



Science and Knowledge Advisory Committee of the Mountain Partnership Terms of Reference

Background

The United Nations General Assembly declared the year 2022 as the International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development (IYM 2022), at the proposal of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic. The corresponding resolution¹ was sponsored by 94 governments and was adopted at the plenary meeting of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly on 16 December 2021.

The resolution invited the Mountain Partnership (MP) to facilitate the observance of the Year. To ensure the IYM 2022 was fully utilized as an opportunity to raise awareness about mountain peoples and ecosystems, increasing knowledge about their main challenges and promoting investments toward mountain areas, the Mountain Partnership Secretariat launched an Open-ended Scientific Committee (OESC) in January 2022.

The main aim of this committee was to produce scientifically sound messages to effectively communicate “mountain issues and strengths” to diverse audiences, to mobilize attention and resources.² The Committee contributed to the observance of the International Year and shared mountain-related information and knowledge.

The OESC was open and voluntary, and its overall objective was to ensure the dissemination of science and knowledge in support of the IYM 2022’s goal of increasing awareness on the importance of sustainable mountain development and the conservation and sustainable use of mountain ecosystems.

During 2022, the OESC supported the IYM 2022’s observance by providing scientifically-sound [key messages](#) on sustainable mountain development (SMD) as well as producing [policy briefs](#) on a wide variety of SMD-related topics.

At the [6th Global Meeting of the MP](#), MP members recognized the value of having the support of a body like the OESC and endorsed the creation of a new long-term, open-ended scientific body to support the Partnership’s communication and advocacy work.

Based on this decision, during the OESC’s [final meeting of 2022](#), the members decided to continue their work by forming a long-term scientific body. A working group of OESC members was formed in February 2023. The goal of this working group was to draft the Terms of

¹ General Assembly resolution 76/129, *International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development, 2022*, A/RES/76/129 (16 December 2021), available from undocs.org/A/RES/76/129.

² See the [Terms of Reference of the Open-ended Scientific Committee](#)

Reference (ToR) of this new scientific body by defining its name, membership criteria, objectives, and thematic areas of work.

Name

Science and Knowledge Advisory Committee of the Mountain Partnership

Membership criteria

Membership in the Science and Knowledge Advisory Committee of the Mountain Partnership is open to all individuals – including scientists and practitioners that have a proven interest and/or expertise in one of the many areas related to sustainable mountain development – and to representatives of governments, institutions or organizations, regardless of whether they are members of the Mountain Partnership. Members of this Committee can participate either in their personal capacity or on behalf of their government, institution or organization.

Contributions to the Science and Knowledge Advisory Committee will be on a voluntary basis. The work/contributions of its members will not be remunerated.

Gender diversity shall be encouraged as well as the participation of Indigenous Peoples and traditional knowledge holders and representatives of the Global South and developing countries.

Mandate and objectives of the Science and Knowledge Advisory Committee

The Science and Knowledge Advisory Committee aims to:

- Underpin the Mountain Partnership's work and support to the Partnership's advocacy and communication goals, based on the advocacy priorities listed in its [Advocacy Strategy³](#) and [Communication Strategy⁴](#) and in the [Aspen Declaration](#);
- Encourage inter- and transdisciplinary approaches;
- Contribute to the science-policy dialogue in support of sustainable mountain development, including by identifying research gaps and priorities.

Members of the Science and Knowledge Advisory Committee agree to:

- Promote knowledge about sustainable mountain development within their network(s) to advance the mountain global agenda;
- Provide support to the main international processes - e.g.: Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) - relevant to sustainable mountain development by building on existing

³ Advocacy Strategy of the Mountain Partnership 2022 - 2025

⁴ Communication Strategy of the Mountain Partnership 2022-2025

processes, formats and structures and providing ad hoc scientific overview - e.g., reviewing concept notes, reviewing and/or drafting key messages, participating as speakers, etc.;

- Contribute to the Mountain Partnership's efforts to raise awareness of sustainable mountain development at high-level events and have mountain issues included in the main international processes;
- Facilitate informed decision-making by relevant policy-and decision makers.

Main Activities

The main planned activities⁵ of the Science and Knowledge Advisory Committee are to:

- Contribute with supporting evidence and inputs that substantiate key messages and materials developed for advocacy/communication campaigns and activities spearheaded by the Mountain Partnership and/or on behalf of Mountain Partnership members (i.e.: prepare policy briefs and compile the recommendations into coherent and succinct documentation);
- Upon request of the MP, provide scientific overview advice and develop key messages for the Five Years of Action for the Development of Mountain Regions 2023–2027;
- Collect and share relevant mountain-related science and knowledge in support of sustainable mountain development;
- Support the Mountain Partnership and its Steering Committee to identify emerging issues relevant to sustainable mountain development, and contribute to integrating said issues in strategy documents developed in the lead-up to Mountain Partnership Global Meetings (i.e. MP strategy documents);
- Develop and disseminate educational, outreach and awareness-raising materials on sustainable mountain development; and
- Provide ad hoc support to Mountain Partnership members with project proposals and the development of new initiatives.

Thematic areas of work

The thematic areas of work that the Science and Knowledge Advisory Committee will work on include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Biodiversity conservation

⁵ The list that follows shall not be considered as complete and exclusive. Members of the Science and Knowledge Advisory Committee may decide to initiate any other relevant activity as they see fit within the broader scope of this Committee.

- Climate change
- Ecosystem restoration
- Ecosystem services
- Education for sustainability
- Environmental education
- Food systems
- Gender equality
- Land-use change
- Local traditional knowledge
- Nature-based solutions
- One Health
- Sustainable mountain tourism
- Sustainable water management
- Waste and other pollution
- Sustainable soil management
- Disaster Risk Reduction

Due to the diverse, crossing-cutting nature of SMD, the main areas of work of the Committee will vary depending on the priorities of the global mountain agenda. The Science and Knowledge Advisory Committee will focus on promoting those topics that are often left behind.

Working modality

The Science and Knowledge Advisory Committee will meet online at least three times per year. Meetings can be requested by its members, the Mountain Partnership Steering Committee and Mountain Partnership Secretariat whenever there are important issues to discuss.

The Chair of the Science and Knowledge Advisory Committee will be elected by the Science and Knowledge Advisory Committee members at the first meeting and will stay in charge for one year. Each member of the Science and Knowledge Advisory Committee can put forward their nomination to become the Chair. He/she may be reelected. One or two vice-chairs can also be elected if the members decide to do so.

The Mountain Partnership Secretariat will convene the meetings in consultation with its Chair. The Mountain Partnership Secretariat will prepare an agenda for each meeting and a short summary of the meeting that, once cleared, will be published on the Mountain Partnership website.

All decisions are taken by consensus. Should this not be possible, the Chair of the Science and Knowledge Advisory Committee can opt for voting, and decisions would be taken by the simple majority.

Key references

The main global and regional documents and frameworks to guide the Science and Knowledge Advisory Committee include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Key international (global, i.e. United Nations, environmental conventions⁶), sub-regional (e.g. Council of Europe Landscape Convention [ETS No. 176]) and regional conventions (e.g. Alpine and Carpathian conventions, regional water conventions) and other legally binding documents;
- The [Five Years of Action for the Development of Mountain Regions 2023–2027](#);
- Main International SMD frameworks such as: [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and its 17 [Sustainable Development Goals](#), [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030](#), the [Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework](#), [2030 Agenda for Mountains - Framework for Action](#) and the [Aspen Declaration](#);
- UN International Decades such as the [UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration](#)⁷ and UN International Years such as the [International Year of Camelids 2024](#), [International Year of Glaciers' Preservation 2025](#) and [International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026](#);
- Global and regional reports, such as the [IPCC Sixth Assessment Report “Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability”](#) and particularly its [Cross-Chapter Paper 5: Mountains](#);
- The [triennial UN Secretary-General's Report on Mountains](#), with a specific focus on the latest [2022-2025 report](#);
- The Mountain Partnership strategies (2022-2025 [Advocacy](#), [Communication](#), [Governance](#));
- The main SMD publications, such as: [Mountain tourism – Towards a more sustainable path](#), [Mountain farming systems – seeds for the future](#), [Vulnerability of mountain peoples to food insecurity: updated data and analysis of drivers](#), [The Hindu Kush Himalaya assessment: Mountains, climate change, sustainability and people](#)

⁶ Such as:

- United Nations. *Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)* (1992). Available at: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/legal/cbd-en.pdf>.
- United Nations. *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)*. 1992. Available at: https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/background_publications_htmlpdf/application/pdf/conveng.pdf
- United Nations. *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (UNCCD)*. 1994. Available at: https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1996/12/19961226%2001-46%20PM/Ch_XXVII_10p.pdf
- UNECE. *Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (The Aarhus Convention)*. 1998. Available at: <https://unece.org/DAM/env/pp/documents/cep43e.pdf>
- UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, 16 November 1972, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4042287a4.html>

⁷ Including the Multi-Country Mountain Flagship: <https://wedocs.unep.org/20.500.11822/37848>.