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The Mountain Program of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

Switzerland's role in mountain development

Sustainable mountain development has a long tradition and special significance in Switzerland. For centuries, local populations have been living in mountain regions in an ongoing struggle with the forces of nature, shaping strategies and policies to achieve balanced, sustainable development. Systems of resource management were steadily improved and modified in the past in response to natural disasters, overuse, and raw exploitation. This led to a relatively high degree of stability in natural and cultural landscapes, providing a basis of subsistence for local populations. Switzerland has a great deal of mountain experience and many instruments for promoting sustainable development in mountain regions.

Conservation of mountain regions in Switzerland as habitats with a variety of protective and productive functions would not be possible without the continuing support of people in the towns and lowlands.

Increasing knowledge and understanding of these interrelations, exchanging experience, and showing solidarity with people in other mountain regions of the world constitute a great opportunity, a stimulating challenge, and an important international task. Switzerland is willing to help fulfill this task through SDC, by participating in the areas of activity described below.

The SDC global mountain core program

Since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, Switzerland has played a very active role in addressing issues related to sustainable mountain development at the global level. All activities focus on promoting efforts to concretize and implement the objectives and proposals contained in Chapter 13 of Agenda 21, particularly in the areas of awareness creation, advocacy, information exchange, and network building. Many challenging forms of cooperation with partners involved in the implementation of the mountain agenda have been established or strengthened.

Profile of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Switzerland's international cooperation agency, is part of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (the Swiss Foreign Ministry). Together with other federal offices, SDC is responsible for overall coordination of development activities and cooperation with Eastern Europe as well as humanitarian aid.

SDC employs a staff of 350 people to carry out its activities in Switzerland and abroad, with an annual budget of CHF 1.2 billion (1999). The agency undertakes direct actions, supports the programs of multilateral organizations, and helps to finance programs run by Swiss and international aid organizations. SDC programs are generally implemented through international agencies, NGOs, universities, and others. SDC takes the role of an initiator, facilitator and coordinator, emphasizing ownership by local stakeholders.

SDC's main activities and products

- Support for publication of *Mountains of the World. A Global Priority*, edited by B. Messerli and J. D. Ives, including translation into several languages.
- Publication of several brochures for the conferences of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD).
- Initiation of regional mountain conferences and collaboration on the conceptual level aimed at implementing the provisions of Chapter 13 through the FAO (UN Task Manager).
- Substantial support for the Mountain Forum as well as global initiation of the African, Latin American, Asian, and European Mountain Forums.
- Support for the journal *Mountain Research and Development* (*MRD*).
- Cooperation with PANOS, an NGO concerned with collection and dissemination of oral testimonies.
- Close cooperation with and support of FAO.
- Production of the CD ROM *Forest Development in the Swiss Alps.*

Results to date can be characterized as highly positive. Chapter 13 has developed a favorable dynamic of its own. At the same time, the Swiss commitment implies a certain obligation to continue the support that we have provided so far. This core program will be continued in the coming years.

The SDC geographical mountain program

Over the last 20 years, SDC has established substantial development cooperation programs with about 20 priority countries. Many are partly or wholly mountainous countries, such as Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan, India, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Over the years, specific sectoral, multisectoral, and integrated programs, focusing on different aspects of sustainable mountain development, have been implemented and supported in all these countries. In addition, related initiatives, networks, partnerships, and international centers such as the International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) were

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established and supported at the regional level. An overview and assessment of this component of SDC's mountain program is underway and will be published in autumn 2001.

The recently launched Central Asian Mountain Partnership Program (CAMP), currently being implemented in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan and to a lesser extent in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, is an example of an SDC regional mountain initiative. CAMP's mission is to promote the sustainable use of renewable natural resources through research and development, capacity building, networking, and communications, with the aim of advancing economic development, social welfare, and ecological sustainability. The program is designed for the next 10–15 years and is supported by SDC's geographical section on Cooperation with Eastern Europe and CIS countries.

The SDC special IYM 2002 Program

Switzerland has supported and enthusiastically welcomed the decision of the UN General Assembly to designate 2002 as the International Year of Mountains (IYM2002). SDC will expand its existing engagements in international mountain development in order to make a major additional contribution to IYM2002, taking an active role in shaping the year's events by pursuing the following aims:

- In order to foster exchange and solidarity—aspects of SDC policy that are of national and international significance to Switzerland beyond 2002—SDC will make distinctly visible and/or long-term contributions to sustainable mountain development, giving particular emphasis to the interface between the national and international levels.
- Activities launched or supported by SDC will be organized to provide a series of highlights throughout the year, with closely corresponding outputs, in correlation with a national and international agenda. Such activities will also be integrated and coordinated with appropriate measures for providing information and making contact with the media.
- Activities related to IYM2002 will be primarily concerned with raising awareness, engaging in advocacy, and building networks. They will take place in Switzerland and abroad and will involve various actors and stakeholders.

Main activities under consideration in Switzerland

- Assessment of SDC's experience with sustainable mountain development. Close cooperation with the press and other media.
- Support for a Swiss National IYM2002 Committee.
- Information and education campaigns in Swiss schools in 2002. Related cooperation with UNESCO and other organizations is under consideration.
- An international workshop in Switzerland (WMS 2001: 30 September–4 October 2001, in Interlaken) on the theme "Mountains of the World: Community Development between Subsidy, Subsidiarity, and Sustainability" (www.wms2001.ch).
- Support for special international activities in Switzerland, such as the activities of the IYM2002 Task Force in the Canton of Valais focusing on water management in mountain areas.
- Special information and media activities, production of a CD on mountain music, support for different cultural events with a focus on mountains.

Activities under consideration at the international level

- Contributions to the meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development in 2002 (CSD 2002) and Rio +10.
- A contribution to CSD 2003: assessment and evaluation of IYM 2002; retrospective view and outlook for the future; book/process devoted to the perspectives of mountain residents and administrative, political, and planning perspectives; close collaboration with the press and other media.
- Initiation of and support for specific activities and special long-term events, above all in Central Asia.
- Continued support for FAO.
- Support for local, national, and regional events in SDC's priority areas.

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