



Celebrating International Day for Biological Diversity: Biodiversity and Sustainable Tourism

Dear Friends,

Warm greetings on the occasion of **International Day for Biological Diversity!**

The United Nations proclaimed 22 May the [International Day for Biological Diversity](#) (IDB) to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues.

At the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), we celebrate this important day each year with a number of activities. To mark this occasion, I am pleased to share with you a message from ICIMOD Director General David Molden, [Celebrating International Day for Biological Diversity \(IDB\): Biodiversity and Sustainable Tourism](#).

ICIMOD organized a Knowledge Forum featuring presentations on the theme “Biodiversity and Sustainable Tourism in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH)” at its headquarters in Kathmandu on Monday, 22 May 2017. The event also featured panel discussions and a mini cultural show reflecting biodiversity and sustainable tourism, the IDB theme for 2017. All eight regional member countries were represented at the event. Presenters covered various aspects of biodiversity and sustainable tourism in the HKH.

Please enjoy articles and blogs posts highlighting various aspects of biodiversity and sustainable tourism written by ICIMOD staff members Janita Gurung, Anu Kumari Lama, Lipy Adhikary, and Pratikshya Kandel on the occasion.

1. **'Travel responsibly, respect indigenous communities' (May 22 World Biological Diversity Day)**

www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/travel-responsibly-respect-indigenous-communities-may-22-1-world-biological-diversity-day-117052100500_1.html

Vishal Gulati; *Business Standard*; 21 May 2017; Source: IANS

2. **Nature tourism**

www.myrepublica.com/news/20484

Janita Gurung and Anu Lama; *My Republica*; 22 May 2017

3. **Khar's experimentation with Himalayan nettle brings recognition**

www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/khar-s-experimentation-with-himalayan-nettle-brings-recognition-57880

Lipy Adhikari; *Down to Earth*; 16 May 2017

Biodiversity and tourism

<http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2017-05-21/biodiversity-and-tourism.html>

Lipy Adhikari and Pratikshya Kandel; *The Kathmandu Post*; 21 May 2017

You can find more media coverage [here](#).

An array of events at the national and regional levels have been organized in several countries in the HKH to celebrate this day.

In Bhutan, the Bhutan Media and Communication Institute (BMCI) organized a workshop mainly to raise awareness on the important contribution of sustainable tourism to both economic growth and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The programme was organized in collaboration with the Guide Association of Bhutan to create awareness among guides on biodiversity and sustainable tourism, to identify and discuss challenges and opportunities, and to prepare a guideline for tour guides.

In India, ICIMOD collaborated with the Centre for Environment Education (CEE) to celebrate IDB. A programme was organized in Jammu and Kashmir. This included presentations on the local biodiversity scenario, maintaining biodiversity registers, intellectual property rights, ecosystem services, and benefit sharing. The event also featured panel discussions, an exhibition, and a rally.

In Pakistan, the ICIMOD Country Office collaborated with WWF Pakistan to celebrate. A seminar was organized with the theme “Zero Poaching of Snow Leopard”. It aimed to raise awareness on the issue. The programme also sought to raise awareness of the contributions of sustainable tourism to economic growth and to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity at the local, provincial and national levels for mainstreaming mountain biodiversity and to enhance tourism.

Best wishes to you all as we celebrate this important day!



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Biodiversity and Sustainable Tourism

Message from the Director General



The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 1992 ushered in a new approach for the way we plan, deliver, and monitor sustainable development in the mountains. The CBD brought special attention upon biological diversity, stressing that the concept applied to much more than species and their ecosystems: Biological diversity is key to people's relationships with food, water, energy and the environment.

The expanded understanding of biological diversity informs our work in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH), where the lives of mountain people are closely linked with the availability and diversity of natural resources. International Biodiversity Day reminds us of the importance of this relationship.

Promoting tourism in parts of the HKH has emerged as a promising avenue for development, but one that requires careful attention to the landscapes in which communities hope to attract increasing numbers of travelers. While the increased tourist visits will raise income levels and economic opportunity, communities will be challenged to accommodate that visitors sustainably, which is to say, with minimal impact on the resources and environment, including biological diversity.

Striking this balance between promoting tourism while protecting the environment is more difficult than it may appear at first. On one hand, the HKH landscape draws more and more visitors every year, and it behooves us to promote this sector as it can address some concerns about poverty alleviation among mountain communities. On the other hand, the CBD encourages countries to convert more and more land to secure our biological heritage, which might effectively slow or limit tourism-based growth in these areas.

Through our numerous transboundary programmes, such as the Kailash Sacred Landscape Conversation and Development Initiative, ICIMOD has gained much experience in maintaining this balance between development and conversation, bringing dividends to the remotest and poorest communities, but in a manner that ensures that resources and cultural formations will be kept intact for the foreseeable future. This work requires considerable collaboration among local communities, tour operators, government agencies, and local stakeholders.

In the Kailash region, which extends over parts of China, India and Nepal, more than one million visitors are expected to arrive in this area to celebrate the "Year of the Horse." They may walk *koras* (circuits) around Mt. Kailash or take purifying swims in the waters of Lake Manasarovar. Each of these visitors will increase the amount of money spent in the areas, but also augment stress on the environment through an intensified demand for food, water, sanitation, and lodging.

For these reasons, ICIMOD is working hard with stakeholders in Kailash and other transboundary areas to devise “win-win” solutions to accommodate this change in remote and environmentally sensitive areas of the HKH. In Kailash, we recently developed “awareness materials” for tour operators and supporting agencies to promote responsible tourism in the area. We also help local communities design infrastructure – such as waste collection and disposal - to minimize the environmental impact of increased traffic.

In early May this year at a policy-Dialogue Bhutan, India and Nepal governments agreed to cooperate on development of tourism in Kangchenjunga Landscape. ICIMOD is facilitating regional cooperation among three countries on conservation and development of this landscape.

On this International Biodiversity Day, we recognize the need to promote development in ways that assuage the effects of poverty while maintaining a careful and holistic view of biocultural needs and challenges. We renew our pledge to work toward this goal throughout the HKH, where biodiversity and human inhabitation can mature in harmony, promoting sustainable growth and equitable development for all.

With best wishes on the International Day for Biological Diversity.

David Molden
Director General



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