International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions

Summary of a Mountain Forum E-consultation

7 April-30 May 2003

International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions: Summary of a Mountain Forum E-consultation 7 April–30 May 2003

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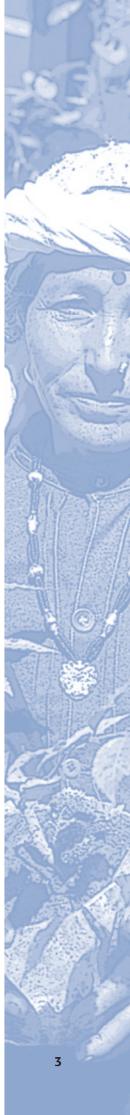
The e-consultation discussion, background documentation, and summary reports are archived at the following website: http://www.mtnforum.org/ip/index.html

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Background

The last three decades have witnessed an increase in awareness for the importance of sustainable development of mountain regions. Mountains host a wealth of natural resources and freshwater that many in both upland and lowland areas rely upon for their livelihood and survival. They are complex, fragile ecosystems whose vertical zones create niche ecosystems that harbor treasures of biodiversity. Mountain people face many of the same challenges as other rural communities-marginality, poverty, eroding cultural foundations, out-migration—but the vertical, remote landscapes make the challenges of sustainable development all the more difficult in these areas and thus the need for special attention.

In 1992 governments at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro 1992 formally acknowledged the importance of mountain regions by including a mountain chapter in Agenda 21. Over the years increasing numbers of individuals and organizations working in mountains found greater resolve and meaning for their labors, and began to communicate and share information beyond their local mountain ranges. One direct output from the 1992 Earth Summit was the creation of the Mountain Forum (www.mountainforum.org), a global network for sustainable development for mountain communities and environments.

In 2002, governments at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) reaffirmed their commitment to sustainable development of mountain regions in paragraph 42 in the WSSD Plan of Implementation. As part of the formal WSSD process, governments and UN agencies took the initiative to launch a new International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions-known simply as the "Mountain Partnership." The Mountain Partnership is an umbrella alliance of mountain actors who are committed to mountain-related goals of the WSSD. Its main purpose is to share knowledge and experience and to foster cooperation among members. More than 80 countries, international organizations and NGO's have joined the Mountain Partnership, and the number of members is growing steadily.

This document summarizes the results of an e-consultation of Mountain Partnership members, hosted by the Mountain Forum in the spring of 2003. The e-consultation was a milestone that provided broad-based input to the eleventh session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and has helped

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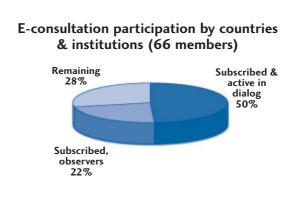
inform the preparation of the October 2003 meeting in Merano, Italy—the first meeting of all members in one place.

Summary of an E-consultation on the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions

7 April-30 May 2003

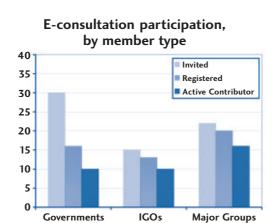
This document is a summary of the e-consultation on the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions, conducted by the Mountain Forum on 7–18 April 2003 and presented to the participants of the Mountain Partnership meeting held 1 May 2003 in New York. The e-consultation was subsequently extended until 30 May 2003 at the request of the participants of the 1 May meeting.

The aim of the e-consultation was to collect a more extensive range of views on the Partnership from the 66 states and organisations which had joined it by 1 April 2003, particularly in preparation for discussions at the 11 th session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) on 28 April–9 May 2003; and also to inform the long-term development of the Partnership. The e-consultation was commissioned by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) on behalf of the Swiss government, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Given the short notice and time available, participants were informed that their contributions would be informal and not binding in any way, and would not be attributed in the present report.









A total of 49 Partners participated in the process (see Annex). The e-consultation was structured into four themes, and suggestions for 'next steps'; which are summarized below.

Membership Expectations

Partners were asked to provide information regarding needs and expectations from the Partnership with regard to *information and networking services, and technical and financial support.* The majority of contributions under this theme addressed such expectations. In addition, a small number proposed an *advocacy function* for the Partnership, e.g., as a "networked platform to multiply the effectiveness of mountain voices" or a "forum to advance specific needs of mountain regions". As noted in the Networking point *theme, this is a key issue for discussion as the Partnership evolves.*

Expectations regarding *networking* recognised the need not only for the use of *information technology* (website with links, databases, etc.; see discussion under the *Networking point* theme below), but also direct, *personal links* between individuals representing institutions. Participants generally regarded the Partnership as a mechanism or platform to promote networking among key players (e.g., international and regional organisations, natural scientists, social science researchers, planners, decision/policy makers, community groups, local NGOs), so that they can communicate with and learn from each other. Key *principles* are to:

- minimise the duplication of effort;
- highlight synergies and foster dialogue;
- harmonise initiatives.

Thus, an important role of the Partnership is perceived to be as a *broker* or matchmaker, facilitating contacts between countries/institutions to forge joint activities, and creating conditions for complementarity and mutual assistance (see also discussion under the *Networking Point theme*).

Linked to the ideas of networking between Partners (and other stakeholders) are expectations related to the identification, collection, analysis, and dissemination of *knowledge and information* on diverse mountain-related issues. Key concepts that were suggested include:

- a clearing-house for knowledge and the sharing of experiences;
- linking the outcomes of research to knowledge management;
- benchmarking with regard to best practices in sustainable mountain development;
- dissemination of success stories.

These are further discussed under the *Monitoring arrangements* and *Networking point* themes. With regard to anticipated technical and financial support, participants mentioned a wide range of *themes*, including:

- sustainable tourism;
- conflict resolution;
- conservation of mountain ecosystems;
- implementation of states' commitments and programmes of work under international conventions;
- maintenance of cultural diversity;
- mountain-specific policy and legislation at the national level;
- natural resources management, especially water and soils;
- rural education; and
- research and monitoring.

These themes complement those discussed and proposed for Partnership initiatives in previous fora, such as the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit.

Expectations of *technical support* included:

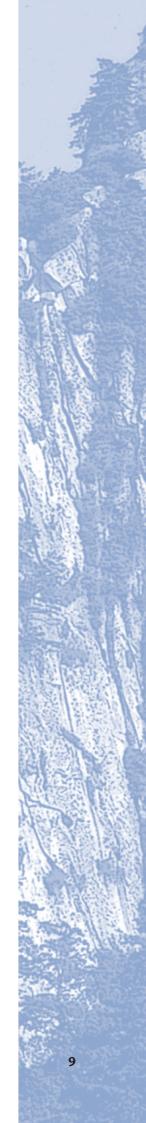
- technical capacity building; including the analysis, synthesis, and management of information;
- institutional capacity building; including management systems and cooperation in community building (e.g., Local Agenda 21);
- policy research relating to mountain development and sustainable mountain livelihoods;
- formulation and implementation of mountain-specific policies/strategies.

Further issues relating to capacity building, particularly for monitoring, are addressed under the *Monitoring arrangements* theme.

With regard to *financial support*, one stated goal was to double financial support for mountain communities and environments over five years. The role of the *private sector* as a source of financing was also mentioned, especially with regard to full-cost pricing of mountain resources and payments for environmental services. In addition to needs for funding the types of technical support mentioned in the previous paragraph, specific development project funding was mentioned (e.g., mountain community microcredit schemes, compensation funds for development and conservation). Linking to the role of the Partnership in *fostering new initiatives*, two proposals were made:

- pilot grants to develop new initiatives for funding;
- nominal/symbolic financial support to provide leverage for securing funds from other sources.

With regard to ensuring *equitable access* to information and knowledge, participants suggested the provision of subsidised access to publications and training for individuals from developing and transition countries.



Membership Commitments

The majority of commitments made by active participants reflected the priorities of the respective governments, organisations, and institutions with regard to issues such as policy development and implementation, financial and technical assistance, research, and project development and implementation. Given the focus of the Partnership on joint initiatives, it will be essential for this information (which has been archived by the Mountain Forum) to be brought together by appropriate means to highlight synergies and foster dialogue (see particularly sections on the *Networking point* and *Next steps* below).

One issue discussed under this theme was that of *membership fees*. In total, 27 views were presented; some participants envisaged more than one alternative. As presented below, there were three general types of response; there was no relationship between the type of response and the type of respondent (e.g., government, international organisation, NGO). The range of views on this topic is a critical issue to be resolved with regard to the governance of the Partnership. Five respondents stated unequivocally that there should be *no mandatory membership fee,* for reasons including:

- this would not be compatible with the spirit of WSSD initiatives;
- the infrastructure for the Partnership should be supported voluntarily by concerned governments;
- a fee would imply the creation of a legal structure rather than a partnership.

Sixteen respondents supported a *nominal fee*; most proposed that this should be on a sliding scale, based on criteria such as economic status, ability to pay, or the budget of an organisation. A number of respondents stated that any fee should be primarily to ensure the functioning of a networking point/coordination centre (see also discussion under the *Networking point* theme), and that fees should depend on services provided. It was noted that "even a partial funding of the proposed Partnership Secretariat cannot be achieve through such fees."

Four respondents proposed that membership should derive not from payment of a membership fee, but through *in-kind support* (e.g., personnel, infrastructure), depending on the comparative strengths and areas of competence of individual Partners, and involvement in joint initiatives.

Monitoring Arrangements

Several respondents emphasized the need to use existing guidelines for reporting/monitoring for the CSD in order to avoid duplication of tasks and a potentially two-speed process.

Two alternatives for monitoring arrangements were presented for consideration:

- **Centralised approach:** this was favoured by five respondents. Most suggested that it should be small. Various alternatives were noted, including 1) location at an agency or institution with experience in sustainable mountain development and 2) rotation.
- Networked/federative approach: this was favoured by twelve respondents. Nevertheless, the majority noted the needs for innovative leadership and a central service, generally stating that this should be small, and should facilitate and provide services, rather than supervise. There were few suggestions regarding coordination within a networked/federative approach, other than it could be assured by virtual means (e.g., e-consultations).
- **Combination:** many respondants, in fact, favoured a combination approach, with a small, light, central Secretariat (FAO was suggested as host institution) that acts as a "broker," informing its "clients" of the offer and the demand. Then, once the match is made, the collaboration itself is federative, e.g. bilateral, regional or through funds and programmes of the UN.

Central functions proposed by proponents of both alternatives include:

- 1. facilitation of, and support for, *networking and exchange* between Partners;
- clearing-house mechanism to facilitate and synthesise exchange of experiences and responses for change (and minimise the administrative burden on Partners);
- development and dissemination of a limited number of clear, simple, standardised guidelines, targets, and indicators for monitoring and reporting. Criteria could include a) appropriate periodicity b) minimum extra burden on Partners (i.e., building on Partners' existing approaches where possible) c) recognition of the needs of mountain people;
- 4. *synthesis and dissemination* of information, knowledge, and success stories through Partnership products.

It was proposed that methodologies should be guided by the participatory principle, engaging all Partners in measuring progress and allowing for reflection and learning. With regard to *capacity building*, it was suggested that:

- emphasis should be given to strengthening existing capacities (e.g., through Local Agenda 21 networks);
- the centralised clearing-house function (2 above) would be essential to build capacity for effective participatory monitoring, e.g., through sharing experiences of what has and has not worked;
- a small set of simple and task-related indicators (3 above) (possibly supported by an on-line multi-lingual tutorial on effective monitoring) could assist in building capacity;
- regional and/or on-line training/monitoring programmes could be established, possibly complemented by dedicated workshops on specific issues at national, continental, and perhaps global level;
- donor countries should be responsible for supporting and consolidating local monitoring capacities.

Networking Point

Issues raised with respect to a networking point overlapped to some extent with those raised under the *Monitoring arrangements* theme with regard to central functions. Issues relating to monitoring, reporting, and capacity building are not repeated in this section. *While some participants stated that such a structure should be neutral/impartial, others stated that it should have an advocacy role: "increasing the voice of the mountain community." This is a key issue for further discussion.*

Proposed key *principles* for this structure included the need:

- to be efficient, open-minded, transparent, accountable, proactive, inclusive and respectful of different cultures;
- to stimulate ownership, commitment, and motivation among Partners.

It was suggested that its operations should be guided by the expectations of Partners, possibly with a small board of Partners with thematic/ regional representation. A number of participants suggested that it should build on, and benefit from, *existing* and emerging partnerships, stakeholder dialogues, and means of communication. Specifically, nearly half of the respondents mentioned the need for close coordination with the *Mountain Forum* (e.g., with regard to membership tracking, calendar of events, on-line library, dedicated e-mail lists).

Its main role was generally conceived as a platform and mechanism for communication and information sharing—primarily among Partners, but also more widely, particularly to the CSD. In this context, a wide range of *clearing house services* was proposed, mainly related to transparent information exchange and agenda setting. Most frequently mentioned were:

- brokerage function, e.g. collecting, publishing and consolidating the appeals for cooperation and helping to match them with offers of assistance;
- timely information on *policy and research* agendas to which Partnership initiatives could respond and contribute;
- continuously updated *directory* (webbased with links) of Partners and ongoing activities;

- proactive multi-stakeholder dialogues leading to consensus on needs for action at global, regional, or national/local scales and thus to the identification and initiation of innovative collaborative activities (Partnership initiatives), including matchmaking of Partners;
- dissemination of information (e.g., through searchable database[s]) regarding:
 - comparative experiences, best practices, and research findings;
 - global and regional events, decision points, and policy fora;
 - resources and funding partners;
 - syntheses of achievements (and shortcomings) of Partnership initiatives.

Other suggested services included:

- access to information on new technologies and methodologies re. sustainable mountain development;
- source of technical expertise (referrals);
- nurturing personal contacts between representatives of institutions;
- bibliography of relevant publications;
- linking scientific databases from different regions.

Next Steps

Participants' suggestions for follow-up subsequent to the e-consultation and planned events at the 11 th session of the CSD included:

- report of events relating to the Partnership at the CSD, to be widely disseminated;
- review of activities before and during the International Year of Mountains, to define needs/gaps and priority areas for the Partnership;
- continued use of the dedicated e-mail list established for the e-consultation (and possibly another e-consultation) for further consultation and definition of the Partnership;
- increase the number of members of, and donors for co-financing, the Partnership;
- a face-to-face meeting of Partnership members (already proposed by the Government of Italy for autumn 2003) to ensure that they take ownership;
- creation of a Secretariat for the Partnership.

Annex: Registered Participants

(* indicates active contributor to the consultation)

Countries

*Andorra: Government of the Principality of Andorra

*Bhutan: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

*France: Foreign Ministry

*Georgia: Georgia International Agency for Sustainable Development and Georgian Mountain Federation (IYM focal point)

*Ghana: Ministry of Environment and Science Iran: Mountain Environment Protection Society

(IYM focal point) *Italy: Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

Directorate General for Economic Cooperation

Kyrgyz Republic: National Centre of Mountain Regions Development

Monaco: Coopération pour l'Environnement et le Développment

*Nepal: Ministry of Population and Environment *Peru: Direccion de Medio Ambiente del Ministerio

de Relaciones Exteriores Swaziland: Wonderland Development Organization

Switzerland: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

*Uganda: National Environment Management Authority

*Ukraine: Association "Our Home" (IYM focal point)

Venezuela: Ministerio del ambiente y de los recursos naturales

Intergovernmental Organizations

*Asian Development Bank
*Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
*International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)
*International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)
*International Potato Centre (CIP)
*Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) *Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD)

*United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

 *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
 United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
 *United Nations University (UNU)
 World Bank

Major Groups

*Association Européenne des Elus de Montagne (AEM)

*Banff Centre for Mountain Culture

*Bulgarian Association for Development of Mountain Regions (BULMONTANA)

*Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) *Commission Internationale pour la Protection

des Alpes (CIPRA)

*Consortium for the Sustainable Development of the Andean Ecoregion (CONDESAN)

Euromontana *European Observatory of Mountain Forests (EOMF)

European Mountain Forum (EMF)

*Fondation pour le développement durable des régions de montagne

*International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation (UIAA)

*International Scientific Committee on Research in the Alps (ISCAR)

*Mountain Forum

*Mountain Research and Development Journal

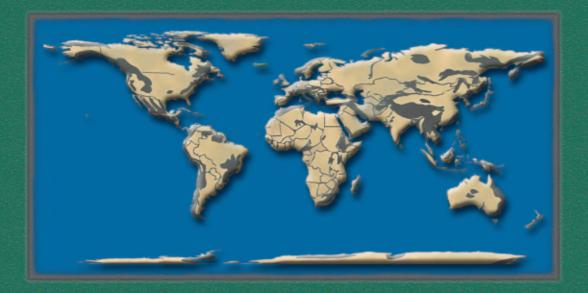
*Swiss Academy of Sciences (SANW)

*The Mountain Institute

*World Conservation Union (IUCN)

*World Mountain People Association (APMM/WMPA

World Wildlife Fund International (WWF-International)



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