

**CSD – 14,
1 May 2006, 3-6 pm, Conference Room 4
Statement by FAO**

It is a pleasure to be with you today to introduce the report, 'The Mountain Partnership: Activities and Achievements'. This was prepared for the 14th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) by the Mountain Partnership Secretariat, hosted by FAO, at the invitation of the United Nations General Assembly at its 60th session in December 2005.

The report provides an update on progress and achievements since the inception of the Mountain Partnership, discusses some of the key challenges facing this Partnership today and provides lessons learned and proposals on how to strengthen the impact and effectiveness of the alliance.

Launched at the WSSD in 2002, the Mountain Partnership was conceived to provide a new platform to improve the well-being, livelihoods and opportunities of mountain people and the protection and stewardship of mountain environments around the world. Its flexible and open structure allows members to tap the wealth and diversity of resources, information, knowledge, and expertise of members, in order to add value to their programmes, projects and activities, to identify and promote new mechanisms for cooperation and to build lasting alliances that will bring positive change to mountain regions, whose populations are amongst the poorest and most disadvantaged on Earth.

As the report demonstrates, the Mountain Partnership has become increasingly operational as a multistakeholder alliance, working toward the sustainable development of mountain areas. Of the approximately 300 registered partnerships in the CSD Partnerships database, the Mountain Partnership is among the biggest, with a total of 133 members. And more members are seeing the value of carrying out activities in the context of the Mountain Partnership as this generally provides greater recognition and new opportunities for developing collaboration and generating funding.

However, despite progress and achievements in some areas, challenges remain. Nearly 4 years after its launch at WSSD, the Mountain Partnership, as is the case with many other CSD Partnerships, is at a critical juncture. At WSSD there were high expectations that new and innovative partnerships would accelerate the implementation of sustainable development policies and actions in the second decade following the Rio Earth Summit. This was surely the case with mountains. But, the reality of governments, inter-governmental and major group organizations, including the private sector, working together to achieve common goals has at times proven to be more challenging, if not elusive, than originally expected.

This report by the Mountain Partnership Secretariat in FAO is not an exhaustive review of what has been undertaken since the launch of the Partnership in 2002.

Rather, it highlights some significant advances, while drawing attention to key issues and challenges that are considered critical to the long-term success of the Mountain Partnership. These challenges involve the uneven level of involvement of members. Communication and networking over geographic and linguistic borders. Greater participation of the private sector. And mobilizing increased levels of funding.

At the Mountain Partnership Secretariat in FAO , we hope that some or all of the issues outlined in the Report will be of interest and value beyond the immediate stakeholders of the Mountain Partnership and will be relevant to the effective development and functioning of other CSD Partnerships .

Thank you.