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# Challenges of Climate Change in the Mountains Highlighted

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### Challenges of Climate Change in the Mountains Highlighted in Cancun

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Experts from leading institutions and government organisations working in the field of climate change in the Himalayan region called attention to mountain issues and challenges in the light of climate change. They linked these issues to the debate on how to mainstream the sustainable development agenda while planning adaptation and mitigation activities, including the management of risks and hazards in fragile mountain environments, and called on mountainous countries to join the Mountain Initiative promoted by the Government of Nepal. The experts were participating in a side event on 'Mountains in Peril: Mainstreaming the Sustainable Mountain Development Agenda into Climate Change Agreements' in Cancun, Mexico.

The side event was organised by ICIMOD on 2 October during COP 16 in Cancun, Mexico. Presenters included Dr. Paolo Bonasoni, EV-K2-CNR/NAST, Italy; Dr Matthias Seebauer, UNIQUE Consultancy, Germany; Mr. Nabaraj Dahal, Federation of Community Forest Users Nepal (FECOFUN), Nepal; Mr Tashi Jamtsho, Executive Secretary of the Bhutan Climate Summit Secretariat of the Government of Bhutan; Dr. Karumuri Ashok, Centre for Climate Change Research, Institute of Tropical Meteorology, India; Mr. Bathuk Upreti, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Government of Nepal; and Dr. John Drexhage, Director of Climate Change and Energy Program, International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), Canada.

In his introductory remarks, Dr Madhav Karki, Deputy Director General of ICIMOD, highlighted the fact that 'mountains around the globe are disproportionately vulnerable to climate change due to the comparatively higher temperature increase in mountains, which is leading to accelerated glacier recession, and as a result of their high exposure to extreme events'. He gave an overview of the status of the Mountain Agenda and raised the issue of the large knowledge gap on the impacts of climate change in mountain regions, especially in the Himalayas. It is important to address climate related issues in the region by coordinating the Rio Conventions, notably the Convention for Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UNFCCC Climate Convention.

The issue of black carbon was raised by Dr. Paolo Bonasoni from EV-K2-CNR/NAST, Italy, saying that "Black carbon and tropospheric ozone are considered among the most important anthropogenic contributors to global warming" and presenting practical mitigation solutions for black carbon.

Dr. Matthias Seebauer from UNIQUE Consultancy, Germany presented a research case study on a community-based REDD initiative in Nepal and highlighted the adaptation aspects of a REDD+ project. Mr Nabaraj Dahal from FECOFUN, Nepal, emphasised that "Local communities that manage and conserve forest must be recognised through REDD payments", and gave a practical example of a community forest pilot REDD project implemented in collaboration with ICIMOD in three different watersheds in Nepal. The project is working towards establishing a Forest Carbon Trust Fund and REDD Payment mechanism so that local communities and indigenous peoples can benefit directly from REDD payments.

Mr Tashi Jamtsho from the Government of Bhutan called attention to the need for action. "In the Himalayas where the impacts of global climate change are manifesting at a rapid pace, the time for action is running out." He told the audience how Bhutan is bringing its neighbouring countries on the southern slopes of the eastern Himalayas (Bhutan, Bangladesh, India and Nepal) together to convene 'The Climate Summit for a Living Himalayas' in Bhutan in October 2011, where they plan to agree a common 10-year adaptation plan for the region. Dr. Karumuri Ashok from the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) shared some research findings on the state of climate change in the

Himalayas, and gave an overview of the different interventions under the Himalayan Mission of the Indian National Action Plan on Climate Change.

Mr. Bathuk Uprety from the Government of Nepal explained how Nepal is promoting climate resilient development initiatives and gave an overview of the different initiatives undertaken by the government to address climate change, including the development of a National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA) and Local Adaptation Plans of Action (LAPAs). The Government had set the Mountain Initiative in motion to give mountainous countries a common voice in climate change negotiations in order to achieve more resilient mountain communities.

"All countries with mountains from the developing as well as the developed world are welcome to join the Mountain Initiative, as it is international." Dr. John Drexhage from IISD summed up the presentations and perspectives on how to address and mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change in mountains: "The presentations from different institutions and governments from the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region have highlighted the importance of using a sustainable and transboundary approach when dealing with climate resilient adaptation and development pathways, while at the same time, opportunities arising from mitigation need to be seized.

" Finally he stressed the importance of the Mountain Initiative promoted by the Government of Nepal as a global initiative to address the challenges that mountains across the world are facing with regard to climate change. Such a Mountain Initiative had become necessary because the Mountain Agenda remains marginalised in international negotiations.. Besides convening the side event, ICIMOD is also running an information booth at COP 16 in Cancun to disseminate information and raise awareness on climate change impacts, vulnerability, and adaptation in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region.

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