



CBD

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity



Achieving the
2010
Biodiversity
Target

STATEMENT

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
ON
INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN DAY



“The Great Smoky Mountains are a sanctuary for the Cherokee people. We have always believed that the mountains and streams provide all that we need for survival. We hold these mountains sacred, believing that the Cherokees were chosen to take care of the mountains as the mountains take care of us”.

Jerry Wolfe, Cherokee Elder, 2000

“We take an offering to the mountain, the patron of the animals, because the mountain looks after the animals and we have absolute faith in him [the mountain] for the welfare of our animals and ourselves”.

Vicente, Rancas, Peru, 1995

The above quotations clearly express the significance of this year’s theme for International Mountain Day “Managing Mountain Biodiversity for Better Lives”. What is common among the people living on the slopes of Java’s volatile mountains, the Tibetan Dropkas, the Curiosos in Canrey Chico in Peru, the women of Chinga village in Nepal, and the residents of Mount Kilimanjaro? Their lives are intricately connected to mountains, and their survival depends on mountain biological diversity.

Mountain systems, covering about 27 percent of the world’s land surface and directly supporting 22 percent of the world’s people, are the water towers of the world, providing for the freshwater needs of more than half of humanity. The world’s mountains encompass some of the most spectacular landscapes, a wide variety of ecosystems, a great diversity of species, and distinctive human communities. The world’s principal biome types—from hyper-arid hot desert and tropical forest to arid polar icecaps—all occur in mountains. Mountains support about one quarter of the world’s terrestrial biological diversity, with nearly half of the world’s biodiversity “hotspots” concentrated in mountains. Almost every area that is jointly important for plants, amphibians, and endemic birds is located within mountains. Of the 20 plant species that supply 80 percent of the



world's food, six species (maize, potatoes, barley, sorghum, tomatoes, and apples) originated in mountains. A large portion of domestic mammals—sheep, goats, domestic yak, llama, and alpaca—originated in mountain regions. Genetic diversity tends to be higher in those mountains associated with cultural diversity and extreme variation in local environmental conditions.

But, mountains are vulnerable to a host of natural and anthropogenic threats, including seismic hazards, fire, climate change, land cover change and agricultural intensification, infrastructure development, and armed conflict. These pressures degrade mountain environments and affect the provision of ecosystem services and the livelihoods of people dependent upon them. The fragility of mountain ecosystems represents a challenge to sustainable development, as the impacts of unsuitable development are particularly intense, more rapid and more difficult to correct than in other ecosystems.

In response, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted the programme of work on mountain biological diversity in 2004, as a set of actions addressing characteristics and problems that are specific to mountain ecosystems. The programme of work aims to conserve mountain biological diversity, maintain the goods and services of mountain ecosystems, contribute to poverty alleviation and to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Underlying the goals of the CBD programme of work on mountain biodiversity is the belief that sustainability will be achieved in mountain areas by reducing poverty, inequality, and marginality, preventing deterioration of natural resources and environments, and improving the capabilities of institutions and organizations to promote conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. Achieving environmental and human sustainability in mountains means finding ways to manage mountain resources and systems so that they can provide critical ecosystem services. Commemoration of this year's International Mountain Day provides an opportunity to raise awareness about the need for effective implementation of the programme of work on mountain biological diversity.

On this International Mountain Day let us resolve to conserve mountain biological diversity. Let us commit ourselves to implement the programme of work on mountain biological diversity for the well-being of mountain dwellers and our own well-being.

Note

When proclaiming 11 December as International Mountain Day in 2003, the UN General Assembly mandated the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) as the lead agency. FAO has developed information and communication material in all UN languages to celebrate IMD. This material is available for downloading at the special website dedicated to IMD 2006 at http://www.fao.org/mnts/intl_mountain_day_en.asp