



One year after Erzurum: reflections by the Coordinator of the Mountain Partnership Secretariat

The 4th global meeting of the Mountain Partnership, which was held on 17-20 September 2013 in Erzurum, Turkey, was a moment to reflect on the experiences of the Mountain Partnership since its creation in 2002 and also look forward. The meeting created significant momentum, developed new ideas and raised expectations. It offered an opportunity to think outside the box, to be innovative and creative. As expected, the results and recommendations from the deliberations were very ambitious. The meeting approved a 4-year strategy and a new governance structure. The following elements, labeled “impetuses of renewal”, drove the preparations and proceedings of the meeting in Erzurum:

- Consider the uniqueness of the Mountain Partnership
- Commitments and benefits of membership
- Refocus on the real substance of the MP
- Governance structure of the MP
- Resource mobilization strategy
- Measurement of joint impact

One year after the meeting in Erzurum, it is time to take stock of the progress made and to reflect on the current shortcomings and main priorities for 2015. The considerations in this document represent the personal views of the Coordinator of the Mountain Partnership Secretariat and complement the formal report of the MPS. They are meant to offer a frank assessment of the experiences and constructive criticism that better enables fulfilling the expectations that stem from Erzurum.

Overarching considerations and achievements

In his keynote presentation in Erzurum, Prof. Bruno Messerli highlighted the big challenges the world will face in future: water crisis, food crisis and energy crisis. Mountain areas are very much affected by these challenges but they also offer solutions. The work of the Mountain Partnership should be aligned with these overarching global priorities.

Through the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the negotiation of a concrete Post-2015 development agenda, the world community is making steps toward addressing these challenges. Thanks to a major advocacy campaign, the Mountain Partnership has managed to ensure that mountains are included in the final document of the Open Working Group on SDGs. This is one of the most important achievements and impacts of the work of the Mountain Partnership in 2014: members worked together, with one voice, towards achieving a common objective.

In addition to this advocacy campaign, 2014 has seen a number of initiatives by MP members such as the promotion of regional mechanisms, thematic conferences, field activities, capacity development and communication efforts –which all contributed to the implementation of the decisions of Erzurum.



However, more efforts by the entire MP constituency are required to maintain the momentum created in Erzurum, to substantiate the impetus of renewal and to fulfill the expectations.

Mountain Partnership as a whole

The positive energy and enthusiasm generated in Erzurum in some cases got diluted. In particular, the commitments made by members during the thematic and regional working groups in Erzurum were not always fulfilled despite several reminders sent by the MPS.

Although important steps have been made, the MP has not yet been fully successful in articulating and proving to its current and potential new members the benefits of being a MP member. In addition, the notion introduced in Erzurum about the reciprocal give-and-take required for mutual benefit and the collective responsibility of all MP members to make the partnership work through all its functions and be successful has not yet come to full fruition.

Only a small proportion of MP members communicates on a regular basis about activities and results and responds to requests from their respective SC member or the MPS.

Governments play a particularly strategic role in promoting SMD and the MP in UN processes, conventions and other international fora and negotiations. The experiences in 2014 have shown that this potential has not yet been fully explored and exploited and that the political support for SMD is uneven.

The recommendations from Erzurum in terms of resource mobilization for the MP are very ambitious. In spite of significant efforts made by the MPS, not much progress has been made in this regard. While it is well understood that sufficient time has to be allowed for successful resource mobilization, more efforts are required in future by the MP members. As requested in Erzurum, governments should play a more active role in this endeavor and be supportive champions.

Steering Committee

The election process for a representative Steering Committee received significant attention before and during the meeting in Erzurum. In 2014, unfortunately, only a few SC members fulfilled their strategic function and responsibilities towards the MP. In particular, the following concerns surfaced in the course of 2014:

- Many SC members do not appear to maintain close contact with their constituencies. Elected as representatives of electoral groups and not their own government or organization, SC members (governments and institutions) are responsible for promoting regional activities and dialogue. In my view, the communication and dialogue within the SC fell short in 2014.
- The 2014-2017 Governance and Strategy document clearly states that SC members are responsible for mobilizing the necessary resources to fulfill the functions of SC membership, in



particular their participation in the annual SC meeting. In case resources are an issue, this should be discussed within the electoral group.

- Not all SC members are sufficiently proactive in advocating for the MP and promoting their initiatives as part of the MP. There is a lack of representation of the MP in some crucial recent global and regional events that are fundamental for raising strategically the flag for sustainable mountain development.

This experience has shown that SC members should be encouraged to review the ToR for the SC members in the governance document.

Mountain Partnership Secretariat

The expectations from the Erzurum meeting on the MPS are very high, but the MPS has limited resources and staff. This incongruence has perhaps occasionally resulted in the perception that the MPS has not satisfied every request, followed up on every detail or sufficiently communicated with the SC in 2014.

However, the MP is a large and diverse membership, and the number of members is increasing. To maintain a dialogue with the members and respond in a timely manner to all the incoming requests for guidance, technical support and participation has been a significant challenge for the MPS in 2014.

Due to lack of funds, communication from the MPS (monthly Newsletter, Website) is to a large extent in English, which is not ideal for a global partnership.

Recommendations

So far, the MP does not have any specific thematic priorities in its activities. This might be one of the reasons for the observed lack of response and the difficulty to put the benefits of MP membership in evidence. Based on the experiences of this first year after Erzurum, it is recommended to reflect on a thematic prioritization, possibly with a regional differentiation, of the MP work over a defined time period. Water, climate change, migration, economy, disaster risk management might be possible areas of work to focus on. Such prioritization might make the work and impact of the MP more tangible and help resource mobilization efforts.

The focal points of governmental MP members should maintain close relations with their national colleagues in key institutional positions and ensure that they are aware of the MP, and support mountains at key fora.

Only with sufficient financial resources can the momentum of Erzurum be maintained and the expectations fulfilled. Accordingly, resource mobilization needs to be pursued with high priority. In addition to traditional resource mobilization efforts, innovative approaches have to be explored including through the private sector. The annual contribution of USD 10,000 by each member

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government, which is symbolic for a national budget, to the Mountain Facility could be such an innovative mechanism with significant scope for success and visible impact.

Advocacy for SMD and the MP is a corporate responsibility. It is recommended that MP members include a slide about the MP in their presentation and carry information material about the MP in the suitcase whenever they participate in meetings, conferences, or any events that are of relevance to SMD. The communication team at the MPS can assist on this.

The partnership on Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) with its strong cohesion and joint agenda might offer an interesting model – not for replication in the MP but for identifying lessons learned which might be useful for the MP.

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28 November 2014