

A Call for Mountains

*From the participants of the **World Mountain Forum** in Bishkek, October 23-26, 2018*

ACKNOWLEDGING that mountain regions provide essential global goods and services for both highland and lowland (downstream) communities and play a key role in sustainable development.

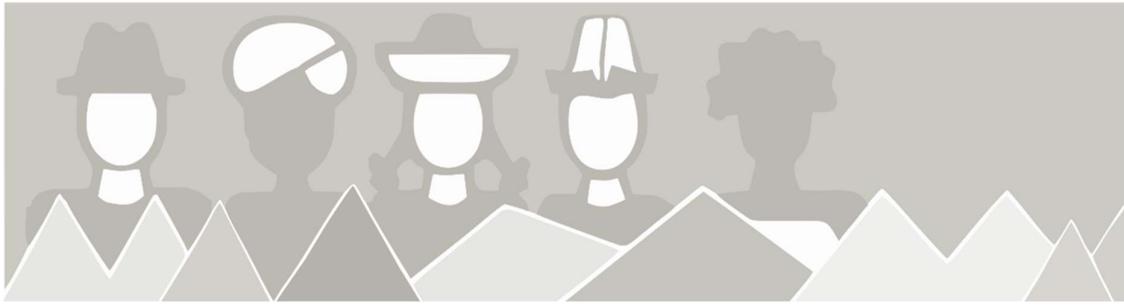
RECALLING the three mountain-related targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, namely:

- target 15.1, which requires, by 2020, to ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements;
- target 15.4, which requires, by 2030, to ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development;
- target 6.6, which requires, by 2020, to protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes.

RECALLING, the United National General Assembly Resolution A/RES/71/234 on “Sustainable Mountain Development” and relevant international conventions such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) - including the conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN), Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, UN Habitat New Urban Agenda, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

RECALLING the deliberations and resultant *Declarations* related to sustainable mountain development issued at the previous World Mountain Forums in Mbale, Uganda, in 2016^[1], and in Cuzco, Peru, in 2014;

NOTING that mountains remain home for some of the world’s poorest, most vulnerable, or marginalized people, and that one in three mountain people in developing countries is vulnerable to food insecurity and the trend is rising;



BEING AWARE of the crucial roles played by women and indigenous peoples in fostering sustainable mountain development, including the protection of mountain environments, cultures, and traditions;

NOTING the need to promote and draw on cultural diversity and traditional knowledge in the world's mountains for sustainable and resilient livelihoods, protection of ecosystem services, and the wellbeing of the mountain people of present and future generations;

CONCERNED that pressures from human activities, and from climate change, is leading to rapid montane biodiversity loss, land degradation and increasing disasters, jeopardizing mountains' capacities to support community livelihoods and the continued provision of ecosystem services;

And finally, RECOGNIZING that mountain ranges are often shared across countries, hence the need to strengthen transboundary cooperation in policy development and knowledge generation and dissemination.

We, the participants at the World Mountain Forum 2018 (and Youth Mountain Forum 2018) in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, following engaging presentations, fruitful discussions, expert panels, and other dialogues pertaining to the Forum's four core thematic tracks,^[2] hereby make the following recommendations with the aim to promote sustainable mountain development, targeting actors at global, regional and national levels, and thus bring optimal benefit for mountain communities and downstream stakeholders around the world:

1. POLICY

1.1. Global

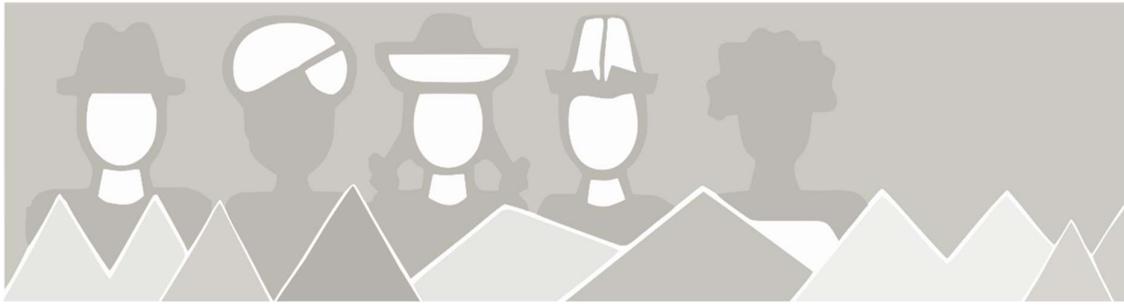
- a) Ensure the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda in mountain areas by supporting the Framework for Action approved at the 5th Global Meeting of the Mountain Partnership, aiming to achieve the most significant mountain SDG priorities by 2022, in preparation of stocktaking.
- b) Increase investments to promote sustainable mountain development and integrative adaptation strategies to climate change in mountains, covering the entire disaster risk cycle, as warming in mountain areas is significantly above global averages according to scientific evidence.
- c) Promote the legitimate inclusion of mountain people and local communities' voices, including those of youth, in international development dialogues and relevant UN Conventions such as the UNFCCC and their associated processes and negotiations, with a strong unified front of diverse mountain voices.



- d) Encourage closer collaboration among mountain stakeholders at all levels, through all relevant national and international mechanisms, such as through building a coalition that advocates for mountains at the global level similar to 'Small Island Developing States'.
- e) Encourage that urgent climate action be taken to keep global warming at no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius by end of the century, including the mainstreaming of climate change adaptation and mitigation in current and future programs and projects, giving preference to nature-based solutions to climate change adaptation.
- f) Strengthen global platforms for mountain regions and countries and create financial mechanisms enabled to support mountain stakeholders through compensations for the provision of ecosystem services and other relevant investment mechanisms.
- g) Work cooperatively with all mountains stakeholders, national and international organizations, and particularly governments of mountain countries, towards a global mountain convention strengthening the position of mountain countries and their peoples, and raise or develop the necessary social support, human and financial resources and compensation mechanisms to ensure the sustainable provision of ecosystem goods and services and the thriving of mountain communities that safeguard globally vital mountain resources.

1.2 Regional

- a) Strengthen existing and promote the creation of new policies, frameworks and mechanisms that support regional and transboundary cooperation for protecting mountain ecosystems and the services they provide, and improving peoples' livelihoods, through protected areas, environmental research and monitoring, and payments for ecosystem services.
- b) Encourage that more support be given for scientific research in mountain regions from bilateral/multilateral development programs and projects (including infrastructure projects) and other financing mechanisms, for the benefit of mountain communities and for maintaining functional ecosystem services and biodiversity.
- c) Establish regional fora that enable convening of stakeholders around issues of environment and development.
- d) Promote cooperative projects and initiatives between public and private organizations, working towards conservation and sustainable development in mountain regions and countries worldwide.



1.3 National

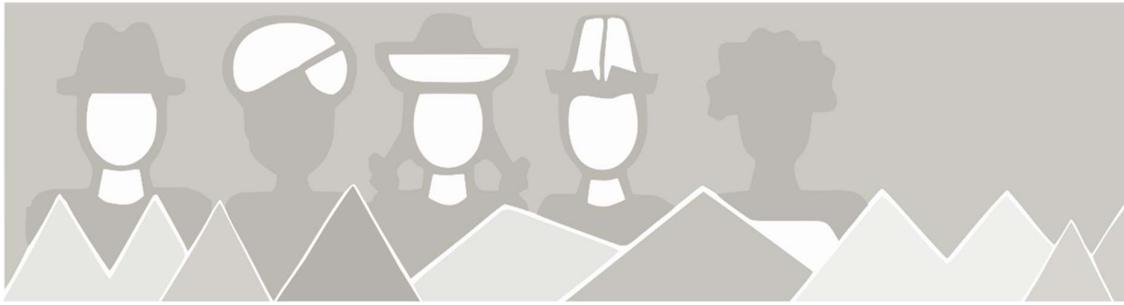
- a) Support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through specific nationally-relevant mountain targets, with the involvement of mountain peoples, and related reporting and monitoring mechanisms.
- b) Governments include mountains in their Voluntary National Reviews (VNR), to include detailed reporting on achieving SDGs in mountains and achieving targets that are country-specific.
- c) Ensure mountains are taken into account in national and sub-national strategies and planning tools such as National Development Strategies including emerging risks in urban spaces as well as rural-urban interrelationships, National Adaptation Plans, and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement.
- d) Promote the integration of ecosystem- and community-based adaptation, and other supporting approaches, into relevant national development processes pertaining to climate change, also incorporating the rights of local mountain communities to land and natural resources.
- e) Develop policies for the compensation of mountain sourced ecosystem services, as well as for addressing income disparities in mountain areas, and for protecting the rights of local mountain communities to land and natural resources governance and management.
- f) Establish national mountain committees as multi-stakeholder mechanisms bringing together the main national institutions and organizations for the advancement of national mountain agendas.
- g) Build capacities in mountain communities (especially for women) to develop new opportunities for sustainable entrepreneurship and to establish rigorous natural resource governance mechanisms to overcome the challenge of resource depletion.
- h) Promote and diversify women's roles as custodians of mountains, enabling them with ownership and responsibility to restore natural biodiversity, beyond overcoming their socio-economic vulnerabilities.
- i) Encourage more financial support for research and development in mountain regions at national levels.
- j) Work cooperatively with all mountains stakeholders, local, national and international organizations, and particularly national governments, towards greater convergences in order to enable coherent and effective development strategies at the national level.



2. KNOWLEDGE

2.1 Global

- a) Recognize and support the need for effective global platforms to enable and strengthen exchange of knowledge, best practices and proven development policies between different mountain regions around the world, and to provide a protected space for carefully monitoring and assessing global progress in mountain development in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement, and the Sendai Framework on DRR.
- b) Strengthen global platforms, such as the UN endorsed Mountain Partnership and dedicated mountain related science-based research networks and journals, to ensure that knowledge is identified and shared amongst mountain stakeholders and the wider development research and policy communities.
- c) Support and provide inputs, as required, to the United National General Secretary Report on Sustainable Mountain Development, which will be compiled in 2019, and then updated triennially, forming the basis for the subsequent United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Sustainable Mountain Development.
- d) Recognize and promote understanding about the upstream - downstream linkages, especially relating to mountain ecosystem services such as the stable, predictable and sufficient provision of freshwater for local to regional uses and encourage global action to protect water sources and the mountain cryosphere.
- e) Raise awareness and mobilize politicians, decision makers, the media and the public, based on sound scientific data and information and comprehensive regional development and environmental assessments.
- f) Support regional and international inter- and transdisciplinary research collaboration linking people and knowledge, fostering research and education to address mountain specific research and knowledge needs, connecting regional research centers and networks.
- g) Support the mountain research community in engaging with international global assessments of scientific state of knowledge, such as IPCC and IPBES.
- h) Contribute to global development debates, e.g. with evidence and assessments to be presented in dedicated chapters on mountains in global reports, such as the upcoming dedicated mountains chapter and cross-chapter paper in the IPCC special report on oceans and cryosphere (SROCC) and sixth assessment report (AR6), highlighting warming scenarios and their consequences for mountain regions.
- i) Facilitate processes enabling stakeholders to suggest themes for sustainable development reports, including mountain specific themes.



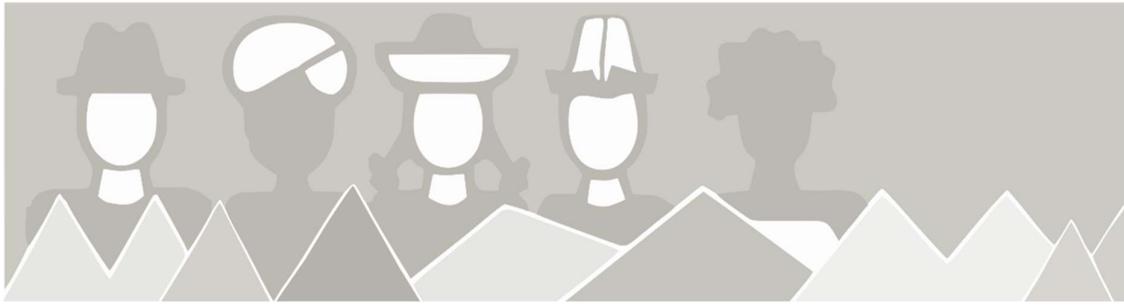
- j) Consider climate information and projections in decision making processes and adaptation strategies for mountain development in a systematic manner, and thereby ensure that decision making is rooted in science.

2.2 Regional

- a) Facilitate regional (multi-national, transboundary) dialogues on sustainable mountain development and the Sustainable Development Goals, through promotion of scientific inquiry and knowledge sharing, to inform policy formulation and decision-making.
- b) Strengthen existing and promote the creation of new regional “centers of excellence” focused on sustainable mountain development, inclusive of necessary funds and concrete long-term plans, as well as support for regional data sharing and knowledge management, in order to enhance sharing and learning in science and policy between different types of knowledge holders, including scientists, policy makers, local communities – whether residing locally or internationally – and a wide range of other mountain stakeholders.

2.3 National

- a) Generate mountain-related baseline environmental and development data, to complement historical data, along with the establishment of regular monitoring and assessments and the provision of open access to this data.
- b) Make data available to a wider public (open access), including meta data information.
- c) Broaden the sources and approaches for collecting data, including remotely sensed data, and ‘crowd-sourcing’ mechanisms, ensuring suitable quality control measures are in place.
- d) Support long term monitoring of mountain relevant indicators as a key to assess and ensure national progress in implementation of SDGs, such as the Mountain Green Cover Index.
- e) Recognize, document, strengthen, protect and convey local and traditional knowledge, including all knowledge holders as well as the different perspectives arising according to gender and age, in knowledge generation and sharing mechanisms pertaining to sustainable mountain development.
- f) Promote mountain-specific courses at national level in university curricula and other programs, as well as mainstream mountain specific contents into existing curricula, including the development of capacity-building and training skills e.g. in economics, mountain hazards, conservation and natural resources management, as well as value chain development, marketing capacities, and the sustainable management of mountain regions.
- g) Support and encourage processes ensuring that relevant knowledge and information - scientific findings, insights and learnings - are reaching mountain areas and are communicated back to local communities where they often stem from.



- h) Build the capacities of national scientific institutions to generate, use, analyze and publish scientific data and findings from mountain countries in order to enhance the visibility of these regions in the global science-policy nexus.
- i) Promote cooperation and exchange of information and the sharing of best practices with other mountain countries.
- j) Ensure documentation of traditional indigenous knowledge of mountain communities including their traditional practices of utilization and allocation of natural resources, integrating the same with national policies to optimize the impacts for mountain people.

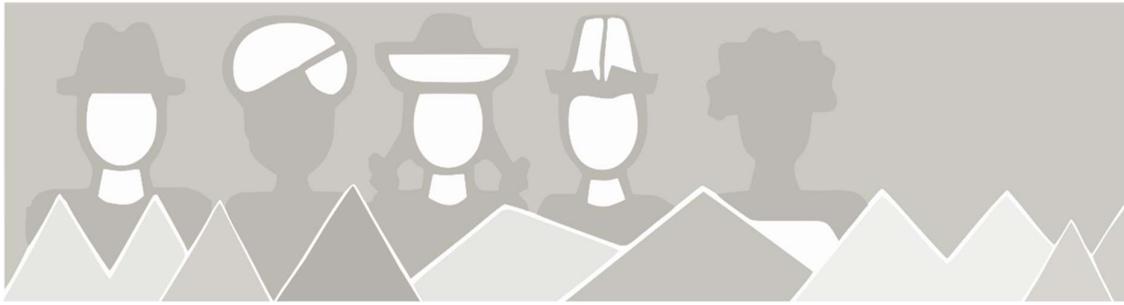
3. ACTION ON THE GROUND

3.1 Global

- a) Facilitate access to finance, capacity building, exchange of current or emerging technologies, and knowledge and research for sustainable mountain development, through various established financial and technical assistance programs, including the Green Climate Fund, Global Environment Facility and other mechanisms and platforms.
- b) Provide concessional financing to mountainous countries and regions for implementation of SDGs and climate change adaptation programs, such as outlined in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda – a global framework for financing the post-2015 period.
- c) Promote an emphasis on natural capital accounting, recognizing the value of mountains and the ecosystem services they provide.
- d) Change the narrative on mountains and their people – from poverty-struck and underdeveloped, hardly self-sufficient peasants and labor providers to guardians of vital traditions, indigenous knowledge and crucial environmental services nourishing important downstream areas.

3.2 Regional

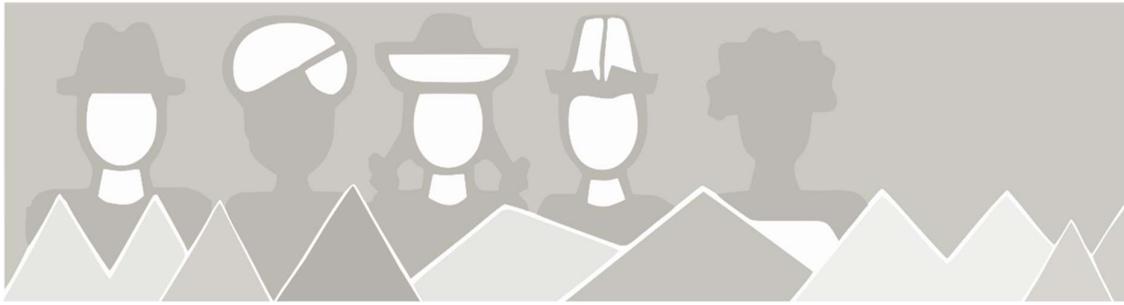
- a) Promote regional development dialogues on long-term and emerging opportunities and challenges in fields of sustainable mountain development, with the aim to facilitate and strengthen development policy, scientific knowledge, and on-the-ground development and conservation outcomes.
- b) Promote regional cooperation in needs-based research and development where mountain ecosystems, mountain societies and/or transport routes or other ‘connectors’ are expected to create (or could benefit from) more unified and coordinated perspectives and approaches across borders.



- c) Demonstrate commitment and support for action by strengthening international and national bodies that promote regional cooperation fostering sustainable mountain development.
- d) Link mountain communities and other stakeholders through exchanges of people, experiences and best practices, such as linking across the ~7,000 km of high mountains spanning many countries in Asia, forging and enhancing strategic partnerships across the main mountain regions worldwide.

3.3 National

- a) Invest in contextually appropriate forms of sustainable management of natural resources and in the strengthening of mountain livelihoods, from the bottom-up, recognizing diverse values of local culture, peoples' empowerment, and need for effective access for local stakeholders to development resources and basic services such as finances and training.
- b) Strive to promote more resilient livelihoods for mountain people, taking into account socioeconomic and ecological aspects, with special attention given to indigenous people, local communities and vulnerable groups including women and youth, and other critical elements of more inclusive development.
- c) Collect, record and share/disseminate relevant local development practices and innovations of mountain communities, including both traditional and emerging adaptive approaches in light of climate change and globalization.
- d) Support the development of small and medium enterprises in mountain regions, focusing especially on mountain goods and services, strengthening value chains for mountain products, and promoting the creation of current and future sustainable jobs through local community enterprises.
- e) Strengthen and diversify sources of income, along with improving food and nutrition security and social-ecological resilience in mountain regions, by diversifying food systems and simultaneously improving local diets for better nutrition.
- f) Promote adequate conservation of agricultural biodiversity and establish gene banks for these resources, along with documentation and preservation of the traditional knowledge of their cultivation and use.
- g) Invest in the next generation through improvements in accessible health and education services.
- h) Empower and enable mountain people to effectually access international funding streams and innovative financing mechanisms 'off the beaten path'.



Endnotes:

[1] The **Mbale Declaration** (emerging from World Mountain Forum 2016) further notes:

RECOGNIZING the importance of mountain areas, as underlined in Chapter 13 (Sustainable Mountain Development) of Agenda 21 (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) and in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002);

REAFFIRMING the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled “The future we want” (Rio de Janeiro, 2012) especially under its paragraphs 210, 211 and 212 which specifically recognize the importance of mountains and their services in achieving sustainable development as well as acknowledging the role of mountain people and their local and indigenous knowledge in relevant for addressing the current global challenges including climate change;

RECALLING Resolution 68/217 adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 2013 related to sustainable mountain development and other relevant United Nations General Assembly resolutions encouraging states and all stakeholders to give appropriate consideration to the issues of Sustainable Mountain Development in the elaboration of the Post 2015 Development Agenda;

RECALLING the outcome of the “Africa Regional Mountain Forum” held in Arusha, the resolutions from the “World Mountain Forum 2014” held in Cusco on 23-24 May 2014 as well as the conclusions of the “Fourth Global Meeting of the Mountain Partnership” held in Erzurum, Turkey on 17-20 September 2013;

ACKNOWLEDGING ongoing global initiatives aiming to address the challenges faced by mountain regions and promoting their sustainable development globally, such as Sustainable Mountain Development for Global Change (SMD4GC) program as well as the Mountain Partnership with its many collaborations, projects, and joint resolutions and recommendations;

And finally, ACKNOWLEDGING the deliberations in the World Mountain Forum in Mbale, Uganda, under the main theme of “Mountains for our Future” and sub-themes: (1) Mountains and Climate Change, (2) Mountain Communities & Livelihoods, (3) Mountain Ecosystem Services, and (4) Sustainable Mountain Agriculture.

[2] The major thematic tracks addressed at **World Mountain Forum 2018** were the following:

- Climate change affecting water and energy in mountain areas:
Mountains are among the most sensitive regions to climate change on Earth. Impacts of climate change are being increasingly observed in mountains, and related future projections raise tremendous concerns of threats to sustainable development.
- Poverty, food systems and agrobiodiversity:
In mountainous regions with limited agricultural lands, rugged topography, and large altitudinal gradients, the preservation of agricultural biodiversity and valuation of traditional knowledge about food systems are essential ingredients of a sustainable future in which development needs are met alongside cultural continuity.
- Resilience and transformation in mountain communities and ecosystems
Strengthening the resilience and adaptive capacity of mountain communities is key to ensure their thriving and sustained role as stewards for mountain goods and services. Mountain communities that manage vital mountain resources are experiencing novel challenges in the modern day.
- Investing in mountains – security the future
Mountains are home to 13% of the global population, providing essential environmental services and goods to people worldwide. Despite increasing recognition of the importance of vital mountain functions by the international community, corresponding investments required to sustain these services are still lacking.