

Report on the 8th Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development

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Report on the 8th Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development

The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development held its Eighth Session (CSD8) in the week of 25 April–5 May 2000 to consider several sectoral themes, one of which was integrated planning and management of land resources. On 25 April, just prior to the high-level part of the session, which was attended by Ministers of Environment, the governments of Switzerland and the Kyrgyz Republic cohosted a side event on “Mountains and Forests.” The purpose of this side event was to help inform and generate discussion among other country delegations, UN agencies, and NGOs present at CSD8 about special aspects of forestry, land use management, and policies in mountain areas. Three guest speakers presented mountain publications and provided the more than 80 attendees with perspectives on mountain experiences from both developed and developing countries. Staff from The Mountain Institute and TMI’s Mountain Forum Global Information Server Node supported the efforts of the Swiss and Kyrgyz delegations to promote and organize the side event, lining up guest speakers and providing supporting documentation such as Mountain Forum e-conference reports. Events such as this one allow the experience contained in the Mountain Forum discussion lists to reach the hands of country delegations and policymakers at CSD.

Switzerland has been a strong and consistent advocate for mountains at the UN dating back to events prior to the Earth Summit in 1992. The Side Event was coordinated by Mr. Olivier Chave, Counselor at the Permanent Swiss Observer Mission to the United Nations. Ambassador Jean-François Giovannini, Deputy Director-General of the Swiss Agency for Development

and Cooperation, and Ambassador Elmira P. Ibraimova, Permanent Representative of the Kyrgyz Republic, co-chaired the “Mountains and Forests” Side Event and introduced the following three guest speakers.

Prof. Hans Hurni of the University of Berne presented (1) a brochure edited at the Centre for Development and Environment at the University of Berne, entitled *Mountains of the World: Forests and Mountains*; (2) a CD-ROM on mountain forest degradation featuring a comparative study of Switzerland and Nepal, and (3) the first issue of the journal *Mountain Research and Development* in its new format.

Dr. Lhakpa Sherpa from The Mountain Institute, Nepal and Tibet Autonomous Region of China, presented the report of the Mountain Forum e-conference on “Mountains, People, Forests and Trees: Strategies for Balancing Local Management and Outside Interests.”

Owen D. Lynch, Esquire, from the Center for International Environmental Law, Washington, provided the third guest presentation on the publication “Mountain Laws and Peoples: Moving Towards Sustainable Development and Recognition of Community-Based Property Rights.” This report includes the results of the Mountain Forum e-conference on “Mountain Policy and Law.”

During the second week of CSD8, country delegations finalized their decision, which included two specific directives related to mountains:

1. Governments are urged to adequately plan and manage land resources in mountainous areas and associated lowlands, whose ecological processes are highly interdependent, and which are

crucial for the integrated management of watersheds. In this regard, Governments and other mountain key players are also urged to recognize that small-scale livelihood systems are best suited to the niche economies that characterize fragile and complex mountain environments; and

2. In cases where general use of mountain resources occurs, Governments are further urged to ensure that a significant proportion of derived benefits is reinvested locally for continued conservation and sound management of these critical land areas by local communities.

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