

Mountains and forests make headlines at the United Nations

Emphatic calls were made for mountains and forests to be prominently featured in the Post-2015 development agenda during a 5 February 2014 event at UN headquarters in New York as the 8th session of the UN's Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) wrapped up its 'stocktaking' phase. Panelists representing Bhutan, Peru and Romania outlined efforts in their respective nations to develop mountains and manage forests sustainably for the well-being and livelihoods of their citizens while moderator Thomas Gass, UN DESA Assistant Secretary-General, noted the issues also need addressing at global level. He reminded participants that the topics discussed by the OWG 'bind us together as a global community.'

Co-organized by the Mountain Partnership Secretariat (MPS), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), the governments of Bhutan, Peru and Romania, the side-event showcased the social, economic and environmental contributions of mountains and forests. "In our view, mountains and forests are cross-cutting in nature and touch on every aspect of development – in terms of addressing poverty, enhancing food security, environmental sustainability, climate change and natural disasters," said Ambassador Kunzang Choden Namgyel, Permanent Representative of Bhutan to the UN, who explained that the lives of the Bhutanese people are deeply intertwined with forests, mountains and the larger ecosystem.

"It is essential to strike a balance between forest conservation and use," said Romania's Ambassador to the UN, Simona Miculescu, adding that forests are an integral part of the national economy and the Carpathian Mountains hold enormous potential for sustainable, long-term tourism revenues. Acknowledging the sensitive balance of nature and interconnectedness of all life, which must be reflected in the SDGs, she paraphrased the pioneering conservationist John Muir by saying, "When one tugs at a single living thing in nature, one finds it attached to the rest of the world."

Peru's Director-General for Forest and Wildlife, Fabiola Muñoz Doderó, also drew the link between forests, mountains and livelihoods, or social and economic development in the Andes. Muñoz Doderó, who is leading efforts to conduct a national forest inventory, spoke of the 'holistic' approach needed for development to be sustainable.

Eduardo Rojas-Briales and Thomas Hofer of FAO, who are also heads of multi-stakeholder partnerships – the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and the Mountain Partnership - and Gerda Verburg, Chair of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), affirmed the support of their platforms to UN Member States in determining the priorities, targets and indicators for the SDGs. The three panelists called for including forests and mountains in the SDGs for their invaluable contributions to food security and poverty eradication of our planet.

<http://www.mountainpartnership.org/news/news-detail/en/c/213904/>