



DRAFT OPTION PAPER

Introduction of a system of membership fees in the
Mountain Partnership

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Draft paper on the options for the establishment of a membership fee for the Mountain Partnership

This paper is presented by the Secretariat at the request of the Steering Committee (SC) and it is intended to be read in conjunction with the relevant sections of the Mountain Partnership (MP) Governance and Strategy 2014-2017.

Background

At its third meeting held in Mbale, Uganda, on 21-22 October 2016, the SC discussed the issue of establishing a membership fee, and mandated the Mountain Partnership Secretariat (MPS) “to develop a concept paper for deciding on the introduction of a membership fee, based on existing models and experiences of other mechanisms.”¹

The relevant section (pages 3-4) of the Summary Report of the MP SC Meeting, 21-22 October 2016, Mbale, Uganda is found in Annex 1.

Current provisions related to the membership fees in the Mountain Partnership

The Governance and Strategy 2014-2017 specifies the provisions for the MP membership, including criteria, roles and responsibilities of members, the form in which contributions can be made (cash, in-kind, etc.), the proposed duration of membership, and the role of the SC and the MPS, among others.

The most relevant sections for the consideration of the introduction of membership fees are reported below:

The criteria, categories and roles and responsibilities of MP members are set out in Section V (Membership). Specifically sections V.A, V.B and V.C. state that:

Section V.A: The criteria for establishing and maintaining membership in the Mountain Partnership include:

- Endorsement of the vision, mission and guiding principles of the MP;
- Active involvement in sustainable mountain development (SMD);
- Being a formal entity with a proven level of stability in terms of funding and organizational capacity, and nominating a Focal Point for regular interaction with members and the MPS;
- Willingness to join forces and cooperate with other MP members;
- Capacity to fulfill the membership roles and responsibilities [...];

¹ Source: [Summary Report](#) , MP Steering Committee Meeting, 21-22 October 2016, Mbale, Uganda

- Access to the information and communication technologies (e.g. computer, e-mail and Internet) to participate effectively in MP activities;
- Access to resources (financial, in-kind or both) within the organization to invest in SMD and to play an active role in the MP.

Section V.B: “Interested governments and institutions may apply to become members of the MP by submitting a request for membership to the MPS with a brief presentation of the purpose/mission and activities of the government or institution related to SMD, along with a description of the contribution that the organization or governmental unit intends to make for achieving the mission of the MP. The Steering Committee [...] will develop procedures for approving applications for membership and for ensuring that all organizations on the membership list are active members. It is suggested that membership in the MP has a duration of four years and can be renewed, based on evidence of engagement and commitment of the government/institution in implementing the mission of the Partnership.”

Section V.C: “MP members are required to indicate their commitment and contribution to Mountain Partnership activities -- financial, in-kind contributions, or both -- the form of which is at the discretion of each member. Organizations from developed countries are invited to pay a membership fee and are expected, to the extent possible, to make a financial contribution to a Mountain Partnership Facility (see section VII.A) which is being established to provide seed money support to collaborative initiatives by MP members. In-kind contributions can include the costs associated with the participation in MP activities and events, hosting of events by providing local support, providing staff time for capacity development, editorial or translation services, etc. Members are invited to regularly communicate their contributions and engagements to the MPS which in turn will publicize these contributions through the appropriate channels”.

The Terms of Reference of the SC state that the tasks and responsibilities of SC include, *inter alia*:

- Define criteria for new membership and review, on a regular basis and with support from the MPS, the current members; and
- Address commitment issues of MP members and accountability matters of MPS if and when such issues arise.

The Terms of Reference of the Secretariat state that the tasks and responsibilities of the MPS include, *inter alia*:

- Analyze, on a regular basis, the commitment of MP members and communicate the results to the SC; review new applications for membership and process them according to the criteria defined by the SC.

Options for introducing a system of membership fees

Recognizing that the MP Governance and Strategy 2014-2017:

- requires MP members to indicate their commitment and contribution to MP activities -- financial, in-kind contributions, or both -- the form of which is at the discretion of each member; and
- invites organizations from developed countries to pay a (unspecified) membership fee,

five options are presented for considerations by the General Assembly with the aim to improve the current status of membership commitment.

Option 1: no change to the current provisions and status.

Option 2: no change to the current provisions, with an enhanced monitoring, by the MPS, of the voluntary contributions and commitments by the members.

Option 3: a minimum threshold for the membership fee for organizations from developed countries is introduced.

Option 4: the payment of a membership fee for all current categories of members is introduced. The level and form of the membership fee is to be determined.

Option 5: the payment of a membership fee for all members is introduced according to a scale of associated benefits. The level and form of the membership fee and the benefits associated with the payment of the fee are to be determined.

Table 4. Options for introducing a system of membership fees

Option	Relevant feature	Basic texts of the MP	Administration of resulting funds	Potential benefits	Expected cost
1. No change to the current status	--	--	--	--	--
2. No change to the current provision, with a strengthened monitoring of members' commitments and contributions	<p>Voluntary annual contributions and commitments. Organizations from developed countries are invited to pay a membership fee, the level of which remains unspecified and at the discretion of each concerned member.</p> <p>Fees and contributions could be cash payments, support to MP activities and events, cost-sharing, staff time.</p> <p>The MPS monitors the communication of commitments and contributions and prepare, at the end of each year, a short report highlighting the status of advancement and fulfillment of commitments.</p> <p>To facilitate the monitoring, a simple, online platform is developed on the MP website for members to communicate their commitments.</p>	Unchanged	Financial contributions could go to the MP Facility and be used according to the MP Facility's rules and procedures (under development).	<p>Global/to the MP: increased engagement from members, increased visibility for the MP; financial contributions to the MP Facility.</p> <p>To Members: seed money from the Facility, stronger sense of participation and engagement.</p>	35 000 USD/year of MPS staff time for follow-up and monitoring of commitments and contributions.
3. A minimum threshold for the membership fee for organizations from developed countries is introduced and the monitoring of members' commitments and contributions is strengthened	<p>Voluntary annual contributions and commitments. Organizations from developed countries are invited to pay a membership fee, for which a minimum threshold is introduced.</p>	Mostly unchanged. Governance and Strategy 2014-2017 requires amendment to reflect the introduction of a	Financial contributions could go to the MP Facility and be used according to the MP Facility's rules and procedures (under development).	<p>Global/to the MP: increased engagement from members, increased visibility for the MP; financial contributions to the MP Facility.</p> <p>To Members: seed money from the Facility, stronger</p>	35 000 USD/year of MPS staff time for follow-up and monitoring of commitments and contributions.

	<p>The equivalent of the established fee could be provided in-kind, or as a combination of in-kind and financial contributions.</p> <p>The MPS monitors the communication of commitments and contributions and prepare, at the end of each year, a short report highlighting the status of advancement and fulfillment of commitments.</p> <p>To facilitate the monitoring, a simple, online platform is developed on the MP website for members to communicate their commitments.</p>	<p>minimum threshold for the contributions from developed countries organizations.</p>		<p>sense of participation and engagement.</p>	
<p>4. A membership fee for all MP members is introduced and the monitoring of members' commitments and contributions is strengthened</p>	<p>All members pay a membership fee, the level of which is established according to a scale linked to the existing categories of MP members (with the option to provide the equivalent of the established fee in-kind, or as a combination of in-kind and financial contributions).</p> <p>All members will communicate their commitments and contributions (financial, in-kind or both) to the MPS through an online platform.</p> <p>The MPS will monitor the communication of commitments and contributions and prepare, at the end of each year, a report highlighting the status of advancement and fulfillment of commitments and the payment of the membership fees.</p>	<p>The MP Governance and Strategy 2014-2017 would require amendment to reflect the introduction of the membership fees for all members.</p>		<p>Global/to the MP: increased engagement from members, increased visibility for the MP; financial contributions to the MP Facility.</p> <p>To Members: seed money from the Facility, stronger sense of participation and engagement.</p>	<p>70 000 USD/year of MPS staff time for follow-up and monitoring of payments of membership fees.</p>

<p>5. A membership fee for all MP members is introduced according to a scale of associated benefits, and the monitoring of members' commitments and contributions is strengthened</p>	<p>All members pay a membership fee, that is linked to a differentiated set of benefits All members will communicate their commitments and contributions (financial, in-kind or both) to the MPS through an online platform. The MPS will monitor the communication of commitments and contributions and prepare, at the end of each year, a report highlighting the status of advancement and fulfillment of commitments and the payment of the membership fees.</p>	<p>This option is the one that would require the biggest changes in the current provisions of the MP Governance and Strategy 2014-2017. The categories of members would need to be amended or complemented to take into account the differentiated benefits. New membership criteria and benefits would need to be defined.</p>		<p>Global/to the MP: increased engagement from members, increased visibility for the MP; financial contributions to the MP Facility; financial contribution for translations, organization of events. To the Members: the different benefits associated with the scale of membership fees should be discussed and defined.</p>	<p>70 000 USD/year of MPS staff time for follow-up and monitoring of payments of membership fees.</p>
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Conclusions

The options discussed above are broadly representative of the kind of systems for membership fees that are applied in partnerships comparable to the MP.

Details of the options should be defined after a decision on the most appropriate option has been taken. All options, except Option 1 “No change to the current status” would require specific funds for their implementation. The main benefits are similar for Options 2-5, and are mainly related to a stronger member engagement, and also, but to a minor extent, to the generation of funds that could be used to support the activities of the MP.

Option 1 would require no change; Options 2 and 3 would be the simplest and cheapest to introduce and implement, and the closest to the current provisions of the MP.

Option 4 and 5 would require significant changes to the basic texts of the MP and higher administration costs. Given the implications of these changes, it is important to ensure that the introduction of membership fees is discussed as part of an overall membership and membership engagement policy/strategy for the MP and not as a stand-alone issue.

Annexes

Extract from the Summary Report , MP Steering Committee Meeting, 21-22 October 2016, Mbale, Uganda, (pages 3-4)

[...] Session 3: MP strategy and governance

To introduce this strategic session, the Coordinator of the MPS presented the background paper entitled “Three years after Erzurum: reflections by the Coordinator of the Mountain Partnership Secretariat”. The subsequent extended discussion under this agenda item followed more or less the structure and contents of this background document.

3.1. Membership fee:

The discussion of this matter resulted with the majority of participants in a general agreement that the introduction of a membership fee was necessary, not as a resource mobilization measure but as an approach to increase membership commitment. 4

The Chair recalled page 7 of the MP Governance and Strategy document where the expected membership commitment is clearly spelled out. The introduction of a fee was considered as a possible way to even leverage additional funds from donors. The following specific comments were made during the discussions:

- It would be important to carry out a review of the current membership commitments: has it declined or increased over the last years, e.g. since Erzurum? This assessment could be carried out by the SC members within their electoral groups;
- A membership fee carries the risk of excluding small and not well-resourced organizations. Can we expect small NGOs in the Himalaya to contribute to the work of the MP? Furthermore, what would be the process to delete members, especially countries or global organizations, that will not pay a fee? We need to leave the door open for any member to be part of the partnership and outline a fair mechanism to implement it;
- When introducing a fee system, a difference should be made between developed and developing countries;
- Whatever fee system will be introduced, it should still be voluntary;
- Do we want to have a smaller number of members that are active, or do we want to have many members for advocacy purposes?
- A membership fee should be part of a broader system of incentives: for example, who pays a fee would have access to small grants;

- Administering a fee structure is very time consuming, so there is a need to evaluate the cost-benefit;
- Possibly foresee a phased approach in the introduction of a membership fee that would allow for gradually collecting experiences and further building on lessons learned.

Decisions:

The SC mandated the MPS to develop a concept paper for deciding on the introduction of a membership fee, based on existing models and experiences of other mechanisms. The paper should:

- present different options (pros and cons, scaled fee structure; fee structure with a fixed figure; fee structure which also allows for in-kind contributions; etc.);
- propose the use and beneficiaries of the fee resources and the decision process; and
- present the structure and governance of the fund (including the link to the MP Facility).

The SC would review the paper and agree on one of the proposals to be submitted to the GA 2017 for consideration.

3.2. Steering Committee: [...]

Overview of existing arrangements regarding the payment of membership fees

The Secretariat carried out a review of some relevant Partnerships, similar to the MP for their history, mandate, structure, governance and membership, including two having their Secretariats hosted by FAO. The five partnerships are: The Global Water Partnership (GWP), The Global Soil Partnership (GSP), the International Land Coalition (ILC), the Global Islands Partnership (GLISPA) and the Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBPEP). Of the five Partnerships considered, two have membership fees: ILC and GLISPA.

The ILC is a global alliance of intergovernmental and civil society organizations for multi-stakeholder collaboration on land issues and is membership-based with global and regional strategies. A condition of membership is the payment of annual fees. The fee scale has four bands depending on the nature of the member organization.

Table 1. Annual fees for ILC members²:

Category A: IGOs and multilaterals, including Bretton Woods Institutions		9724 USD
Category B: Global CSOs, CGIAR Centres, including networks with global outreach and international NGOs	North	2431 USD
	South	1216 USD
Category C: National/regional CSOs, including networks, NGOs, associations, research institutions	North	608 USD
	South	305 USD
Category D: Social movements and grass-roots organizations, including IPs/farmers/people's organizations and loose/informal networks.		182 USD

The fees are part of the new ILC membership strategy adopted in December 2016. The strategy was developed during 2015 by a Membership Committee specifically appointed by the Council for that purpose. In particular, payment of the membership fees contributes to the ILC Strategic objective II of a fully engaged membership.

In the GLISPA, the annual membership fees are linked to a set of differentiated benefits for the membership³.

Table 3. GLISPA membership fees

Member Type	Annual Fee USD	Council Member	Invited members meetings	Invited High Level Events	Chair Initiative Groups	Participate in Working Groups
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² From ILC website

³ From GLISPA website

Council Member	5,000-25,000+					
Affiliate Member	500-4,999					
Friend	0					

The Global Soil Partnership and the Global Bioenergy Platform, both having their Secretariat in FAO, do not have membership fees.

Table 1. Overview of membership fee systems in comparable Partnerships

Partnership	Membership types	Membership fee	Comments (from the Partnership website/other documents)
Global Water Partnership	A GWP Partner is defined as: "Any entity, except individuals, may become a Partner of the Network. Partners of the Network may include States, national, regional and local Government Institutions, Intergovernmental Organisations, international and national Non-governmental Organisations, Academic Institutions and Research Institutions, Companies, and service providers in the public sector."	NO	Registration as a Partner of GWP does not involve paying a fee. All GWP Network entities may receive voluntary contributions from Partners in order to build greater commitment and ownership at the relevant level and strengthen the partnership participation in activities. The introduction of fees could exclude or marginalize those Partners who may find it difficult to pay a fee, or could promote differential treatment amongst Partners, which would go against GWP principles and values
Global Soil Partnership*	The Global Soil Partnership was established in December 2012 as a mechanism to develop a strong interactive partnership and enhanced collaboration and synergy of efforts between all stakeholders It includes two types of partnerships: <u>GSP partners</u> which come from a wide range of institutions such as Governmental Organizations, universities, civil institutions, research centers, soil science societies, UN agencies, NGOs, private companies, farmer associations, donors, etc.	NO	n/a

	<u>GSP national focal points</u> designed by FAO members countries (partners by default to the GSP).		
International Land Coalition	The ILC is a global alliance of intergovernmental and civil society organizations for multi-stakeholder collaboration on land issues and is membership based with global and regional strategies. The ILC has regional platforms	YES	Every member of the ILC is requested to pay annual fees (USD)
Global Bioenergy Partnership*	GBEP was founded in 2006 on the idea that bioenergy can significantly contribute to energy access and security, climate change mitigation, food security, and ultimately sustainable development. The last decade has marked considerable growth for the organization, now counting with more than 70 members and an expanded number of activities in different countries. GBEP brings together public, private and civil society stakeholders in a joint commitment to promote bioenergy for sustainable development.	NO	n/a
Global Island Partnership (GLISPA)	A voluntary partnership for all islands, regardless of size or political status, to take bold steps to build resilient and sustainable island communities through innovative partnerships. It provides a global platform that enables islands to work together to develop solutions to common problems and to take high-level commitments and actions that address these global challenges. Launched in 2006, the Partnership has more than 20 members and 50 entities who strategize and collaborate through the Partnership annually to achieve the 2030 Strategy.	YES	Three membership categories: Council Member: contributes member fee of \$5,000 to \$25,000+ annually and are invited to Council and Member meetings as well as high-level events. Affiliate Member: available to new participants or those without capacity to contribute the full membership amount. Affiliate members contribute \$500 - \$4,999 and are invited to Members meetings at international forums. Friends of GLISPA: contribute no fees but participate in achieving GLISPA 2030 Strategy.

* Secretariat hosted by FAO