

Cusco declaration on sustainable development of mountain ecosystems

International Workshop on Sustainable Mountain Development

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The representatives and experts from Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Canada, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Spain, the United States of America, Finland, France, Mexico, Nepal, the Netherlands, Peru, Switzerland, Venezuela, meeting in Cusco, the ancient capital of Peru, on the occasion of the "International Workshop on Mountain Ecosystems: A Vision of the Future" held on 25-27 April 2001, have drawn up this Declaration:

1. Realizing the importance and value of mountain regions, which prompted the United Nations General Assembly to declare 2002 the International Year of Mountains (IYM-2002),
2. Recognizing the importance of mountain regions, as enshrined in Chapter 13 (Sustainable Mountain Development) of Agenda 21,
3. Noting the pertinent provisions of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, especially that which relates to the adverse effects of climate changes in mountain ecosystems,
4. Noting the provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity for the conservation of ecosystems and natural habitats and the maintenance and recovery of viable populations of species in their natural surroundings,
5. Noting further the pertinent provisions of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the RAMSAR Convention on Wetlands, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and other international instruments,
6. Recognizing that mountains are an important source of water, energy and biological diversity. Furthermore, they are a source of such key resources as minerals, forest products and agricultural products and of recreation. Moreover, a major ecosystem representing our planet's complex and interrelated ecology,
7. Acknowledging that the negative impacts of recent years to mountain ecosystems translate, among others, into the rapid loss of habitat and genetic diversity, environmental degradation, deterioration of the quality of water for human consumption, retreat of glaciers and on the human side, social exclusion and poverty among mountain inhabitants and loss of indigenous knowledge,
8. Conscious that the conservation of ecosystems, prevention and mitigation of disasters and sustainable development of mountain regions are a common emerging concern of our countries and the international community,
9. Conscious that most global mountain areas are experiencing environmental, social and economic degradation,

10. Affirming our commitment to the sustainable development of mountain ecosystems,

11. Acknowledging further that the International Year of Mountains - 2002 provides the perfect opportunity to consolidate and capitalize efforts leading to the sustainable development and conservation of natural and cultural patrimony of mountain regions,

Declare as follows:

On Environmental Aspects:

1. The need to promote the use of mountain areas from an ecosystemic and participative approach, including local governments and communities while integrating social, landscaping, environmental and economical aspects in the creation and implementation process.

2. The need to acknowledge cultural knowledge and traditional technologies of mountain societies as a scientific and technological patrimony for the sustainable development of mountain ecosystem.

3. The need to rely on baseline information and carry out environmental impact studies on tourist activities and other present and potential economic mountain activities, while encouraging their pursuit and sustainable handling.

4. The need to promote integrated watershed development and participation of the communities, civil society and governments, at local and national level, for the management of mountain ecosystems.

5. The need to encourage investments to effect integral and participative investigations for the sustainable management of natural resources and the dissemination of results obtained thereby to society.

6. The need to encourage recognition of biodiversity as a global competitive advantage of mountains, as well as its conservation and sustainable use for the well being of the populations.

On Cultural and Social Aspects:

1. The need to promote respect, appraisal and incorporation of cultural through dialogue and participation of the populations in political decision-making processes, as well as intercultural support and environmental education programmes.

2. The need to encourage citizen participation of every social actor in order to promote ample and equitable access to information, as well as the "social responsibility of companies" as an strategic approach for sustainable development.

3. The need to acknowledge that water and biodiversity are communal properties and therefore, the State and individuals are responsible for their use, regulation, control and conservation, in agreement with the legislation in force, while respecting the organizations, cultural traditions and customary rights of the populations.

4. The need to promote the strengthening of local capacities and the State to develop a pluricultural and participative policy on environmental management.
5. The need for production systems to recognize the contributions of traditional knowledge and practices, as well as encourage the equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge and practices among the communities and its members.
6. The absolute need to generate areas for the empowerment of mountain populations, mainly of those farmers and natives whose voices are still not heard or taken into account in political decision-making processes.

On Economic Aspects:

1. The need to consider the following high-priority aspects for sustainable economic development:
 - Economic compensation policies for mountain populations must be encouraged for the services rendered to develop low lands, specially, water use, power generation, minerals and disasters prevention.
 - Consumption of mountain products, at local and national levels, must be encouraged, as well as competitive conditions to access international markets created.
 - Access to financing must be made available by designing creative competitive advantage mechanisms to advance the productive activity of mountain areas.
2. The need to recognize the importance of mountain regions as regulators of water resources required in order to advance activities in high and low areas. Consideration must be given to the cost related to making this resource available.
3. The need to encourage the allocation of public assets to mountain areas in order to improve competitiveness and the quality of life of the populations.
4. The need to encourage the use of clean alternative energies and technologies in the productive activity, as well as improve the quality of life of mountain populations.
5. The need to encourage infrastructure to develop communications that permit access to timely information in order to advance economic activities.
6. The need to encourage community-based, clean and sustainable tourism in order to articulate it with the other typical productive activities of mountain areas.
7. The need to create conditions for clean mining and hydrocarbures activities, articulating them to the local sustainable development.

Recommendations:

1. The need to propel and support the realization of activities leading to the celebration of the IYM-2002; the inauguration of the IYM-2002 during the United Nations General Assembly; the IV Symposium on Sustainable Development of Mountain Ecosystems (Merida-Venezuela); the III Latin

American Congress on Hydrographic Basins in Mountain Areas (Cartagena-Colombia); the II World Meeting of Mountain Populations (Quito-Ecuador) and; the II International Workshop on Mountain Ecosystems (Huaraz, Callejon de Huaylas - Peru).

2. The need to broaden participation during the IYM-2002 preparatory activities with representatives from the base communities, local governments and the population in order to deepen awareness and responsibility on the matter.

3. The need to assess the advances made in the implementation of Chapter 13 of Agenda 21, at regional and national level, in order to identify new opportunities to act.

Cusco, 27 April, 2001

Notes to readers

This paper is an outcome of the International Workshop on Mountain Ecosystems: A Vision of the Future, Centro Bartolomé de las Casas, Cusco, Peru. 25-27 April 2001.