

South America geographic meeting

Names of Facilitators: Baldomero Casillo and Jorge Recharte

Topics discussed:

Priority issues. There have been multiple previous exercises to identify mountain priorities in the framework of MP meetings; the challenge remains to focus further and work on priorotoes that reflect existing capacities and resources by MP members in the South America region. The priorities identified and the approaches to respond to these will differ among countries.

The group identified the following five topics:

1. *Institutions for Mountain Sustainable Development in the region.* This issue includes several dimensions. First, it refers to the MP process initiated through the “Andean Initiative” (Tucuman 2007) that involves the commitment by five Andean countries to promote functional National Mountain Task Forces. These countries are also currently completing a study, conducted with technical support of MPS (FAO TCP), that will present results in Colombia in 2014, therefore providing key inputs to discuss the issue of building institutions for mountain sustainable development and other priorities. Second, institutions for mountain sustainable development refer to the challenge of involving mountain local governments (elected representatives of mountain communities) and also the direct representation of indigenous peoples and communities in the National Mountain Task Forces. Third, promoting institutional foundations for mountain sustainable development involves the (coordinated) task of raising public awareness about why mountains matter and the need for specific strategies and policies for these ecosystems. It also involves creating awareness in the industrial sectors that use and have impacts on mountain natural resources and societies (from mining, to energy to tourism).
2. *Trans-boundary continental watershed management.* This point refers to upland-lowland interactive systems that connect two or more countries and therefore points to the need for cooperation over large scales connecting upland-lowland ecosystems at continental scales (for example, Andean-Amazonia interactions and other geographies).
3. *Climate change, water and energy.* Priority topic emerging in the region. The group also referred to other related issues like ecosystem management, mountain protected area conservation, land use planning, etc., issues that are horizontally connected to the five topics in multiple ways.
4. *Food security.* Linked also to issues of sound ecosystem management and recognizing that countries may have different ways to define and approach this issue.

5. *Cultural Heritage and Indigenous Knowledge*. Promote the affirmation of mountain societies through the recognition of native knowledge for proper management of ecosystems. Mountain communities are the most important users of natural resources and therefore their knowledge and capacity to innovate should be highlighted.

Coordination mechanism.

1.- A consequence of the TCP Project.

The discussion by the group made clear that a coordination mechanism that could potentially emerged out of the TCP study, and subsequent deliberations, should be seen as commitment from governments to find the mechanisms to include all actors. The participants deliberated over the different degree of success the TCP has had in the participating countries, concluding that the challenge that lay ahead was to include the civil society in the results of this project.

2.- The Andes Initiative.

It was also highlighted that the coordination mechanism would be a natural consequence of the existing Andes Initiative, its Declaration and Action Plan both of which are active.

3.-One proposal was to identify the regional mechanism of coordination as equal to the representation due by the two members that our region will select (1 for governments 1 for civil society) to the Steering Committee (SC).

The group noted that while sound communication with the two representatives is important, there is a need for a mechanism to coordinate. Major challenge to sustain the role of regional coordination is to leverage funds for this purpose. This could be done through regional projects, either new ones or through those that already exist.

Decisions.

- Promote institution-building actions that contribute to broad and transparent platforms to discuss mountain development issues including governments, civil society, indigenous groups, and production sectors operating in mountain areas.

Support expected from MP Secretariat

- Not specifically discussed, but there was mention of the need to ensure equal inclusion of government and civil society actors, a process for the MPS to consider in its plan as a potential item for action.

Follow-up actions

- Presentation of the final results of the FAO TCP activity is considered a milestone to complete discussions on coordination mechanism for South America regional activities of the Mountain Partnership.
- As an informational item, it was noted that MPS is supporting, in response to demand, a Spanish-language training program on mountain sustainable development.

Participants: South America geographic meeting Sept 17, 2013

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