



“Without effective climate adaptation strategies, mountains are at serious risk”

Water, energy, forests: regional experts identify key issues for Central Asia

Dushanbe, Tajikistan: 14 November 2011. Effective adaptation strategies are required in response to the impact of climate change in mountain regions. With a view to better integrating scientific evidence and mountain people’s experience into international discussions, experts from Azerbaijan, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and Tajikistan met in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, from 9 to 11 November 2011.

“The venue of the meeting is not accidental” said **Talbak Salimov, Minister of the Environment and Chairman of the Committee on Environmental Protection under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan**. He went on to explain that “Central Asia is a veritable climate change hotspot. Our countries are passive smokers affected by carbon emissions from neighbouring countries.”

Organized by the Mountain Partnership Secretariat and the University of Central Asia in collaboration with the Government of Tajikistan, the meeting was held within the framework of the World Bank’s Development Grant Facility (DGF) on **“Climate change impacts, adaptation and development in mountain regions”**.



Water, essential for agriculture and food security

“Glaciers are shrinking, and integrated water resource management is clearly a top priority for the region,” experts agreed at the meeting. “Change in water flows could have damaging effects on agriculture and food security,” they warned. Besides water, the meeting highlighted other specific issues of interest to Central Asia.

Clean, green energy: from hydropower to mountain solar panels

From hydropower to solar, wind, bio- or geothermal energy, Central Asia holds a huge potential for renewable energy. While large-scale dam construction projects continue to raise environmental concerns, smaller-scale projects based on biofuels and solar cells are particularly attractive for investors as they provide immediate revenue.

Visiting project sites after the meeting showed participants that climate adaptation measures are locally specific. In the mountain village of Khakhimi, nestled in the Rasht Valley south of Dushanbe, a mountain hospital serving a community of 13 000 became a renewable energy pilot centre after donors funded the installation of solar collectors and photovoltaic cells. The project was implemented by a Tajik NGO, CAMP Kuhiston, an active Mountain Partnership member. The energy these produce is used in rooms where women giving birth are kept warm and well insulated from the harsh temperatures common at such high altitudes.

Forests and mountains, “living together”

Around the village of Shahtuti Bolo, located in the Nurobod district of the Rasht Valley, “some 1 200 fruit trees are stabilizing mountain slopes otherwise prone to mudslides,” participants were told by the local authorities. Habibullo Karimov, an elder villager, clarified: “In the past 20 years, mountain slopes have become bare, devoid of walnut forest, while the frequency of mudslides increased.” As a solution to fuelwood depletion, villagers are now using energy-efficient stoves and cookers. This project was again carried out by CAMP Kuhiston with technical support from the Centre for Development and Environment based at the University of Bern (CDE), and NCCR North South.

“The United Nations has declared 2011 the International Year of Forests. World Mountain Day 2011 is an excellent opportunity to remind people in cities that forests and mountains live together,” said Olman Serrano, Coordinator of the Mountain Partnership.

Forthcoming steps

Mr Salimov closed the meeting by reminding the regional experts: “All we can provide is pure, clean, drinkable water; clean, fresh air; and green electric energy.”



The next meeting within the framework of “Climate change impacts, adaptation and development in mountain regions” will be held in Mbale, Uganda. It is being organized jointly by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Mountain Partnership Secretariat in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), also with support from the World Bank.

Links of interest:

www.mountainpartnership.org

<http://ca-dialogue.blogspot.com/>

www.ucentralasia.org/campus.asp

<http://www.camp.tj/>

http://www.cde.unibe.ch/Regions/WHS_Rs.asp

<http://www.north-south.unibe.ch/>