

## INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN DAY 2009

11 DECEMBER

### “DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT”

This year's **International Mountain Day** theme “**Disaster Risk Management in Mountains**” aims to raise awareness on the high number of natural hazards in mountain areas and the high vulnerability of mountain communities.

**Mountains are hazardous places.** Many mountain communities live under the threat of earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, avalanches, landslides and floods. Many are the factors that cause people to live in these vulnerable situations: ties of kinship and community, a culturally different notion of risk and last but not least, poverty.

“Population growth and unsustainable natural resources management practices have put dangerous pressure on the mountain ecosystems and make mountain communities increasingly vulnerable to disasters,” says Thomas Hofer, Forestry Officer at FAO. “Climate change is causing glaciers to retreat and dangerous lakes to form at their foot. The banks of these lakes are weak and when they are breached a natural hazard known as a glacial lake outburst flood results. **To reduce the risks of disasters in mountain areas it is urgent to increase awareness and to develop integrated strategies and policies on disaster risk management at the national level.**”

**International Mountain Day 2009** aims to draw attention to sustainable agricultural, pasture and forestry practices as key elements of risk reduction. This year's slogan is “**REDUCING RISK SAVES LIVES**”.

In December 2009, high level policy makers will gather in Copenhagen at the 15<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. As International Mountain Day falls in the middle of this important conference, the theme of disaster risk management in mountains was chosen to highlight the urgent need to adopt climate change adaptation strategies that reduce risks of disasters in mountains.

International Mountain Day is an opportunity to create awareness about the importance of mountains to life, to highlight the opportunities and constraints in mountain development and to build partnerships that will bring positive change to the world's mountains and highlands.

It was the United Nations General Assembly who designated 11 December, from 2003 onwards, as 'International Mountain Day'. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is the designated lead coordinating agency mandated to lead observance of International Mountain Day. The day is observed every year with a different theme relevant to sustainable mountain development.