



Mountains, source of life for more than half the world's population

Regional meeting of the Mountain Partnership in Latin America stresses the key role of adaptation to climate change in mountain regions

Santiago, Chile 3 November 2011- More than half the world's population depends on water coming from mountains, which are not only the main source of fresh water reserves in the world, but also important reserves of biodiversity and such important services as energy generation. Despite their importance for human life, these ecosystems are among those most vulnerable to climate change and are thus under increasing pressure.

These were the views expressed by a group of international experts and representatives of the governments of Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru, who met in Santiago, Chile, on 26-28 October to discuss the impact of climate change in mountain regions. This was the first regional meeting organized under the "Strategic initiative for climate change impacts, adaptation and development in mountain regions", with support from the World Bank.

The discussions gave rise to recommendations in order to address the challenges and define strategies to highlight the issue of mountains in international processes.

"It is important to recognize the environmental importance of mountain ecosystems because they are the world's foremost reservoirs and water regulators, a key source of energy and the origin of global biodiversity, sustaining the life of the world's population," stated Olman Serrano, Mountain Partnership Coordinator.

Strategic recommendations

The experts defined the creation and boosting of forums for exchanges on technical and policy issues as a fundamental necessity for sustainable development in mountain areas.

In addition, they considered it important to continue institution-building in the region's countries on matters relating to mountains. They also stressed the need for studies of economic optimization and ecosystem services, and the promotion of research into various issues associated with mountains.

The participants urged the Mountain Partnership Secretariat and the governments of the region to promote the creation of national, regional and international forums for discussion among public policy, technical and scientific decision-makers, including the creation and boosting of national mountain committees. They also called for the creation of specific financing windows in multilateral funds for activities dealing with the environment and climate change and projects connected with mountains.

"Adapting to the phenomenon of climate change is a major challenge in mountain regions. If urgent measures are not taken to curb its effects, it is likely that extreme events such as much heavier rainfall will be more frequent and severe in mountain zones," stated Ambassador José Luis Balmaceda, Director of Environmental and Marine Affairs of Chile's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Forthcoming steps

The next regional meeting organized in the framework of this collaboration with the World Bank will take place in Central Asia (Tajikistan) in collaboration with the University of Central Asia, and will be followed by another in Africa (Uganda), undertaken jointly with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Mountain Partnership

The [Mountain Partnership](#) is a United Nations mechanism to support sustainable development in mountain regions.

Press contacts

Rodrigo Flores: rodrigo.flores@fao.org , (526) 923 2248

Cristián Albagly: cristian.albagly@fao.org , (562) 923 2176

RLC-Prensa@fao.org

Twitter: www.twitter.com/FAONoticias