



Press Release

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THE "HIMALAYAN SEED BANK" CREATED IN NEPAL BY EVK2CNR

KATHMANDU, Nepal - The first "seed bank" of Himalayan plants was created today to preserve biodiversity in the Sagarmatha National Park. The great initiative promoted by the Italian EvK2Cnr Committee, Nast (Nepal Academy of Science and Technology) in collaboration with the Italian University of Pavia, is unprecedented in the world. The agreement was signed this morning in Kathmandu, with the support of Prime Minister of Nepal Madhav Kumar Nepal, who met Agostino Da Polenza and praised the whole work of EvK2Cnr Committee.

The "Himalayan Seed Bank" is the first of the world dedicated to the Himalayan alpine flora and will be hosted in the Nast laboratories. It will shelter seeds of endemic species of the Sagarmatha National Park, in particular of wild, medicinal plants, but also agricultural ones, in order to save the precious local biodiversity from the effects of anthropization and climate change. Beyond seed conservation "in situ", the project will promote studies on seed germination in different climatic and environmental scenarios, in order to understand the reactions of these vegetables to global change. Local researchers will be trained ad hoc.

"The Indian subcontinent is one of the richest areas in the world for biodiversity - Graziano Rossi, University of Pavia, says -. Natural vegetation ranges from tropical rain forests to alpine flora. The Himalayas, considered one of the 20 most important hot spots for biodiversity in the world according to Conservation International, host over 3000 endemic species. But they are in danger: deforestation, fires, pollution, use for medicinal purposes and climate change are causing a loss of biodiversity in the area. We will study Himalayan seeds in order to understand their future reaction to climate change, but also to preserve them from extinction: we hope to let these seeds and their embryos survive outside their environment, ex situ, i.e. in high-tech structures such as seed banks".

The agreement for the realization of this project was signed this morning, November 16, 2010 by Surendra Raj Kafle, Nast Vice-Chancellor and Agostino Da Polenza, president of EvK2Cnr.

"I'm happy to have signed this agreement during the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity - Agostino Da Polenza says from Kathmandu -. The Himalayan Seed Bank has a concrete but also symbolic value for biodiversity preservation in the Himalayas and it will be handled directly by EvK2Cnr".

The project, promoted by EvK2Cnr in collaboration with the University of Pavia, is carried out within the SHARE (Station at High Altitude for Research on the Environment) project.

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"SHARE - explains Elisa Vuillermoz, coordinator of EvK2Cnr scientific projects - the main research and monitoring project of EvK2Cnr in the field of climate and environmental studies, was included among the reference projects of the Mountain Initiative for Climate Change, as a fundamental support to define adaptation strategies against climate change in mountain regions. In this context, information and new research activities in the field of biodiversity will have an increasing importance. The Himalayan Seed Bank is a major achievement not only from a scientific point of view but also to strengthen the relations with local partners through programs of capacity building and technology transfer".

These days, Da Polenza met also the Nepali Minister of Environment Madhav Kumar Nepal, who praised the work of EvK2Cnr in the fields of scientific research at high altitude and climate change. EvK2Cnr has been managing for 20 years the Pyramid Laboratory/Observatory located at 5,050 meters a.s.l. in Nepal at the base of Mount Everest. Today, with its SHARE program, EvK2Cnr is world leader in integrated environmental research, climate change monitoring and sustainable development of mountain ecosystems.

IMAGES

http://www.montagna.org/montagnaftp/evk2cnr/adp_nast_firma.jpg
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VIDEOS

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