

**A brief note on Sustainable Mountain Development Summit
under
Indian Mountain Initiative of CHEA**

Inaugurating the Sustainable Mountain Development Summit of the Indian Mountain Initiative (IMI) on May 21, 2011 at Uttarakhand Academy of Administration, H.E. the Governor of Uttarakhand Mrs. Margaret Alva said that in coming years human kind will increasingly depend on mountain resources such as water, bio-diversity and recreation. Raising the concerns of sustainable development in the mountains, she said that as the population grows these very assets would become scarce and their sustainable use would pose a major challenge. With its vast green cover, the Indian Himalayan Region, also acts as a giant carbon 'sink', and forms a considerably large part of the identified Himalayan Biodiversity global hotspot, she added.

The Honorable Governor appealed to the gathering to devote its attention and time on redressing the alarming situation in the Himalayas. She stressed on themes like Rural Tourism and Community Forestry to help rural women be productively engaged. The Governor also expressed her satisfaction over the design and setting up of over 12,000 *Van Panchayats* in Uttarakhand, which for the first time have adequate resources to function effectively. While noting that some of the *Van Panchayats* are exclusively managed by women, the Governor emphasized the need for a clear focus on promoting active involvement of rural women in *Van Panchayats*. On the issue of harnessing of hydro-power, H.E. Mrs. Alva expressed the hope that a way out will be found, experts' views would be carefully heard and common man's issues would also be duly factored in.

Dr. Andreas Schild, Director General, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Nepal stated in the inaugural session that that high level of adaptability of the mountain communities, combining traditional knowledge with modern science and technology is the way forward for sustainable development. He raised the concerns that while there exists a vast knowledge repository, it is not being used effectively for policy formulation. Dr. Schild noted that in the Rio Summit the mountain agenda was

brought to the forefront by European delegation; it is now the turn of developing countries of the Himalayan region to take the agenda forward. In this context, Dr. Schild did mention that the Hindu Kush-Himalayan mountain system is not only important for the 200 million mountain people, it is also essential for the reduction of vulnerabilities downstream. What happens in these mountains affects nearly 1.2 billion people -- one fifth of the world's population -- living in the downstream river basins, and up to three billion indirectly in terms of food and energy production. The impact on climate and weather patterns is felt even further away. Securing food security in South Asia implies ensuring the availability of the water resources of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas, he added.

Addressing the participants, Mr. Manfred Haebig, Principal Advisor, GIZ (German International Cooperation) informed the gathering that GIZ is implementing various developmental programmes all over India including the States of Himachal, Tripura and also Regional Economic Development (RED) Programme in Uttarakhand. It works closely with Central and State governments and other stakeholders in India as well as worldwide on various issues of sustainable development like natural resources management, responsible tourism, agribusiness, capacity building, skill developments, amongst other issues. He stressed on the fact that GIZ considers the issues taken up in this Summit very relevant. Globally, interrelated issues of climate change adaptations, environment, energy and sustainable economic development are focus areas of GIZ. He hoped that this initiative will be a long term sustainable effort towards bringing about relevant policy measures in regional and international cooperation in climate change adaptations.

Participating in the Summit, Dr R K Pachauri, Director General, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) lauded the civil society involvement along with legislatures in this common platform. He lauded Indian government's commitment to address the issues of climate change with focus on Himalayan region which is evident in National Action Plan on Climate Change. He emphasized on collaborative research at global level to address the climate change issues and stated that TERI is committed to address issues of

climate change through its expertise. He stated that a participatory model of adaptation involving local communities is critical in order to achieve the desired results.

Speaking on the occasion Dr. R S Tolia, Chairman of Central Himalayan Environment Association (CHEA), the main organizer of The Indian Mountain Initiative informed that IMI is an initiative of India's citizens, under the aegis of CHEA, to create a Himalayan Development Forum of all 11 Indian mountain states and the hill districts of West Bengal. He pointed out that the preparations for India's 12th Five Year plan have already commenced and the Indian Mountains states need to have new ideas, new initiative and, above everything else, a concept of Sustainable Mountain Development mainstreamed into the planning of Indian mountain states. He said that this summit will hopefully throw up new ideas, new initiatives and a renewed reorientation for the Sustainable Development of mountains in the context of well known "Himalayan Dilemma". He stressed on the need for the Indian Mountain States to have national or regional summit before the international Rio+20 Summit.

IMI Sustainable Mountain Development Summit is being attended by delegates from **Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Uttarakhand**. Delegates from **Germany, Nepal, Switzerland, USA** are also participating in the Summit which are Policy Makers, Civil Society Representatives, Scholars and Academicians from all the concerned eleven Himalayan States of India.

The IMI partners **GIZ, India, HRDI, Gopeshwar, ICIMOD, Nepal, SRTT & NRTT, Mumbai, State Biodiversity Board, Uttarakhand, and UCoST, Dehradun**.

The two day Sustainable Mountain Development Summit of the Indian Mountain Initiative (IMI) of Central Himalayan Environment Association (CHEA) concluded on May 22, 2011. Addressing the second day's Inaugural Session, Mr. P.D. Rai, Member of Parliament, Sikkim lauded the efforts of IMI in organizing the two day Sustainable

Mountain Development Summit. Calling it a timely initiative, Mr. Rai offered to host the next Sustainable Mountain Development Summit in Sikkim in 2012. Mr. Rai emphasized the need for setting up a think tank to deliberate on the unique needs of mountain regions and how they can be addressed best and communicating the same to the formulation process of the 12th Five Year Plan. Such efforts, he expressed the hope, would culminate in the setting up a Ministry for Mountain Development.

The Session was chaired by Mr. Alemtemshi Jamir, Additional Chief Secretary and Development Commissioner Nagaland and Mr. K.S. Kropha, Principal Secretary Planning, Government of Meghalaya. While noting the rapid progress made by Nagaland in promoting tourism through such measures as the Hornbill Festival, Mr. Jamir emphasized the need for external specialists for promoting the tourism sector. He specially noted the need for organization like CHEA in Nagaland. In his address Mr. Jamir said that while there were many positives, there were also areas of concern. He noted these as conflict especially over resources, the need to accommodate the educated – 80% of Nagaland's population is literate – and climate induced migration.

Mr. Kropha lauded the Indian Mountain Initiative for organizing the sustainable Mountain Development Summit, 2011. He noted that Meghalaya lagged behind national average on various socio-economic indicators. He observed that there was scant recognition of the fact that partition of India had adversely affected the economy of North east in general and Meghalaya in particular. He informed the gathering that while Meghalaya has 78% of its area under forest and acts as a carbon sink there is no compensation to the state for this vital ecosystem service.

There were two parallel breakout sessions on day one of the Summit; session **Hydro Power Project in Mountain Regions** and **Climate Change and Adaptation Scenarios in Mountain Regions**.

The consensus on Hydro Power was that while there is no denying that energy is vital for the growth of the country it should not come at the cost of common people and environmental degradation. Towards this end it was concluded that small and micro projects could be the answer to the conflict surrounding Hydro Power Projects. The discussion on Climate Change and Adaptation covered wide ranging themes from Black Carbon to community forestry to payment for ecological services and engaging local communities.

On day two as well there were two parallel sessions **Rural Tourism in Mountain Regions** and **Community Forestry in Mountain Regions**.

While addressing the session on Rural Tourism Mr. Rakesh Sharma, Principal Secretary Tourism highlighted the major issues facing Rural Tourism in the state concerned connectivity and infrastructure. Mr. Rajiv Bhartari, Chief Conservator of Forest – Ecotourism, Forest Department Uttarakhand said that there is a need to market Rural Tourism destination which often go unnoticed.

In the session on community Forestry chaired by Mr. R.B.S. Rawat, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Uttarakhand and Mr. S.S. Sharma, PCCF, *Van Panchayat* Uttarakhand, the importance of Community Forestry was noted and the need for further strengthening Van Panchayats was stressed.

Dr. Pushkin Phartiyal, Executive Director, CHEA mentioned that the movement would be taken to the Eastern Himalayas for the next chapter of the Sustainable Mountain Development Summit under the Indian Mountain initiative of CHEA.

The two days summit concluded with a valedictory session chaired by Prof Girijesh Pant, Vice Chancellor, Doon University and Dr B.S. Burfal, Chairman State Biodiversity Board Uttarakhand.