN



BANGLADESH



BHUTAN



CHINA



INDIA



MYANMAR



NEPAL



PAKISTAN



ICIMOD and its Regional Member Countries gratefully acknowledge the generous support of Austria, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland for core and programme funding, and Australia, Canada's International Development Research Centre, the European Union, Finland, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and the World Bank for project funding.

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