

**THE WMPA'S CONTRIBUTION  
TO THE RIO 2012 CONFERENCE**

In preparation for the RIO 2012 Conference, the World Mountain People Association is presenting a summary of papers and proposals that are the result of much hard work. Meetings were held between the communities and key players of mountain regions in more than 40 countries. Regional meetings also took place on three different continents (the Andes, Himalayas, North Africa, Central Africa, East Africa, and Southern Africa). These meetings drew on scientific studies as well as the experience and expertise of institutions working in mountain regions and development NGOs. To begin, the WMPA and its representatives would like to present the following observations:

**I. EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT: A PREREQUISITE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Despite differences in culture and background, mountain populations the world over share a **common identity**, united by their know-how, adaptability, and the specific practices that allow them to live in territories that are as rich spiritually as they are materially. They are **proud** to have created cultures and civilizations that are a valuable asset to our world, even though they are all too often unknown or treated with contempt. They are **proud** of having diversified their surroundings, thereby **increasing** the very **biodiversity** they are too often wrongly accused of endangering.

Nevertheless, **10 years after the International Year of Mountains (IYM) in 2002**, countless mountain communities still remain culturally, socially, and politically marginalized. Mountain populations are only taken into political consideration when dealing with the war against poverty, a task largely assigned to international aid organizations. National legislation and international regulations impose education and rural development standards, thus failing to recognize the contribution of mountain populations and forcing on them a set of cultural, economic, technical and management standards unsuitable to their environment. This ultimately leads to a loss of ancestral practices, skills, and knowledge. The unfair and ruthless economic competition of the world's dominating economies also contribute to the problem.

Because of economic globalization, demographic growth, and mounting ecological concerns –in particular global warming, which is especially noticeable in the mountains– the natural resources found in mountain regions (water in all its states, minerals, diverse plants and animals, and recreational sites) have become increasingly vital to the current growth model. As a result, there is a concentration of economic activity in the often coastal cities close to the mountains, and the populations of these cities swell as people fleeing difficult living conditions migrate there in search of better opportunities.

- Productivist modernisation treats the mountains as a sort of *hinterland*, a reservoir of resources and labor. Furthermore, the countries and regions concerned consider the increasingly marginalized populations inhabiting these territories to be more of a burden than an asset. Even when they are not being plundered outright, mountain populations possess only very little power, since any decisions regarding the exploitation of natural resources are made by national or multinational companies with the consent of the State and without any regard for the residents. The communities therefore do not benefit from the exploitation and privatization of natural resources, which are monopolized and commercialized to meet the needs of non-mountain economies: mines, hydrocarbon, water and dams, forests, tourism, etc. In the last few years, mountain regions such as those found in the American Andes and the Indian Himalayas have seen this phenomenon grow, spurred on by global growth and the ensuing demand for basic goods.
- In the past, **environmental policy** has consisted primarily of creating national parks. However, the populations living in these so-called protected areas have been excluded from the process of managing them, and they have also been refused the right to use these richly biodiverse areas to create their own natural reserves. Policies are still often decided upon and enacted in violation of usage rights, especially ancestral property rights. The natural parks in India or South Africa are examples of this.
- The agricultural, pastoral, and forestry practices used to manage the land are a part of mountain culture. They not only provide the resources necessary to live in these regions, they also secure continued access

to these resources, ensuring the communities' long-term survival. These activities are still the most important source of employment and income for mountain people. They also ensure group membership at a time when members of the population are increasingly travelling between large urban centres and their home territory, pursuing economic activities in both places. The potential of these systems governing production and community life is all too often underestimated or simply ignored by the authorities.

- These systems, born of the passing generations of mountain people, are only rarely supported by State policy, and they desperately need specific, targeted help such as technical support and research, market access, access to credit, promotion of mountain products, etc. The practices and standards by which communities sustainably manage the region's resources are not recognized and, in some cases, they are even denied to exist.
- Mountain communities are rarely able to handle **tourism**, which often contributes to the **destructurization and folklorization of their cultures**. In most cases, tourism merely acts as an easy and artificial substitute for what is really needed: policies that truly aim to create innovative industrial and artisanal jobs. Cultures are further diluted by the absence of or even ban on using the maternal language in education.
- The **process of decentralisation** currently underway on a worldwide scale has made mountain regions even more fragile while driving the boom of urban centres, thus widening the already large gap in equality. The traditional lifestyles and community organization of mountain people, which may sometimes involve stepping over administrative boundaries, are not taken into account. Many newly elected officials lack **technical and administrative training**. Many regional government officials have little knowledge of their regions and the societies that live there.
- Lastly, only very rarely have States made any of the **necessary adjustments to the national budget** that help isolated, rural mountain regions.
- Because the isolated locations and geological constraints result in **additional investment costs**, mountain regions lack infrastructure (roads, railroads, post offices, telephone lines, and Internet connections), basic social services (access to water, health centres, schools), and diversified employment opportunities (industrial jobs, jobs in the service industry).
- Certain mountain populations have been **criminalized** because they **cultivate "illicit crops"** such as coca in the Andes, cannabis in North Africa, and poppies and hemp in Asia. The programs aimed at eradicating these crops displace millions of mountain people, particularly in Colombia and the Andean countries.
- Because of the growing inequalities on both a regional and human level, mountain populations live in some of the most extreme poverty known on this planet. In a number of cases, they are forced to leave their homes in order to survive, migrating close to cities on the coast or the plains. Some also head north: the United States for Andean populations, Europe for North African and Sub-Saharan African populations, and the Far and Middle East for Himalayan populations.
- In addition, all of these processes are leading to violent conflicts in mountain regions. Worldwide, the most violent conflicts occur in mountain regions.

In conclusion, we stand against the idea that mountains are free to be looted for the sake of an inevitable modernity that is taking place at the expense of a large number of our planet's regions and communities. Globalization has given rise to an approach that, while concentrated on preserving mountain regions (without, however, protecting them from overexploitation), fails to take into account the specific issues surrounding the development of the men and women living there. It therefore appears that this approach has considerably weakened mountain regions and populations everywhere in the world. And yet, mountain populations include almost one billion people. Furthermore, mountain territories cover 35% of the surface area of the world's continents, and they provide the resources necessary for half of the planet's inhabitants to survive.

The challenge facing us is therefore to modify our extractivist behavior by adopting a more balanced view of territories and their communities, and by making **equitable and sustainable development** a priority. This development must take root in the idea that mountain regions and communities are able to play an important role in the ecological and social transition our planet so desperately needs. We need to bring forth a new concept of local and global governance.

## **II. COMMUNITIES AND TERRITORIES: INSTITUTIONS FOR MANAGING MOUNTAIN ECOSYSTEMS**

### **1. Community Institutions**

Mountains offer up a trove of natural resources whose richness is increased by a gradation of the slope over short distances. Humans have taken advantage of this by domesticating various crops, and the natural biological diversity of mountains has been constantly enriched through man's skills and his ability to adapt to his surroundings. Mountain populations have organized themselves into communities that manage their

territory according to rather diverse cultural traditions, which are shaped by the possibilities and limitations of their environment as well as their own unique histories.

These traditions have accompanied the cultures and civilizations that engendered them for thousands of years, proving that they can stand the test of time. This is possible because they allow communities to manage complex ecosystems by inventing forms of government that are able to evolve (and often based on the principles of participative democracy). Communities have succeeded in creating a system of standards that allow them to govern territorial organization and the use of resources on various levels and over long periods of time.

Mountain communities have successfully taken advantage of the complementary natures of agricultural, forestry, and pastoral production. They have strongly modified their environment in order to live off their labor-intensive efforts, for instance by creating terraces that control the distribution and use of water, thus increasing production and diversity.

Mountain territories are therefore not only the setting but also the product of all the activities that link communities to their environment and that allow these communities to adapt to constant social change. Communities must carry on their activities for the benefit of the whole world. Given the present homogenizing effect of globalization and the future ecological challenges we will be confronted with, these communities, with their potential in human and cultural diversity, will be an asset to our planet.

Indeed, communities living on the plains, modern technology, and science have all benefited from the agricultural practices passed on by mountain communities. Even today, mountains still offer a wide range of high-quality products and services as well as a balanced lifestyle that are the product of the culture and its environment. It is therefore important for large cities on the plains and in the mountains to reconnect with their territories, establishing a close link that fosters exchange.

## **2. Mountain Territories and the Green Economy: An Ecological and Social Transition**

The Rio 2012 Conference is highlighting a new objective for our planet: a well-governed Green Economy.

We are convinced that the development model of the North is unsustainable, and that the poorest developing countries must go about the process of developing in an entirely new way, essentially by making use of renewable energy sources. However, this does not exonerate Northern countries, who represent 20% of the global population but consume 80% of the energy produced. They will still need to significantly change how they consume energy and where they get their energy from.

We therefore recognize that the Green Economy concept is important, provided that it also considers previously neglected issues exploring the link between high-synergy activities and the characteristics of the environment in which they are carried out. Furthermore, we would like to see an assessment of the **ecological deficiencies found in the plains and Northern countries**. Through the idea of a Green Economy, our global society is rediscovering its interest in and concern for mountain areas and ecosystems. Seemingly new policies are being enacted that have in fact been the foundation of mountain economies for thousands of years. This approach recognizes the advantages that mountains have to offer. It also values mountain resources by acknowledging that the uniqueness of mountain products stem from specific environmental characteristics as well as the culture and skills of the population.

The other aspect of the Green Economy is the issue of monetary compensation for ecological goods and services. "Ecological services" are being monetized, a development justified by the great ecological challenges facing our planet as a result of unsustainable development models. This monetization is taking place particularly through the carbon market and other compensation mechanisms between the North and the South. Therefore, as soon as new international agreements are signed, still more sectors of activity offering new products and services are launched internationally, and, through complex mechanisms linking North and South, they become available all the way down at the local level.

In an economically difficult situation, people seize these new opportunities as they become available in all different sectors: water, forests, and biodiversity especially. The market behavior of these sectors does not take into account regional policies or sustainable development. Nor does it consult the communities involved, who have a stake in the matter because of their function and contributions to the mountain and the planet as a whole .

The WMPA believes that mountain communities cannot participate in a Green Economy that puts a price on ecological goods and services. Technology cannot evolve to become more ecologically sound if living beings and ecosystems are given a market value.

This notion is more restrictive than that of sustainable development, because it does not explicitly address social objectives. It only broaches technological changes pertinent to certain key players. But social change cannot be limited to just technological transformation, as necessary as that may be. Technical transformation

cannot be an end in itself. As we consider what is at stake in the emergence from the current state of crisis, it becomes clear that what we really need is an ecological and social transition that addresses environmental and developmental issues together, as proposed by the French NGOs that make up the group Rio+20.

The WMPA wishes to use Green Economy tools in order to reevaluate, within a new framework, the importance of collectively managing territories. This new framework would view economic activity as linked to the surrounding environment. We want to show that mountain communities have always been providers of "ecological services", and that their knowledge and skills have allowed them to properly manage shared resources on different territorial levels. We also want to underline that it is in the interest of global society for these communities to remain on their lands and to live there with dignity.

However, the new understanding of global development that our planet so desperately needs should not be determined by the notion of sectoral compensation, particularly between North and South. The role of mountain communities must be valued through truly equitable, integrated territorial development policies. These policies should be applied at all levels, from mountain ranges to drainage basins, to the communities themselves. What we do not want is to add new inequalities to the already existing ones by attributing extrinsic value to such elements of mountain production as forests and rivers. For example, paying communities money according to the size of the forests found on their territory puts other communities, who have no forests but who reduce their carbon footprint by farming close to home (thus reducing the need for transportation), at a disadvantage. Moreover, such an initiative would destabilize agropastoral production by encouraging populations to increase forest size to the detriment of farmland. More people would migrate to cities, leading to higher population density and pollution in urban areas. All this would take place in a world that is already burdened by a shortage of food.

**With Rio coming up, the Green Economy's goal is to try out new approaches with communities on their territories, as long as compensation mechanisms meet the following conditions:**

- **They must finance the integrated development of mountain territories in an equitable fashion and on all levels,**
- **in accordance with the terms laid out with/by the communities concerned.**
- **They must not be the only financial instruments used, since they are by no means sufficient to replace the need for integrated development policies for these territories.**

The goal of Rio 2012 is to pave the way for an ecological, cultural, and social transition, giving us the tools to face the difficulties that will come up as we rethink our notions of development and environment. To do this, the world needs living mountains. Furthermore, because they have often been at the forefront of sustainable development despite their difficult living conditions, we must recognize the past, present, and -hopefully- future role mountain communities play in fostering development.

### **3. Mountain Territories: Common Resources and Heritage**

Instead of the notion of "ecological services" the WMPA prefers to speak of "common resources" when describing the way mountain communities manage the resources found on their territories. Populations organize themselves into communities of "users" of these resources, which thus become collective property.

Common resources may be natural resources, but also goods that are produced, maintained, and shared by users grouped into a "community" whose size and nature may vary. This assumes that community members are actively participating and that rules for using resources are determined in particular according to traditional know-how. Globally, common resources such as water, soil, forests, oceans and seas, as well as education and health, are being monopolized like never before. Instead of preserving them, this trend endangers the populations that depend on them and throws off the ecological balance of our planet.

Experience shows that a territory most often benefits more from the efforts of the community that uses it than by protective measures imposed by the State against the will of the community.

Finally, the term "natural resources" carries the notion of nature being instrumentalized and exteriorized. It is tainted with the anthropocentrism characteristic of Western civilization. The notion of "common resources", however, is an alternative that allows different cultures to discover a common language. By insisting on the role of human and social communities, the term "common resources" facilitates dialogue between civilizations.

**We would like to see the type of governance proposed in Rio, particularly the establishment of a World Environmental Organization, to be organized with the participation of mountain communities. These communities would contribute, in a decentralized way, to defining global shared resources. This governance should also support all further initiatives that, through a decentralized approach, are based on communities of users collectively reappropriating common resources. These communities of users, although autonomous, would thus be closely linked to global society.**

**To this effect, we propose favouring integrated mountain policies, accompanied by the institutions necessary to successfully manage common resources at all territorial levels. We must also continue to pursue our goal of re-establishing equity in economic and social development, which is a condition of sustainability. Attaining our Millenium Development Goals must remain a priority as long as we do it through specific policies that centre around the life of territories and communities as well as the territorial management skills these communities have acquired and organized.**

#### **4. Innovation: Social and Political Initiatives**

No matter what the cultural and socio-political context is, this requires innovative governance. Such governance must be based on recognizing the cultural diversity and autonomy of communities as well as their skill in managing territorial resources.

The WMPA wants to share and unite the political and social experiments currently being conducted by mountain countries and organizations:

- The concept of "buen vivir" in the Andean countries,
- Bhutan's "Gross National Happiness",
- The cohesion and territorial diversity policies promoted by mountain organizations in Europe (AEM)
- Several national initiatives, such as the Federation of Community Forestry Users in Nepal, and local initiatives, such as the projects of the Institution Patrimonial du Haut Béarn in the French Pyrenees.

Mountain societies have always taken advantage of the complementary nature of different territories either by using the resources directly or by engaging in trade. This has required and encouraged them to be innovative, a now integral characteristic of territorial governance. These societies are therefore unparalleled sources of skill and potential resources as long as they are legitimate, recognized actors in political decision making.

**Regulations and world governance must be refashioned to reflect this interdependency. This must be done through ascending subsidiarity, overall wealth redistribution and by balancing out certain elements vital to achieving equitable development (basic services, infrastructure, non-territorialized economic activities, etc.). If these conditions are met, communities will be able to make the mountains their home and their source of sustenance. They will be able to face new challenges such as demographic evolution, migration, mobility between cities and the countryside, and adjustments due to global warming.**

Enacting these integrated mountain policies is all the more urgent now that local demographic evolution and climatic upheaval have increased pressure on mountain regions while technical innovation is sometimes slow to catch up. The current evolution and projected climate changes will only increase this imbalance.

#### **5. Climate Change and the Mechanisms of the Carbon Market**

**Several mountain ranges seem to be headed for a true climatic disaster, judging from climate predictions. This becomes especially apparent when you realize that the limits set forth by the IPCC cannot be respected and that the increase is double the average in mountain regions. Some communities may benefit from this, but we know that the technological adaptation and investment in infrastructure required by the increasing climatic catastrophes will be too much for local community management to handle. This is especially true when it comes to water.**

**In the near future, glaciers will have disappeared, considerably affecting the availability of water. We have already seen this phenomenon taking place. The competition between different actors (big cities, large-scale agriculture requiring irrigation, and the mining industry) for access to water will become more acute. It is likely that these actors will be given priority, and that the often prodigious sums of investment money will be directed their way. It is therefore even more important that mountain populations be included in decisions and projects, as they are particularly vulnerable due to their limited resources.**

**The Mountain Partnership, created for RIO, should also be an active participant in important negotiations, especially during the Conference on Climate Change.**

### **III. TOOLS AND ACTION PLANS FOR MOUNTAIN REGIONS**

In order to respond to these issues, which affect all humans on an economic, demographic, cultural, and environmental level, the WMPA, as a key player representing mountain populations, believes that mountain regions need a reference document addressing all of these areas. The Association proposes to update Chapter 13 of Agenda 21, established during Rio 92. This document remains a fundamental step towards the recognition of mountain territories and the need for a systematic, comprehensive approach to solving problems endangering our global ecosystem.

This new document will outline the policies, tools, and actions needed to address the specific local and global needs of mountain territories.

Certain points, which the WMPA supports, are especially important for mountain organizations:

1. **The implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Numerous such indigenous peoples live in mountain regions. This declaration is founded on the principles of human rights, collective rights, and the rights of communities.**
2. **The constitutional recognition of the uniqueness of mountain territories by the States and regions concerned. Also, the adoption, in conjunction with the local population, of "mountain laws" that are adapted to the various needs of mountain ranges.**
3. **Social and economic rights and regulations for these territories, shared on a national and global level. The goal is to proactively change the unequal treatment of these territories while taking into account their natural characteristics.**
4. **Cultural and legal recognition of the forms of governance, inherited or chosen, with which these territories are administered.**
5. **The rights that come from this full acknowledgment that culture drives governance.**
6. **Mountain communities, often plundered, are demanding the right to be consulted on the use of natural resources. They are also calling for policies to determine how profits are to be split up between the different territorial levels. Indeed, one of the most critical current issues is the relationship between mountain populations and the global actors who are interested in exploiting the natural resources largely concentrated in mountain territories and who make up the territorial richness of communities (mining, large hydroelectric projects, etc.).**

### **IV. MEANS AND FINANCING**

1. States should allocate **funds in their national and regional budgets** to implement these specific policies and investments projects for mountain territories. This should be done by making the right adjustments on a national level and by using money earned by exploiting the natural resources found in the mountains.
2. The global economy's key players, such as multinational companies exploiting water, energy, hydrocarbon, minerals, and forests, should be taxed on their activities. Along with allocated budgetary funds, such taxes will help finance international cooperation efforts and programs.
3. A long-term **international action plan for mountain regions** benefitting their populations should be defined in order to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). This program would be funded through the carbon market. Furthermore, it would run along territorial –not sectoral– lines, and it would not rely entirely on monetization, as already discussed above.

### **V. ADAPTING ORGANIZATIONS TO RESPOND TO MOUNTAIN REALITY**

The WMPA's role is to bring the concerns of the various mountain territories into the international arena and to speak about them with global actors and other sectors of society.

- The Mountain Partnership
- Social Forums
- The World Environmental Organization and RIO (In order to ensure that the World Environmental Organization –a proposed new UN agency designed to satisfy the requirements set forth at the Rio Conference– is acceptable to mountain communities, the WMPA insists that it be not be exclusively intergovernmental. Rather, it should be created so that territorial representatives can work side by side with environmental experts. In addition, it should be linked to other agencies, especially the FAO, etc.)

Our goal is to obtain acknowledgment of and respect for the legitimacy of the following requests made by mountain populations:

1. **The participation of mountain organizations in the Intergovernmental Conference on Climate Change is indispensable given the strong impact of climate change on mountain regions.**
2. **Recognition of the specific nature of mountain economies and products by the World Trade Organization. The WTO should also recognize the specific national and regional policies already enacted and those still needing to be put into place to protect these economies and products.**
3. **The creation of a Mountain Department within the FAO. This department, together with regional centres, researchers, NGOs, and international observers, would be responsible for coordinating international action for the benefit of mountain populations.**
4. **The acknowledgment that the growing of crops declared to be illicit for drug use is an issue pertaining to mountain regions. The populations of these primarily mountainous territories are often criminalized without consideration for the root of the problem (poverty, disparities in regional development, lack of governance).**
5. **To this effect, the WMPA will continue working with organizations created by producers of these crops. Along with other partners, these organizations held the First Global Forum of Producers of Crops Declared to be Illicit, and then went on to attend the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on drugs (UNGASS 2009).**
6. **The WMPA supports the demand to decriminalize the cultivation of hemp and coca leaves for their traditional (chewing), artisanal, cultural, and pharmaceutical uses, as well as any potential industrial uses. We also back the efforts to fight the trafficking of drugs made from these crops, the decriminalization of producers, and the redefinition of the UNODC's so-called alternative policies.**

#### **VI. APPENDICES**

- **PROPOSAL FOR CHAPTER 13 - RIO 2012: MOUNTAINS FOR THE WORLD**
- **WMPA ACTIONS (CHARTER OF TERRITORIES)**
- **CHARTER OF WORLD MOUNTAIN POPULATIONS (QUITO 2002)**
- **DECLARATION OF THE FIRST GLOBAL FORUM OF PRODUCERS OF CROPS DECLARED TO BE ILLICIT (BARCELONA 2009)**
- **OLORON MANIFESTO "LIVING MOUNTAINS FOR A MORE HARMONIOUS WORLD" (2010)**