

Press Release

International Conference of Mountain Countries on Climate Change

5-6 April 2012

Kathmandu

5 April 2012 - The International Conference of Mountain Countries on Climate Change began here today with a vow to step up efforts to find consensus among the mountain countries and work together in the days ahead to meet the challenges posed by climate change.

The two-day conference organised by the Ministry of Environment is being participated in by more than 70 representatives from about 30 mountain countries and representatives of various donor agencies and host of national and international non-governmental organizations.

Addressing the inaugural function, President Dr. Ram Baran Yadav said the mountains all over the world are facing disproportionate impacts of climate change. "Combined with the forces of globalization, continuing environmental degradation and slow socio-economic development, climate change is making life in the mountains in developing countries more difficult," he said.

The President said, "I have also been told about the melting glaciers, and the scenarios ahead. The bottom line is that if we do not act promptly now, we are likely to face more natural disasters, greater food insecurity, and acute water shortages in the future."

Saying that the Mountain Initiative launched by Nepal is a commitment that demands action at the global, regional and national levels, the President stressed on the need to address the common interest of the mountainous countries and regions and the Initiative can provide a framework and platform for them.

"You have a seemingly impossible challenge ahead of you," President Yadav further said. "But I believe having this group of committed and learned delegates from around the world here in Nepal is the first step towards tackling the challenge. It can be done. We can do it collectively."

Addressing a separate session, Dr. Rajendra Kumar Pachauri, Chairman of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), said that some of the worst impacts of climate change will be on women, therefore, they should be put in forefront while developing adaptation and mitigation strategies by any countries.

"The countries within this (South Asia) region have enormous interdependence," he said, "So, they should come up with collective efforts in addressing the environmental issues including the climate change."

The time has come to take initiatives like this to promote collective efforts, he further said. "Because the countries have high stakes to raise the mountain issues and the stakeholders are numerous," he added.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Environment has launched the Nepal Climate Change Support Programme amidst today's conference. The first phase of this Euro 16.5 m (NRs 1.8 billion) programme aims to reduce the vulnerability of two million women and men in the Mid and Far West of Nepal where the impacts of climate change are already being felt.

The programme, with funding provided by the EU (Euro 8.6m) and the UK (Euro 7.9m) and technical support from UNDP, will be the first initiative to put the Government's National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) into practice.

Krishna Gyawali, Secretary at the Ministry of Environment, said, "This programme is the first to put Nepal's Climate Change Policy and NAPA into action, ensuring that at least 80 percent of resources reaches the local level where it is desperately needed."

The Ministry of Environment led programme will also be the first to help communities in the Mid and Far West implement most urgent and immediate adaptation actions included in the NAPA through the National Framework on Local Adaptation Plan for Action. The actions include support for irrigation, landslide and flood protection, access to clean energy and introduction of more climate resilient crops.

The first phase of the programme will focus on 14 Districts in the Mid and Far West of Nepal which the NAPA identified as the most climate vulnerable requiring urgent support. The districts are Humla, Mugu, Dolpa, Bajura, Jumla, Jajarkot, Rukum, Achham, Dailekh, Rolpa, Kailali, Bardiya, Kalikot and Dang districts.

Countries attending the conference:

Nepal, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Uganda, Yemen, Azerbaijan, Bolivia, Chile, China, DR Congo, Georgia, India, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Peru, Qatar, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Uzbekistan, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway, Russia, Switzerland, and USA

Fact file:

- Mountains cover around 25 percent of the Earth's land surface and host about 13 percent of the world population
- Mountains are perennial providers of essential ecosystem services
- Millions of mountain inhabitants are vulnerable to climate change, as fragility, sensitivity and complexity of the mountains further make the populace highly susceptible to climate change
- Climate change further poses risks to people and resources in upstream and downstream
- Nepal, a mountain country with fragile mountain ecology but rich bio-diversity and natural resources, is ranked as the fourth most climate vulnerable country in the world, even though it releases only 0.025 percent of the global carbon emission.

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