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Mountain Tourism Declaration towards Rio+20

Since 1992, when chapter 13 on mountains as fragile ecosystems was introduced in Agenda 21, the demand for goods and services from mountains has grown considerably. Moreover, the ability of mountain systems to provide essential goods and services for all of people and ecosystems is increasingly under threat from climate change, globalization, ongoing land degradation, a chronic lack of sustainable investment and unsustainable pattern of resource use.

CEEweb for Biodiversity, a network of more than 60 NGOs in Central and East Europe, and Mountain Partnership members recognize that despite the progress that has been made in promoting sustainable development of mountain regions, national and international development agendas still treat mountains as marginal environments. As a result, e.g. poverty rates and depopulation are higher than in non-mountain areas. In particular, mountains are increasingly threatened by unsustainable investments, e.g. in tourism infrastructure. After 20 years of declarations, there are only single but no concerted actions in place driven by the United Nations System or Governments responsible for mountain ecosystems.

In the context of a Green Economy, new opportunities for investments by the private sector are emerging in mountain regions, especially in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and ecosystem goods and services. However, innovative institutional arrangements are urgently required to trigger governance models and decision support systems aiming at both the integration of the social, ecological and economic capital at all scales in mountain regions, as well as the actual mainstreaming of mountains into overall national and regional development and conservation processes, such as in the Carpathians and the Alps with a number of legally binding protocols (e.g. on tourism, biodiversity).

Enhancing the global political commitment that translates into increased sustainable investments tailored to mountain regions will directly benefit poor mountain communities and indirectly humanity as a whole. Hence, sustainable mountain development, notably through integrated and socially inclusive policies, as well as low carbon technologies, should have a prominent place in the Rio 2012 agenda and in particular in its final declaration. To achieve these ends strong and united advocacy for mountain issues with tangible results in future UNCSD negotiations is essential.

CEEweb for Biodiversity is an umbrella organization of NGOs in the Central and Eastern European region. Our mission is the conservation of biodiversity through the promotion of sustainable development.