"Promoting Geographic Information and Earth Observation Applications for the Sustainable Development of the Hindu Kush Himalayan region"

1. Background

Mountain geography with its diverse physical, social, and ecological aspects plays one of the most dominant factors influencing mountain development. Activities towards sustainable development in mountain areas must take into account their remoteness and distinct spatial and temporal characteristics and diverse socio-ecological conditions. The dynamics of mountain environments needs to be mapped, modelled, monitored, and analysed at multiple-scales to support policy decisions and devising of appropriate development interventions. It is important to have a common geographic framework as a basis for integrating multiple disciplines and investigating key components of the social, economic, and environmental conditions to enhance our understanding of the complex mountain ecosystem. Unprecedented advances in geo-information and earth observation technologies, and the emergence of geo-information science, provide a viable institutional and technological framework to support informed decision-making.

ICIMOD is one of the first and foremost regional institutions promoting geo-information based solutions for sustainable development in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan (HKH) region. It aims to be an internationally recognised resource centre for geo-information and earth observation applications. It is pursuing its goal through capacity building and networking, integrated geo-data management, development of mountain-specific applications and decision support systems, and acting as a clearing house in the region.

2. Objectives

The two-week e-conference is being organised jointly by ICIMOD and the Mountain Forum Secretariat (MFS) to promote geo-information science and technology for integrated mountain development. It has the following objectives:

- To provide a virtual platform to share knowledge and experiences in the geo-information community by facilitating dialogue among a broad user base in the region and beyond
- To facilitate showcase geo-information applications and decision support tools and methodologies for mountain development
- To help foster a mountain geo-information network by establishing linkages among similar regional and global initiatives
- To sensitise people on the use of geo-information science and technology in mountain development policies and practices

3. Themes

The GIS (geographic information systems) e-conference will initiate discussions on, but not limited to, the following main themes:

i)   *Capacity building and networking:* issues related to human resource development, GIS education and training, distance education and e-learning, regional geo-information network;

ii) *Mountain databases, tools, and methods:* issues related to data sharing policies, status of data in the region, metadata and data standardisation, tools and methodologies for data sharing, and spatial data infrastructure (SDI) for the HKH region;

iii) *Thematic applications and decision support systems:* applications and decision support tools and systems on various thematic areas such as climate change, land cover mapping and land use planning, biodiversity assessment; natural resources management; census mapping; risk and vulnerability mapping; and others with a view to promoting the sharing of case studies, good practices, and lessons learned from the HKH and other mountain regions of the world.

4. Official Website and Registration

www.mtnforum.org

In case you do not have easy access to the Internet, you may request an electronic copy of the registration form by writing to the e-Conference Organising Team at: gis@mtnforum.org