

## **Sustainable mountain development**

### **Report of the Secretary-General to the 77<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly**

#### **Draft outline**

**(Reporting period: July 2019 – April 2022, approx.)**

The outline is largely based on previous Secretary-General (SG) reports and related resolutions, highlighting currently relevant themes and allowing us to pull out a more substantive analysis of sustainable mountain development, including challenges and progress achieved within the 2030 sustainable development agenda. As standard practice, contents would be consolidated in close collaboration with concerned stakeholders.

#### **1. Introduction**

- Mandate/background of the report, reference to the 2019 report of the SG on sustainable mountain development ([A/74/209](#))
- General outline
- Key issues: urgency to act, need for integrated long-term approaches based on sustainability, resilience, recovery from COVID-19 and inclusiveness
- Advocacy and public awareness activities (International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development 2022, International Mountain Day)
- Reference to partners included in consultation process (450 Mountain Partnership members as of 9 March 2022, including 60 Member States, and other Non-MP Governments)

#### **2. Background and challenges**

- General overview of the current global situation of sustainable mountain development, updating from previous report
- Presentation of main challenges (including climate change, vulnerability to natural disasters, loss of biodiversity, poverty and food insecurity rates, COVID-19, political and social marginalization) faced by mountain communities and ecosystems (reference to the UN Decades of ecosystem restoration, water for sustainable development, family farming and indigenous languages as well as the 2022 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on mountains)
- Underline lack of disaggregated data for sound analysis and policy advice

#### **3. Mountains and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (overview)**

- Emphasize link between mountains and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development within the framework of the Decade of action to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs and with reference to the SG Report Our Common Agenda
- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) process – highlight the role of mountains and the indicators considered important for safeguarding mountain biodiversity and ecosystem integrity, in line with previous policy recommendations presented at the CBD Open-Ended Working Groups (OEWG-1 and OEWG-2) to elevate mountains in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. (Key partners involved: Mountain Partnership Secretariat (MPS), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Grid-Arendal and the Mountain Research Initiative)
- UN Food Systems Summit process – highlight the diversity of mountain food systems and the role of mountain people as custodians of knowledge and agrobiodiversity and the

support provided by Mountain Partnership members in the various dialogues, parallel sessions and information sharing

- Progress (or lack of progress) towards relevant Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) mountain targets, including the Mountain Green Cover Index and the two 2020 targets as well as other relevant mountain targets outside the SDG framework, highlighting if we are on track, if any urgency is needed and concerns regarding disaggregated data (if applicable).

### 3A. Climate Change

Mountains are highly significant regions in the context of climate change and sustainable development, at the intersection of accelerated warming and a large population depending directly or indirectly on them. They are regions of high biological and cultural diversity and provide vital goods and services to people living in and around mountain regions and in downstream areas. In recent decades, climate change impacts in mountains and their attribution to human influence have increased with observable and serious consequences for people and ecosystems in many mountain regions.

The recent IPCC [Cross Chapter Paper 5 on mountains](#) describes the impacts of climate change in mountains and discusses adaptation options and climate resilient development pathways.

Climate-driven impacts on mountains negatively affect among other things: ecosystem services, agriculture, pastoralism, water availability (which might lead to conflicts), natural hazards (such as flash floods, landslides and glacial lake outbursts) and tourism. The current pace, depth and scope of adaptation is insufficient to address future risks in mountain regions, particularly at higher warming levels and with warming above 1.5, the need for adaptation to address key risks in mountains becomes increasingly urgent.

This section highlights trends and challenges related to climate and in particular:

- a) Impact on mountain areas
- b) Regional trends
- c) Glaciers, snow and cryosphere issues
- d) Water issues
- e) Link between agriculture and GHG emissions and the need to transform food production practices as part of climate action in addition to the need for adaptation.
- f) Update on mitigation and adaptation to climate change including the FAO & Koronivia joint work on agriculture and national examples and best practices if relevant
- g) Resilience and adaptation
- h) Research

### 3B. Ecosystem restoration and protection

The UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration was launched in June 2021 and it has the main goal of “preventing, halting and reversing the degradation of ecosystems worldwide”. The two UN lead agencies for this UN Decade are FAO and UNEP.

The section might address relevance of following issues to mountain development:

- a) Watershed management, sustainable water management and sustainable forest management
- b) Increasing occurrence of disasters and disaster risk reduction strategies
- c) Biodiversity conservation including agro-biodiversity

- d) Land degradation and desertification
- e) Agroecology ([MPS publication](#) and case studies from around the world)

### 3C. Mountain economies and livelihoods

Mountain economies are often based on small-scale agriculture, tourism, mining and remittances. As mountains are often far from the most productive areas and have limited infrastructures, services and opportunities, mountain people tend to be poorer and more marginalized than people living in the lowlands. Outmigration trends are quite evident for both seasonal and permanent working opportunities in the lowlands. In mountains the main activity is largely family farming, which plays a key role for ensuring household food security as well as shaping mountain landscapes and conserving natural resources and biodiversity. Family farming communities and in particular indigenous peoples in mountains are custodians of spiritual and cultural values and of site-specific knowledge. The Decade for Family Farming is an opportunity to promote national policies that support secure land tenure, access to resources, empower women and retain in mountain regions.

This section will focus on the linkages among SDG1 (No poverty), SDG 2 (sustainable agriculture, food systems and food security and nutrition in mountains), SDG 3 (Health), SDG4 (education), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG7 (energy), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG10 (reduced inequalities) and SDG 15 (life on land), thus addressing the contribution of sustainable mountain development to the core principle of leaving no one behind.

It will also look at innovative examples such as the participatory labelling of mountain products in eight countries and the continued implementation of a global network of mountain participatory guarantee systems (PGS) by MPS/FAO with IFOAM-Organics International.

Some trends and integrated approaches might be covered referring to:

- a) Food insecurity and poverty in mountains
- b) COVID-19 implications, response and recovery
- c) Migration and urbanization
- d) Urban–rural linkages
- e) Social protection, gender, indigenous issues
- f) Education and extension – examples of the Mountain Partnership’s IPROMO, GROW, IPROMO Latinoamericano
- g) Sustainable food systems and mountain agriculture, agrobiodiversity
- h) Mountain products and value chains – success stories from the Mountain Partnership Products Initiative, including Nepal and second phase of project with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and PGS
- i) Sustainable mountain tourism – World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) [study](#) and collaborations examples from several organizations from around the world
- j) Affordable and clean/renewable energy
- k) Ecosystem-based services in support of livelihoods
- l) Mountain-related financing

### 3D. Governance

Inclusive and tailored approaches to mountain development are conducive to more equitable and sustainable life in mountains, ensuring increased benefits for local communities and reducing outmigration trends. In this section, the role of the Mountain Partnership will be presented as the only UN alliance on sustainable mountain development, highlighting the need for specific pro-

mountain policies, of cross-sectoral coordination at national level and other issues related to SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals), including domestic and international resource mobilization. The section will in particular focus on:

- a) Policy and law – highlighting the positive role of mountain specific legal and fiscal initiatives, investments and national laws and strategies
- b) Cross-sectoral coordination – the role of national mountain committees
- c) Participatory approaches and peoples' participation
- d) Partnerships, transboundary cooperation and conventions (such as the Alpine and Carpathian conventions)

#### **4. Recommendations for sustainable mountain development<sup>1</sup>**

Some possible recommendations are outlined below. These could be updated, as the new ones will be distilled from the analysis of the contributions received. Recommendations may cover some of the following aspects:

##### a. Recommendations for climate change:

Action is needed to develop and implement measures to strengthen the adaptive capacity and climate resilience of mountain communities and reduce exposure to climate risks through increased generation and use of climate and disaster risk information such as strengthened awareness of climate threats and risks, development of hazard risk maps, early warning systems etc.

The need to strengthen institutions for climate adaptation is evident, such as increase the capacity of local staff to promote landscape approaches, strengthened mountain governance mechanisms, training of local staff in climate smart agriculture.

Sustainable land management in mountains has the potential to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable mountain people, reduce disaster risks from extreme weather events and their impacts in mountains and in connected lowlands (SDG 13 and 15).

Transboundary cooperation is needed to address transboundary climate risks and regional adaptation to climate change in mountains, and to work across countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

##### b. Recommendations related to landscape approaches and ecosystem restoration:

The need for mountain specific-policies adopting a holistic approach that take into account an integrated landscape approach and a need for restoration in and protection of mountains which addresses natural resource management, watershed management, sustainable water management and sustainable forest management, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity conservation, land degradation and desertification and agroecology through multistakeholder, transboundary approaches.

##### c. Recommendations related to livelihoods improvement in mountain areas:

Promoting diversified agrifood systems and livelihoods options such as: improvement and shortening of value chains of mountain products, ecotourism, enhanced institutional, technical, entrepreneurial and marketing capacities of producers and institutions, PGS, block

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of recommendations based on the outline and on previous reports and that will be adjusted according to the contributions received.

chain technology, increase access to markets, ecosystem-based services schemes for mountain farmers.

Countries may benefit from the global call for ecosystem restoration, which will catalyse political/institutional support, scientific research and financial resources to improve the productivity and capacity of ecosystems, support mountain communities, and reduce vulnerabilities

d. Recommendations related to infrastructure and digitalization:

Investing in sustainable infrastructure, including roads and trains, as well as communication services and the digitalization of sustainable tourism, is critical for sustainable mountain development (SDG 9).

Policies and infrastructure for environmentally sound waste management in the mountains need to be strengthened.

e. Recommendations building on the UN Decade for Family Farming:

Strengthening of mountain family farming with women empowerment and gender equality, specific policies for mountain family farming, securing land tenure, providing access to resources for mountain family farms, training and improving basic infrastructure in mountain regions.

f. Recommendations related to international processes:

Prioritization of mountain issues with development agendas and processes, including the mentioning of mountains in the Voluntary National Reports, highlighting the role of mountain ecosystems and mountain communities in the UN Rio Conventions, the Paris Agreement and other relevant global fora.

Promote adaptation finance and private sector inclusion and contribution are key enablers for adaptation in mountains.

Investments in resilience to sustain mountain rural livelihoods amid conflict.

g. Recommendations related to advocacy, knowledge management and outreach:

Build on the multi-stakeholder membership of the Mountain Partnership and take advantage of the opportunities provided by International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development, International Mountain Day and other relevant UN Days and decades to mobilize more resources and promote investments and specific actions.

h. Recommendations related to data:

Increase the collection and dissemination of disaggregated data on mountain-related economic, social, environmental and meteorological issues for policy advice at the local, national and regional level.

i. Recommendations related to COVID-19 recovery:

Boost mountains smallholders' resilience to mitigate the immediate impacts of the pandemic while strengthening the long-term resilience of mountain food systems and livelihoods, and by promoting sustainable tourism in mountains.