

## **SUMMARY OF THE CHAIR**

### **International Expert Dialogues on Mountains, People and Climate 2024 in Kathmandu**

#### **1. Background**

The Government of Nepal hosted the International Expert Dialogues on Mountains, People, and Climate on May 22–23, 2024 in Kathmandu. The dialogue was organized in response to the Prime Minister of Nepal's pledge during the COP 28 high-level side event "Call of the Mountain: Who Saves Us from the Climate Crisis?" - to raise awareness of climate change and advance the mountain agenda in the UNFCCC negotiation process.

The expert dialogue on mountains, people and climate change brought together more than 250 delegates around the world including Nepal forging discussion on ways to prioritize mountain-based actions in the context of climate change and collectively urged mountain countries and agencies to collaborate on UNFCCC mountain work programs and mandates.

#### **2. Key messages from the sessions**

##### **Significance of mountain issues and beyond**

The mountain and coastal ecosystems, from the two ends of the terrestrial ecosystem, are highly vulnerable to climate change. This stresses the importance of unified global voice for mountains and beyond.

Healthy mountains mean a healthy climate which signifies the importance of mountains for sustaining the lives and livelihoods of people living in upstream and downstream regions, including the coastal areas.

The disproportionate impact on least contributing and least capable countries especially on vulnerable groups resonates for a unified voice and international action, emphasize the significance of climate justice, and locally led solutions.

The current scale of risks and vulnerability signifies the importance of collective action and political will to adhere concrete and sustainable solutions for the mountain agenda with more ambitious actions and concrete deliverables.

##### **Ambition for 1.5 Degree Celsius: Urgency for Action in Mountains and Beyond**

Science is crystal clear on climate change impacts to mountain ecosystems. 1.5 degree Celsius is too high to the mountain ecosystems and people. Mountains and marine the global water and food supply and biodiversity are severely threatened by climate change, leading to disproportionate impacts on mountain communities.

The scale of climate change impacts is unprecedented. This reiterates the urgent need and global leadership for climate action to limit global warming to 1.5°C, highlighting threats to the Himalayas and the need for adaptive strategies, deep emissions reductions, increased climate finance, and tailored adaptation plans.

Global communities should recognize the challenges and political hurdles in climate negotiation on advancing the mountain agenda particularly addressing it in the context of 1.5 degree Celsius, such as the need for global attention and investment in sustainable mountain development.

The importance of leveraging existing knowledge platforms, regional partnership, and global cooperation is immense as mountains are vast source of data, information, and knowledge hubs, but to be discovered and disclosed, need to be prioritized research and technology, including the inclusion gender equality, social and disability inclusion.

There is a need for collaboration within mountainous countries and beyond, for knowledge sharing, accelerating finance access and delivery, develop technology and transfer, and engaging civil society, youth, local and indigenous community engagement, all essential for driving climate action.

### **The Science and Evidence on Climate Change Impact, Vulnerability and Risks is very clear.**

Evidence clearly suggest that human activities led GHG emissions, glacier declines, socio-economic impacts, IPCC paths to limit warming below 1.5°C, and the importance of local context and indigenous knowledge.

Science clearly shows rapid warming, shifting monsoon patterns, glacier loss, reduced snow days, glacier melting, permafrost loss, peak water flow loss and increasing risk of glacial lake outburst floods expected between 2030-2050, and increasing escalating disasters.

Good- and forward-looking science is essential to describe the climate problems, explore socio-structural vulnerability and to prescribe the best solutions based on nature and people's aspiration. While science is essential for identifying problems, the solution lies in social, political, and other factors in strengthening knowledge gaps and promoting mountain and climate change solutions, including use of indigenous knowledge.

There is an urgency for the need to strengthen observational knowledge gaps, particularly in understanding mountain and marine dynamics such as cryosphere variables like permafrost extent, glacier ice volumes and snow cover variation.

### **Emerging Threat and Crisis in the Mountains: Loss and Damage**

The complexity of climate change impacts in the Himalayas, the world's youngest mountain system, and the three choices to deal with: mitigate, adapt, loss, and damage.

The climate induced disasters have induced increased risks and vulnerabilities in mountain systems, including governance, land use, housing design, and development; addressing these requires conceptual clarity, planning integration, and the inclusion of non-climatic hazards.

There is urgency of the need for improving methodology to capture non-environmental loss and damage (NELD), livelihood, health, mental, and ecosystem services in assessment. Need to improve methodology and financial resources, existing tools, such as EIA (lack focus on climatic hazards) and anticipatory disaster impact assessments.

The effectiveness of utilization of climate finance for loss and damage taking a transformative approach is of foremost importance in days to come.

There is a need for regional and global coordination and collaboration for multi-hazard risk reduction and addressing cascading hazards. Particularly emphasizing the need to utilise indigenous knowledge and collaboration to access finance. In addition, the need for the direct access and the small grants for the communities should be ensured in the loss and damage fund. Further, technical support on assessing loss and damage at the country level.

## **People, Policy, and Prosperity: Living in Harmony with Nature**

There is immense opportunity to convert them into mountains of opportunity by nurturing the diversity, niche, and human adaptability. For this, long term decisions are needed over short term. Solutions that are more proactive responding to anticipatory climate risks will contribute to building long-term resilience.

The partnership between communities living in the mountains and the lowlands, analogous to producers and markets, forms a vital link as **both benefit from the environmental dividends** offered by the mountains.

It is evident that forging landscape approaches, community-based forest management, nature-based solutions, climate resilient tourism plan, improved water resources and catchment management, and multistakeholder and transboundary collaborations are approaches that require **people centric policies tied with incentives based on equity and inclusiveness**.

We need to acknowledge the contribution of mountain biodiversity and ecosystem services at attaining the SDGs, and the creation of financial incentives for the conservation and management of mountain ecosystems while recognizing and respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

There is a need for a coherent understanding of climate impacts on mountains and downstream communities, highlighting the importance of transboundary cooperation including the need for systematic and integrated approaches to addressing climate challenges.

A more proactive solutions and anticipatory risk management is needed in the face of climate change, urging continued dialogue and collaboration at all levels through acknowledging the importance of recognizing and respecting the role of indigenous people, local communities, women, and youth in conservation efforts and sustainable land use practices.

## **Locally Led-Adaptation: From Mountain to Marine Ecosystems**

Local communities are on the frontlines of climate change impacts, yet rarely do they and other local actors have a voice in the decisions that most affect them.

Appreciation of the fact that the numerous delivery mechanisms show how LLA can be implemented in practice and show that alternative approaches to business-as-usual already exist, and that adaptation action should be supporting these types of locally led initiatives.

We need to shift the status quo from current top-down approaches to a new model where local actors have greater power and resources to build resilience to climate change.

There is relevance of knowledge, technology, and finance to be more contextual, tailor-made, localized and blended with science and evidence. Recognizing the role of local institutions, building capacity, and increasing direct access on climate financing are pre-requisites of ensuring sustainable local solutions.

We need to recognize the urgency of shifting power to local stakeholders, without expecting them to shoulder the burden of adaptation, can catalyse adaptation that is effective, equitable, and transparent.

## **Climate Justice, Equity and Local Voices: Gender and Youth**

We need to recognize that despite people and communities being on the front line of climate impacts, there is significant gap in international climate finance that reaches the local level, and least being effective.

There is urgency of revisiting the current policies, plans and approaches of assessing and targeting the most vulnerable, including women and youth appreciating the fact that the people who are the most impacts are least benefited and least involved in global and national discussions, including planning and decision-making process.

The need to recognize that the fact that justice delayed is justice denied. The admiration of the urgency of recognizing the voices of gender and youth in terms of urgency in designing addressing the adaptation need of the most vulnerable communities.

Recognize the human link of climate change and the lapses of current policies to recognize the disproportionate and differentiated vulnerability and impacts which is deeply rooted in the socio-structural issues, deprivation, power imbalance and marginalization and further triggered by climate change and climate induced loss and damage.

We should, make the worlds fairer for young people and women. Mountain women and youth including indigenous people- have to be integrated pin the discussions and collaborative.

### **Economic Growth: Clean Energy and Green Economy**

Rapid and full decarbonization of energy system is needed using the existing knowledge hub- a climate actions that can spur economic growth such as capitalizing from the transition to bioeconomy, circular economy, and green economy.

Any investment that spurs a green economy must link green growth, and quality growth which facilitate a transition towards a more sustainable and resilient economy that prioritizes climate and environment, focusing on social equity and justice.

Knowledge must be part of the future discussions on promoting green economy for identification of policy instrument and market models for green energy.

Consensus that a climate-friendly economy considers meeting the needs of the present and future generations by focusing on ideas such as green jobs and environmentally friendly innovation. Economic growth that does not go hand in hand with the climate and environmental goals in an inclusive manner is inadequate for sustainable development.

Clean electricity is the mantra to the path of decarbonization. The cooking sector is low hanging fruit, green industrialization, and nature-based solution is a feasible option. For this, partnership with private sector is needed to achieve this objective.

### **Climate Finance and the Role of Private Sector**

Mountainous countries face high cost of capital, higher transaction costs in accessing and utilizing financial resources and are already indebted, hence it is of utmost importance that while providing finance, these aspects must be realistically reflected and developing countries must not be forced to choose between climate action and poverty eradication.

Need of climate finance to mountainous countries to be provided based on their needs and in line with the latest science of keeping the global average temperature below 1.5 degrees Celsius by the end of this century. Developed countries must provide accelerated support for

implementing NDCs, NAPs, LTS, and other climate action plans of the mountainous developing countries.

Access to international climate finance has been extremely challenging, therefore the urgent need to simplify the access process, providing predictability, adequate and timely delivery are crucial to support the mountain people and communities.

Mountainous developing countries are already heavily indebted, and debt sustainability is a major concern for them. This is leading to an immense burden on achieving sustainable development and poverty eradication. Hence, climate finance support for these countries must be delivered in a grants-based and concessional manner.

### **Advancing Mountain Agenda: Global Cooperation and Regional Partnerships**

The issue of mountains is beyond countries boarder more of regional and international concerns so need to be embeded in UNFCCC processes

Regional platform, global cooperation to enrich understanding, accelerate access and delivery of climate finance, and protecting development investments.

Various means of achieving global cooperation: i) establishing expert networks; ii) having a strong negotiating team; iii) build knowledge and establish evidences on connecting mountains to marine; iv) wider stakeholders support; v) a strategic and coherent message

A strong call for predictable, adequate and efficient financing mechanisms to support the need of mountain countries and to ensure climate justice, and address the issues of loss and damage.

Note: The abstract version will be developed and upload in the website  
<https://mountain.mofe.gov.np/>