



**Governing Council
of the United Nations
Environment Programme**

Distr.
GENERAL



UNEP/GC.22/INF/37
27 January 2003

ENGLISH ONLY

**Twenty-second session of the Governing Council/
Global Ministerial Environment Forum**

Nairobi, 3-7 February 2003

Items 4 (c) and 5 of the provisional agenda*

Coordination and cooperation within and outside the United Nations, including non-governmental organizations

Follow-up of General Assembly resolutions

**THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME MOUNTAIN STRATEGY:
ADDRESSING ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL
YEAR OF MOUNTAINS, 2002 AND ITS FOLLOW-UP**

Note by the Executive Director

The present document provides a summary report on the contribution of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to the International Year of Mountains, 2002. It highlights the opportunities for building upon ongoing UNEP Mountain Programme activities with a view to helping ensure the environmentally sound development of mountain regions during the follow-up to the International Year of Mountains. It also indicates the initial activities intended to implement the outcomes of the International Year of Mountains for the period 2003-2005. The text of the report has been issued without formal editing.

* UNEP/GC.22/1.

K0260247 310103

Introduction

The UN General Assembly declared 2002 as the International Year of Mountains in November 1998. UNEP, UNESCO and UNDP were nominated as the main organisations to support the lead agency in this effort, FAO. The UN GA Resolution on IYM noted the critical importance of the follow-up: “The IYM will be successful if there is considerable follow-up at the different levels which reaches far beyond 2002”.

In the UN GA Resolution A/Res/57/245 on IYM adopted on December 20th, 2002 at the 57 session of UN GA, UNEP’s efforts were recognised. The Bishkek Mountain Platform, prepared with the support of the International Advisory Board for Bishkek Global Mountain Summit, was accepted as the overall framework for the IYM follow up:

“Encourages all relevant entities of the United Nations system, within their respective mandates, to continue their constructive collaboration in the context of the follow-up to the International Year of Mountains, taking into account the inter-agency group on mountains, and the need for further involvement of the UN system, in particular FAO, UNEP, UNDP, UNESCO, UNU and UNICEF, international financial institutions, and other relevant international organizations, consistent with the mandates of the Bishkek Mountain Platform”. (UN GA A/Res/57/245, para 9)

The Bishkek Mountain Platform, paragraph 6.1, “calls on UNEP to ensure environmentally sound management in mountain regions, in particular in developing countries, by strengthening environmental networking and assessments, facilitating regional agreements and encouraging public-private sector cooperation”.

UNEP’s mountain strategy was prepared in the spring of 2001 and provided the framework for addressing environmental priorities during the IYM. It is envisaged that the mountain agenda will be carried forward through UNEP’s 2004-2005 Programme of Work. Mainstreaming mountain activities would require extra-budgetary resources, which may be generated under the overall umbrella of the International Partnership for Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions. Two meetings of this partnership will take place during the first four-month of 2003 to define the programme of activities, institutional responsibilities and financial contributions of donors and partners to support initial efforts of the partnership during 2003-2005. The current UNEP mountain strategy will be updated as a result of these meetings.

UNEP contributions to the IYM

During the IYM the following activities were implemented:

1. Awareness raising and outreach campaign

1.1. Special Public Service Announcement (PSA) on the IYM and Bishkek Global Mountain Summit – produced by TVE and broadcasted on CNN North America, CNN Europe, CNN Airport Network and CNN International from July 2002 until November 2002. Mountain Month was organized on BBC for October 2002 supported by five films made by TVE and broadcasted on the BBC World Service on weekends.

1.2. Special UNEP press releases with a focus on mountain environments were made during the IYM. “UNEP on the Summit” – UNEP supported a special expedition with the International Union of Alpine Clubs (UIAA) in the Himalayas that reported on glaciers melting and environmental change in the mountains for the World Environmental Day celebrations in June 2002. The video diary made during this expedition was extensively used in different TV broadcasts and during Mountain Month on BBC. Chris Bonnington, world-renowned writer and climber, expressed his willingness to serve as the UNEP good will ambassador for mountains.

1.3. Ten thematic papers, prepared for the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit, were distributed for comments and best practices worldwide through e-consultations initiated for UNEP by the Mountain Forum. Several thousands of comments and case studies were received and incorporated in the final texts of the Bishkek papers as the result of the e-consultations.

2. Building coalitions and organizing events to support environmental aspects of Mountain Agenda

2.1. The Bishkek Global Mountain Summit (BGMS) was accepted by all mountain stakeholders as the concluding event of the IYM. All major regional conferences and seminars held during 2002 laid the foundation for the BGMS and the Bishkek Mountain Platform. The International Advisory Board (IAB) for the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit was convened by UNEP's Mountain Programme more than 10 times during 2001-2002, including twice with the President Akaev of Kyrgyzstan, who is an honorable chair of the IAB. The IAB ensured broad based support for the Bishkek Mountain Platform.

2.2. The Council of Patrons for Mountains was convened for the first time in Bishkek. The Council includes several Heads of States and Prime Ministers, Senior Representatives from Parliaments, Heads or senior managers of several UN agencies and Development Banks, several representatives of Royalty as the members of the IAB. Following a very interactive roundtable discussion and endorsement of the Bishkek Mountain Platform, President Akaev of Kyrgyzstan invited the members of the Council of Patrons and the IAB to provide continuous support to mountain issues and to return in the spring of 2005 for the next Global Mountain Summit in Bishkek.

2.3. UNEP was one of the organizers of the global videoconference "High Summit 2002", and hosted the African Hub of this event in Nairobi, Kenya.

2.4. Environmental assessments and preparation of the first report on the global status of mountain ecosystem – Mountain Watch

2.5. Funding was secured and the first report of Mountain Watch was prepared and distributed at the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit. The Mountain Watch is now available on the web and is recognized as an authoritative assessment of the status of mountain ecosystems under pressure. Ongoing coordination with the GEO, Millennium Assessment and Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment are underway to ensure synergies and provide a platform for other assessment efforts related to mountains. Consultations with donors and partners are ongoing to secure funding for the Mountain Atlas production, based on the synthesis of Mountain Watch reports.

2.6. www.globalmountainsummit.org and the Mountain Watch web sites (supported by the UNEP Mountain Programme) were established and became two of the most visited sites for mountains. Both sites are hosted by UNEP-WCMC. Special contributions were made to the GEO-3 report covering mountain issues. The GEO-3 regional outlook for the Caucasus was also produced.

4. Technical assistance and legal instruments for transboundary cooperation.

4.1. As requested by the Government of Kyrgyzstan, UNEP's Mountain Programme provided support to the preparation and negotiations of the Central Asia Mountain Charter. The Charter was opened for signature at the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit and, so far, has been signed by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

4.2. At the request of the Government of Ukraine, UNEP assisted in consultations and negotiations which may lead to the adoption of the Convention for the Protection and Sustainable Management of the Carpathian Mountains at the "Environment for Europe" conference in Kiev in May 2003. Several meetings were held with the support of Governments of Austria, Italy, the Netherlands and Liechtenstein and the draft text for the framework convention is now under discussion.

4.3. Following requests from Armenia and Georgia, two meetings were held to discuss preparation of a Convention for the protection and sustainable management of the Caucasian mountains.

5. International Partnership for Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions

5.1. IYM provided the opportunity to launch the International Partnership for Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions - a major global effort to help the millions of poor people who depend on mountain ecosystem for their survival. UNEP, together with FAO and the Government of Switzerland, are the founding members of this partnership. The partnership was launched at WSSD with the first operational discussions taking place at Bishkek. The partnership document was recently distributed by the Swiss Government as an official UN document (see annex).

5.2. Under the overall umbrella of this Partnership, UNEP is requested to lead efforts on: networking and regional agreements, including the proposed Network of the Mountain Development States and Regions; transboundary cooperation in the Carpathian, Central Asia, Caucasus, Altai, African and Latin American mountain ranges, including a proposed Mountain Protected Areas Network; private-public partnerships, including the one with the World Economic Forum on "Water and Mountains Initiative" and assessments, such as Mountain Watch and the Mountain Atlas.

Follow-up activities to implement outcomes of IYM

As agreed with the major partners, and reflected in the Bishkek Mountain Platform and the new UN GA Resolution A/Res/57/245 on mountains adopted on December 20, 2002, UNEP will work together with partners to ensure follow-up to address the environmental aspects of sustainable development of mountain regions under the auspices of an interim Secretariat for International Partnership, with generous support of the Governments of Switzerland and Italy. An MOU with FAO to define roles and responsibilities for the International Partnership for Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions and other IYM follow-up activities will be prepared.

During the first four months of 2003, two meetings of partners will be organized in Switzerland by SDC with the support from the UNEP Mountain Programme and FAO IYM unit to elaborate the *modus operandi* of the International Partnership, including institutional and financial aspects. On the basis of these consultations, UNEP's Mountain Strategy for the follow-up to IYM will be updated to reflect agreements reached among partners based on expected additional extra-budgetary financial contributions from donors.

UNEP will convene three regional workshops in Latin America, Africa and Eurasia to identify best practices for the sustainable development of mountain areas in each region and to build regional partnerships for the Mountain Watch Process.
