



RARA Declaration on Climate Change and Environmental Threats: Protecting Lives and Livelihoods of Mountain People

31 October 2014, Rara Lake, Nepal



In collaboration with:

act:onaid



DDC Mugu



ICIMOD



Promoter:



Preamble:

Following the recognition of the Mountain Agenda in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) 2012 and a strong need to advocate mountain issues post-Rio in the international processes such as UN conferences on climate change, biodiversity and desertification as well as development processes such as crafting of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Post-2015 Development Agenda, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (MOSTE) and the Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre (KIRDARC) Nepal organised a national conference attracting wide range of public - civil society, political leaders, local communities, indigenous people, women, dalit, development practitioners, researchers, media, private sector, national and international agencies, governmental and non-governmental organisations and development partners aiming at developing national momentum on Mountain Agenda in the context of changing climate.

Declaration:

We, over 200 representatives of different group of society meeting in Rara, Karnali region at the *National Conference on Climate Change and Environmental Threats: Protecting Lives and Livelihoods of Mountain People, 30-31 October 2014* have come together to put forward the **RARA Declaration on Climate Change and Environmental Threats: Protecting Lives and Livelihoods of Mountain People in Nepal Himalayas** to start Mountain Agenda momentum in Nepal through effective engagement of civil society in a coordinated approach and eventually enhancing visibility of mountain issues in the global processes, thus enabling better life and livelihood of mountain people in harmony with nature:

1. We recognize that the mountains cover around 25% of the earth's land surface and host about 13% of the world population and are perennial providers of essential ecosystem goods and services to billions of people living in the mountains and downstream, who are increasingly experiencing the impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, and desertification and land degradation. The negative consequences of globalization are heightened by fragility, remoteness and complexity of mountains, making mountain communities even more susceptible to climate change and other natural disasters, which keep them isolated from the global economy.
2. We recognize that Nepal, with 77% land recognized as high hills and mountains that are rich in bio-diversity and natural resources, is ranked as the fourth most climate vulnerable country in the world, despite releasing only 0.025 percent of global carbon emissions. Those emissions emanate largely from a few economically active areas far away from the mountainous areas.
3. We recognize the critical role pro-poor local institutions, media and communities can play in building capacity of mountain people, conserving and wisely utilizing natural resources, encouraging rights based approaches and including community property rights in the new constitution of Nepal, promoting participatory democratic governance, plurality and

diversity enhancing socio-economic and cultural rights as basic human rights, fostering multi-level, cross-sectorial cooperation, and respecting, recognizing and utilizing human and natural capital in mountain areas in enhancing life and livelihood of mountain people while improving their resilience against negative impacts of climatic and other socio-environmental changes and benefitting from positive opportunities.

4. We recognize that when the mountain areas, communities and issues are under-researched and overlooked, the mountain communities are largely underprivileged, and often ignored, avoided or excluded from mainstream development initiatives. Hence we urge for the formation of a national mechanism that includes mountain communities in all development initiatives - from planning to implementation, on equitable basis with special provisions developed for highly marginalized mountain communities such as in Karnali and Northern belt of Nepal.
5. We urge the Government of Nepal and the international agencies to advocate for compensation mechanisms for the loss we are bearing due to accelerated climate change effects. Such mechanism should be realized in the form of increased climate funding, technology transfer and capacity building of national to local institutions and people. We believe present funding mechanisms in Nepal for achieving most development goals and addressing environmental issues, such as climate change needs to be increased to 80% to be spent at local level as envisioned in the NAPA document with appropriate legal mechanisms.
6. We urge the Government of Nepal and development partners to start separate funding window with decent financial resources to boost adequate production and use of alternative energy resources needed for local manufacturing and tourism industries as well as to promote organic agriculture and animal husbandry, mountain specific climate adaptive technologies and practices, pro-poor sustainable tourism, carbon neutral transports - gravity ropeways, cable cars and electric vehicles , establish markets, set-up locale-specific intermediate processing units in each mountain pocket areas, promote e-commerce. Local Communities should be encouraged in planning and implementation of such initiatives including provisions for public-private partnership with balanced planning approach – top-down as well as bottom-up.
7. We commit to establish a Climate Change Adaptation Learning Centre (CCA-LC) in Karnali aiming to promote long term research on climate change, collect good practices from different parts of the country and eventually promote the proposed centre as a complete learning centre enabling academic and research institutions, civil societies and local communities to research, interact and learn from each other. Communications, Networking and Knowledge Sharing will be an important function of the centre in which mainstream and community media can play important role.



8. We urge the Government of Nepal to promote Karnali and Northern belt of Nepal as a prime destination for nature tourists with clear plans and adequate public participation maximizing economic benefits to the local communities and enhancing needed local infrastructure. To start this process we urge the government to prepare Sustainable Tourism Master Plan promoting tourism in Rara linking it with Sinja and Dullu – cultural capitals of western Nepal, Jumla, Khalanga, Badimalika and other neighbouring religious hubs, and Khaptad as well as trans Himalayan landscapes of Dolpa, Humla and other parts of Nepal.
9. We commit to form and foster the Nepalese Civil Society Mountain Initiative (NCSMI) as a development initiative owned by civil society and facilitated by local governments to debate, advocate and ensure sustainable mountain development in Nepal. The initiative will have global linkages through the Mountain Partnership (MP), the Mountain Forum (MF), the Mountain Research Initiative (MRI) and other global mountain players to ensure adequate evidence based advocacy of the Mountain Agenda at global and regional level, and to hold bi-annual sustainable mountain development conference in Nepal and in Asia to promote sharing of knowledge and experiences on mountain development challenges, opportunities and options among the concerned stakeholders. The NCSMI will be represented in National and international forums such as UN meetings on climate change, biodiversity, desertification, Sustainable Development Goals and Post-2015 Development Agenda among others through its membership and in coordination with the Government of Nepal and other global mountain champions such as the MP.

