

The Altai Declaration

Protocol of Intentions

Considering the importance of implementing Chapter 13 of Agenda 21 (Rio de Janeiro 1992), and considering that we must resolve the problems of sustainable development of mountain regions together, this declaration is made.

On the initiative of the government of the Altai Republic, the representatives of government institutions of China, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and the Russian Federation (hereinafter the four countries) participating in the Second CoDoCA Conference on Strategic Considerations on the Development of Central Asia (Urumqi, China) discussed the need to adopt an intergovernmental Altai Mountain Areas Convention on Sustainable Development ('Altai Convention').

Whereas the Altai Mountain areas exhibit outstanding ecological, cultural, and resource values that include a wealth of water and recreational resources and rich biodiversity, the four countries sharing the Altai Mountain areas have a common responsibility to protect and develop these values in trust for the world community.

They have already acknowledged this responsibility through the establishment of protected areas in the Altai Mountain areas of each of the four countries and by nominating some of these in the Altai Republic as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The Altai Mountain areas within the four countries have a need to improve economic development, generation of income, and the development of infrastructure.

The absence of a policy for sustainable development of the Altai Mountain areas is resulting in unsustainable use of natural resources, degradation of the environment, and social problems.

A number of large development projects that have been proposed may bring harm to the region.

The undersigned have therefore concluded that there must be a coordinated regional policy for protection and sustainable development of the Altai Mountain areas.

The undersigned believe that an appropriate mechanism for this purpose will be the conclusion of an Altai Mountain Areas Convention on Sustainable Development (Altai Convention), and they recommend that their respective governments enter into negotiations for the conclusion of such a convention without delay.

The goal of this Convention should be to work out and implement a coordinated policy for development of the entire Altai Mountain Area, resulting in the establishment of a transboundary Biosphere Reserve according to the standards of the Seville Strategy for UNESCO Biosphere Reserves.

The Convention must include the key components of protection and development, including protocols on the initiatives given below.

- ▶ Establishment of transboundary protected areas and biodiversity programmes, including, among others, a conservation strategy for the Snow Leopard and the Argali Mountain Sheep
- ▶ Development of ecologically and culturally appropriate and economically competitive land-use systems, including, among others, grazing, agriculture, forestry, and water management
- ▶ Practical support for such land-use systems, including traditional knowledge and practices; provision of environmental safety strategies
- ▶ Development of an environmentally friendly energy supply, transportation, and communications' infrastructure
- ▶ Sustainable eco-tourism development based on local community involvement, including transboundary tourism
- ▶ Provision of transboundary exchange opportunities between mountain communities
- ▶ Cooperation in the fields of culture, science, and education
- ▶ Protection of sites of cultural, historical, and religious significance

The undersigned acknowledge that on the issue of protected areas, at this time steps must be taken to prepare for the signing of an inter-governmental protocol on protected areas as one component of the Altai Convention.

For this purpose, the undersigned propose to create a working group which, within one year of the signing of the Altai Convention, will jointly prepare a protocol on protected areas for signing by the governments of the country signatories to the Altai Convention.

In order to develop the Protected Areas' Protocol and other protocols (on tourism, transport, land use, etc) under the Convention, the undersigned recommend undertaking a joint consultation process.

The undersigned encourage the involvement of governments with experience in preparing similar conventions such as the signatories to the Alps' Convention (Austria, Germany, France, Italy, Switzerland, etc).

The undersigned request that, owing to his experience in international cooperation in the Altai, Mr. Vasili K. Manyshev, Chair of the State Committee on Environmental Protection of the Altai Republic (Russian Federation) take on the role of coordinator of this process.

September 18, 1998