



Forth Global meeting of the Mountain Partnership

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Opening remarks

by

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Vice Minister for Forests and Water of Turkey, Representatives of Governments and International Organizations, members of the Mountain Partnership, ladies and gentlemen, good morning!

It is a great honor to welcome you on behalf of the Director-General of FAO, Jose Graziano da Silva, to the Fourth Global Meeting of the Mountain Partnership – an important occasion to reinforce our collective commitment to the future of mountains and their populations in a globalizing world.

To all of you who have contributed with so much commitment, effort, time and inspiration in order to make this meeting a reality, allow me to express on behalf of FAO our deepest

gratitude. In particular, I would like to thank our host, the Government of the Republic of Turkey for all their incredible support to this meeting. We have had many opportunities in recent years to work closely with Turkey and witness its commitment to sustainable mountain development and, as Head of the Forestry Department of FAO and Chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, allow me to add forests to the list as well.

I would also like to thank all of you gathered here today for coming to Erzurum. You will carry out some very important tasks for the future of the Mountain Partnership, including endorsing a strategy that will guide the work of the Partnership for the next four years, selecting a steering committee, setting priorities and ensuring that the Partnership continues to grow and prosper.

This alliance was launched a little more than ten years ago, so it's time now to take stock of the past and adapt and change for new challenges and opportunities ahead. The Partnership started in 2002 with less than 40 members and today counts more than 210 members. All members have been involved during the last 18 months in an intense process aimed at making the Mountain Partnership more efficient and transparent, increasing the ownership and engagement of all members and, especially, ensuring the visibility of mountains in the international debate that started last year in Rio+20.

As the UN lead agency for mountains, FAO is not only a humble Mountain Partnership member, but also has the honor of hosting its Secretariat. From the beginning, FAO has been committed to supporting the mandate and the activities of the Mountain Partnership. And we stay true to it.

Many accomplishments have been achieved in these ten years thanks to you the members and the donors. Thanks to your work, mountains have been included in a number of international processes. Perhaps most noteworthy are the three paragraphs dedicated to mountains in the outcome document of Rio+20.

As you know, each day mountains are under increasing threats reaching from the effects of climate change, deforestation, exploitative mining, conflicts, ill-managed tourism and

migration of mountain people and the correspondent loss of traditional well adapted knowledge and related cultural heritage. Indeed, as diverse as mountains and mountain cultures may be, they are exceedingly fragile in a context of accelerating globalization. Sustainable mountain governance requires specific strategies, policies and approaches that can help promote awareness and action for development in mountain areas.

Despite the echo of the work of the Mountain Partnership in several UN General Assembly resolutions and the Rio+20 declarations “The Future We Want,” unexpectedly, mountains have for the moment disappeared from the issues identified for the thematic Open Working Groups called for the coming months in UN-HQ that cover most of the thematic areas of the Rio+20 declaration. At this stage, we must focus on each of the Rio+20 substantive themes, including mountains. A balanced approach that is needed, one that is not limited to what mountains can provide to society (water, soil protection, biodiversity, cultural heritage, tourism: downstream approach), but also considers the limits of sustainable delivery and how mountains can be enabled to respond to the huge social demands they face (upstream approach). A balanced approach between delivery of services and political commitment can be achieved. Including mountains in the Post-2015 development agenda should be urgently addressed, with a concerted action coming out of this timely meeting.

This meeting is an excellent opportunity for us all to listen to and learn from the experiences of our members; to reaffirm our commitment and turn our words into concrete action for tomorrow’s challenges.

Allow me to end with two personal notes. As you know, Thomas Hofer has been serving as the interim coordinator of the Mountain Partnership Secretariat for the last year. We think he and his team have done excellent work and therefore FAO proposes that the Steering Committee confirm him as the coordinator.

As you may know, Milan will host Expo 2015, which is dedicated to food. As the UN Commissioner General for Expo 2015, I would invite you all to consider how the linkages of mountains and food could be highlighted during this important exposition.

In closing, allow me to wish you a fruitful meeting and hope that this renewed spirit of collaboration will strengthen the Mountain Partnership and help us all work towards the achievement of sustainable mountain future.

Thank for your attention!