



Adaptation to climate change in Central Asia: mountains lead the way in new approaches to forest management and renewable energy

Regional experts stress the importance of water conservation and forestry as means of natural hazard prevention and sustainable mountain development in Tajikistan

Dushanbe (Tajikistan), 9 November 2011 While in past centuries natural causes determined changes in people’s daily lives, “developing countries are now suffering from unprecedented changes caused by human activity in terms of scale and pace,” said **His Excellency Murodali Alimardon, Deputy Prime Minister of Tajikistan**, as he opened the regional meeting on “[Climate change impacts, adaptation and development in mountain regions](#)” in Dushanbe today.

Organized by the Mountain Partnership Secretariat and the University of Central Asia in collaboration with the Government of Tajikistan and with financial support from the World Bank, the meeting in Dushanbe follows the one held in Santiago, Chile, at the end of October. For three days, experts from Azerbaijan, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Mongolia and Tajikistan will explore how best to address scientific-based evidence of climate change impacts on mountain regions in international climate change discussions. **Talbak Salimov, Minister of Environment and Chairman of the Committee on Environmental Protection under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan**, emphasized the importance of working in partnership, as addressing global climate change in Central Asia should not be limited by national boundaries: “Even though all the countries in the region have their own interests, climate change challenges are common to all of them, which is why it is crucial for the participants in this meeting to develop a common vision.”



From right to left: His Excellency Murodali Alimardon, Deputy Prime Minister of Tajikistan; Talbak Salimov, Minister of Environment and Chairman of the Committee on Environmental Protection under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan; and Olman Serrano, Coordinator of the Mountain Partnership

Tajikistan, vital source of water for Central Asia

With half of its land mass and 80 percent of its lakes lying at an altitude of 3 000 metres, and 8 000 glaciers (seven of them longer than 20 kilometres), Tajikistan's mountain ranges may be considered a vital source of water for the region. Overall, Tajikistan holds 40 percent of the water resources serving the five Central Asian countries, and its water also serves China and Russia. However, global warming is slowly decimating mountain glaciers, affecting snow reserves and at the same time increasing water requirements.

Upstream climate change, downstream challenges

The melting of glaciers in Central Asia will affect both the process of supplying water to the population and also agriculture. "Ongoing climate change negotiations should reflect the specific characteristics of mountain regions better", said **Olman Serrano, Mountain Partnership Coordinator**, who added: "It is urgent that we continue to develop and enforce adaptation mechanisms to ensure better protection for these severely affected ecosystems and their populations."



Addressing adaptation in mountain regions

Those taking part in the meeting will visit two villages in the Nurobod district of the Rasht Valley, where innovative pilot activities have been implemented in response to the complexity of climate change in high-altitude contexts. The village of Khakhimi will showcase a combination of local-level adaptation and mitigation efforts at the Renewable Energy Demo Centre. Around the village of Shahtuti Bolo, 1 200 fruit trees are stabilizing mountain slopes otherwise prone to mudslides, while energy-efficient stoves and cookers are local solutions to fuelwood depletion.

Forthcoming steps

The next meeting within the framework of “Climate change impacts, adaptation and development in mountain regions” will be held in Mbale, Uganda. It is jointly organized by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Mountain Partnership Secretariat in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), also with support from the World Bank.

Links of interest:

www.mountainpartnership.org

<http://ca-dialogue.blogspot.com/>

www.ucentralasia.org/campus.asp