

THE ASPEN DECLARATION A NEW MOMENTUM FOR MOUNTAINS

We, the members of the Mountain Partnership, during our Sixth Global Meeting taking place at the Aspen Institute in Aspen, Colorado, USA on 27-29 September 2022, have agreed to this Declaration to jointly promote the sustainable development of mountain areas.

Preamble

Mountain ecosystems provide people and the planet with essential goods and services such as water, food and biodiversity. Home to about 1.1 billion people, mountains are also centres of cultural diversity and traditional knowledge. However, biodiversity loss, climate change, land degradation and pollution among other impacts are severely and increasingly affecting mountain livelihoods and ecosystems. Meanwhile, mountain people are among the world's poorest and most vulnerable: in 2017, half of the rural mountain dwellers living in developing countries faced food insecurity. Mountain communities are highly dependent on small-scale and family-based agriculture. Living at the frontline of the climate crisis, exposure to natural hazards, lack of key services, and impacts arising from crises and conflicts are factors contributing to the high vulnerability of mountain populations, particularly for women, persons with disabilities, children and people in vulnerable situations. The COVID-19 pandemic has further disrupted life in mountains and compounded existing vulnerabilities. Recognizing successful, locally-driven experiences of transformative change; identifying new and sustainable livelihood opportunities; acknowledging Indigenous People and Local Communities' (IPLC) rights; adopting new and supporting existing practices that combat land degradation, drought and desertification and that assist mountain ecosystem restoration; and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation, disaster risk reduction, and resilient agrifood systems are urgent requirements for achieving the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Recalling:

1. The Mountain Partnership – the UN alliance dedicated to mountains – is guided and inspired in its actions and commitments by: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Declaration of the UN Conference on the Human Environment (1972), the World Charter for Nature (1982), the Declaration of the UN Rio Conference and the Agenda 21 and its chapter 13 on managing fragile mountain ecosystems (1992), the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (2018) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015).
2. Founded in 2002, the Mountain Partnership advocates for addressing the challenges facing mountain regions by tapping the wealth of diversity of its members as well as promoting the sharing of knowledge, experiences, information and expertise of its members, to stimulate, concrete initiatives at all levels that will ensure improved quality of life and environments in the world's mountain regions.
3. The Framework for Action approved by the members of the Mountain Partnership in 2017 during the Fifth Global Meeting of the Mountain Partnership, the Group of Friends of Mountainous Countries established in 2019 under initiative of the Kyrgyz Republic, and the resolution A/76/L.28 for an International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development (IYM) 2022 are the most recent

measures to align the efforts of the international community towards improving the livelihoods of mountain peoples and protecting and conserving mountain environments around the world.

4. The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) with the UN Environment Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN as the assigned leading agencies of the UN System, provides a unique opportunity to collectively engage with the aim to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of mountain ecosystems on every continent.
5. Regional organizations, conventions, platforms and initiatives such as the Alpine Convention, the Carpathian Convention, the Andean Mountain Initiative, the Working Community of the Pyrenees Mountains, the Africa Regional Mountains Forum, the Scientific Network for the Caucasus Mountain Region and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development are key partners for the achievement of sustainable mountain development.

Noting that:

1. The principles and legal obligations of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), including that of the future Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) as well as their respective programmes of work and agendas linked to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015), strongly orient the work of the Mountain Partnership.
2. The Mountain Partnership is also guided by the conclusions and recommendations of the World Meteorological Organization High-Mountain Summit Call for Action (2019); the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), which includes the Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate (2019) and the Cross-Chapter Paper on Mountains in the Working Group II Contribution to AR6 on Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability (2022); the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (2019); the resolution A/RES/74/227 on sustainable mountain development adopted by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on 19 December 2019; and the report A/77/217 on sustainable mountain development adopted by the UNGA on 22 July 2022.
3. The Kyrgyz Republic will propose to include the 2023-2027 “Five-Years of Action for the Development of Mountain Regions” in the triennial UN General Assembly resolution on sustainable mountain development as an outcome of the International Year for Sustainable Mountain Development 2022.

In light of the unfolding biodiversity, climate, pollution and health crises, while recognizing climate and intergenerational justice concerns, and building on the new momentum provided by the proclamation of the IYM 2022, we, the members of the Mountain Partnership, commit to:

- increase efforts towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, aiming to secure the contribution of resilient mountain ecosystems and communities to a more sustainable world; and

- support the establishment of processes and mechanisms within the Mountain Partnership that engage diverse stakeholders and rights holders across society in strengthened science-policy dialogues and multistakeholder dialogues, thereby jointly identifying and addressing knowledge needs associated with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in mountain areas.

Furthermore, we, the members of the Mountain Partnership commit to:

- engage the international community to help address the challenges faced by mountain countries in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including addressing the impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation and pollution;
- mobilize countries with mountainous territories to jointly advocate for their interaction in the UN multilateral processes, including following up on the implementation of upcoming major outcomes such as the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework;
- establish, support, and strengthen existing cooperation mechanisms between mountain countries to increase targeted investments and impact that align with efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to protect and improve the conservation of mountain ecosystems;
- promote cooperation among mountain countries on economy, social development, environment, culture, tourism, science and education, in line with the achievement of the SDGs;
- maintain the structure of the Mountain Partnership, avoiding the creation of additional bureaucracy, to continue to effectively advocate for mountain regions;
- contribute to implementing the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030, engaging in particular with UNEP and FAO as custodian agencies;
- support the ongoing efforts toward the establishment of globally binding instruments to combat plastic pollution;
- encourage efforts to address the underlying drivers of vulnerability to climate change, including poverty, marginalization, exclusion from social safety nets, and gender inequalities;
- ensure mountain women and Indigenous peoples' access to resources, including land, social protection and capacity building, to enable their economic autonomy and decision making;
- encourage education efforts to empower and enable children and youth to become change agents for sustainable mountain development;

- consider the outcomes of the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit and of the 10 principles of agroecology developed by FAO (2018) for the development of sustainable food systems in mountains;
- increase finance and private sector inclusion and contributions for climate change adaptation, water management, sustainable land management, ecosystem restoration, pollution prevention and disaster risk management in mountains;
- expand public and private investment in innovation, including, connectivity, e-mobility, digital and soft infrastructure in mountain areas, to reduce the digital gap with cities and make mountain areas more attractive to young people by supporting technological entrepreneurship;
- enhance capacity building, knowledge transfer, research, monitoring, and data access on mountain and cryosphere issues at local, national, regional and international levels, including associated Indigenous knowledge and sustainable customary practices, while creating synergies with the efforts of other organizations and initiatives; and
- implement the priorities of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 to enhance the resilience of mountain communities and build their capacity to anticipate, cope with and recover from disaster.

To support these commitments, we request the Mountain Partnership Secretariat, *inter alia*, to:

- engage and support Mountain Partnership members in international advocacy processes for mountains where appropriate and necessary;
- enhance the visibility of the actions of the Mountain Partnership and its members through communication and awareness-raising campaigns, as stipulated in the Mountain Partnership Advocacy Strategy 2022-2025, to increase support in different areas and at different scales;
- engage and support Mountain Partnership members in the observance and follow-up of key outcomes of the IYM 2022;
- ensure that Mountain Partnership members' efforts, impacts and results on sustainable mountain development are considered by the global political agenda and shared in relevant fora and platforms and processes to impact; and
- up-scale initiatives and projects, as appropriate, in support of the sustainability and resilience of mountain communities and ecosystems, including support to sustainable and resilient mountain food systems.