

Mountains and the Sustainable Development Goals



CALL FOR ACTION

In a world struggling with scarcer resources, growing population and the consequences of climate change, mountains can contribute to a more sustainable future.

Mountains supply more than half of humankind with water. They are reservoirs for food, energy and biodiversity. Mountain communities have gained experience and can offer solutions to affront climate variability and harsh environments. The benefits derived from mountain regions were recognized as 'essential for sustainable development' by the Rio+20 summit. States were invited to 'strengthen cooperative action' and encouraged to 'adopt a long-term vision and holistic approaches'.

This call to action - by mountain countries, organizations, communities – aims to help ensure that mountains are included in the Sustainable Development Goals, which will take effect when the Millennium Development Goals expire in 2015.



Key facts and figures

Mountains are home to one tenth of the world's population and cover 25 percent of the earth's land surface.

Around 40 percent of mountain populations in developing and transition countries, about 300 million people, is food insecure with half of them suffering from chronic hunger.

Mountains provide up to 60-80 percent of the world's freshwater resources for domestic, agricultural and industrial consumption.

Mountains are early indicators of climate change, as evidenced by rapid glacier melting and loss of snow cover, whose implications go far beyond mountain boundaries.

Mountains host approximately one quarter of all terrestrial biodiversity and half of the world's biodiversity hot spots.

Mountains in the Sustainable Development Process

- 1992 Earth Summit – Agenda 21 – Chapter 13
- 2002 WSSD – Plan of Implementation – para 42
- 2012 Rio+20 – The Future We want – paras 210, 211, 212



SDG thematic clusters

POVERTY ERADICATION

Mountain peoples are among the world's poorest and hungriest. In developing countries, a vast majority live below the poverty line and an estimated 300 million are food insecure.

Targets: Reduce the number of mountain people suffering from poverty by at least 50 percent by 2030 by fostering equitable growth, employment, social protection, infrastructure and investment.

FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION, SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

About 40 percent of the mountain population in developing and transition countries is vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition.

Targets: Eradicate hunger by at least 50 percent and ensure that mountain communities have access to safe and nutritious food.

WATER

Mountains provide up to 60-80 percent of the world's freshwater, which is essential for all forms of life. Population growth, intensification of land use and climate change in mountains impact water availability, altering the water regime for agriculture, energy production, industrial use.

Targets: At least 50 percent of mountain communities have adequate access to safe water for domestic consumption, irrigation and sanitation by 2030.

ENERGY

Mountains provide sustainable energy for downstream cities, remote mountain communities. Mountains are sources of energy such as hydropower, solar power and wind power.

Targets: By 2030, increase the share of sustainable energy in the energy mix especially in countries with fragile mountainous ecosystems. Improve access for mountain communities to sustainable energy.

FORESTS

Mountain forests represent 23 percent of the earth's total forest cover. They provide timber, fuel, medicinal and aromatic plants, food and fodder. Mountain forests protect the earth by reducing CO₂ emissions and shielding against natural hazards.

Targets: At least 50 percent of mountain forests are used under sustainable forest management schemes.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mountain ecosystems are easily disrupted by variations in climate. Many mountain glaciers are melting and snow cover is changing, which affects water supplies globally. Climate change also exacerbates desertification and land degradation, further reducing arable land in mountain areas.

Targets: Safeguard mountain ecosystem services and biodiversity, by improving the resilience of mountain areas. Ensure good management of water and other natural resources.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Mountain communities are highly vulnerable to extreme weather events and natural disasters including floods, landslides, and avalanches, and they are particularly affected by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

Targets: By 2030 build resilience and reduce deaths from natural disasters in mountain regions by 50 percent.

BIODIVERSITY

Mountains host approximately 25 percent of terrestrial biodiversity as well as vital genetic resources for key crops and livestock. Land use change and climate change are seriously threatening this global asset.

Targets: Countries adopt the programme of work on mountain biological diversity of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

EQUALITY, SOCIAL EQUITY, GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Mountain dwellers often belong to indigenous groups and minorities which are politically, socially and economically excluded. Women and children who live in mountain areas are at higher risk of hunger and malnutrition and are often excluded from decisions affecting the management and use of local resources.

Targets: At least 40 percent of mountain residents are empowered, gender equality is increased and mountain women have access to natural resources and decision making by 2030.

Mountains must be included in the post 2015 development agenda

They require specific strategies and policies to achieve development. Goals, targets and indicators must be set to improve the livelihoods of mountain people and to conserve mountain ecosystems for the sustained prosperity of the present and future generations.

The Mountain Partnership members call upon the Open Working Group to ensure that mountains are included in the Sustainable Development Goals.

For more information, see the UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform
<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org>

Major Groups can join the UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform
<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/majorgroups.html> and submit their proposals to the Sustainable Development Goals e-Inventory www.sdgseinventory.org/. They can also join the platform <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/> created by the United Nations and civil society 'to amplify people's voices in the process of building a global agenda for sustainable development'.