

RESOLUTION

of the International Forum

Sustainable Development of Mountain Territories

On 12–13 October 2023, the International Forum *Sustainable Development of Mountain Territories* organized by the Interparliamentary Assembly of the CIS Member Nations, the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Russian Geographical Society, was hosted in St. Petersburg. The Forum brought together around 500 participants from 14 countries, including eight CIS countries: heads of legislative and executive authorities, representatives of international organizations, business circles, educational and research institutions, and mass media.

The Forum participants *noted* that:

The world's mountain ecosystems, covering more than a quarter of the planet's area, play a significant role in regulating the Earth's life, providing clean water for at least half of the global population, serving as biodiversity hubs and offering habitats for a multitude of peoples. Current global climate changes lead to the degradation of mountain glaciers, disruption of water supplies for millions of people living in mountains, submountain areas and flatlands, and intensify disaster and destructive processes affecting people's living environment. Against the backdrop of these and other, often catastrophic, changes, the issues of mountain peoples' livelihoods have been growing, which causes migration from mountain territories and the increase of social tensions.

Mountain regions of the Central and Northern Eurasia are an important macro-region on the world map with a set of natural, ethno-cultural and political and legal features, which require a strategy to be developed for sustainable development of mountain territories in the context of climate change, smart natural resource management, the protection of unique nature, peoples' livelihoods and culture.

The Interparliamentary Assembly of the CIS Member Nations (IPA CIS) has launched a few initiatives to share practices and knowledge among representatives of mountainous countries of the Commonwealth. In 2020, the IPA CIS Model Law on the Development and Protection of Mountain Territories was drafted and adopted, laying the ground for constructive discussions and the advancement of cooperation between scientists and experts in the field of sustainable development of mountain territories.

The Forum marks an important step in the development of a joint action plan and the decisions along the lines identified during the round tables, panel discussions and work meetings, following up on the recommendations developed there, namely:

in the field of the social and economic development of mountain regions:

— to pay close attention to preserving the living environment and improving the well-being of local communities in mountain areas, including by encouraging investments in mountain infrastructures related to transportation, critical and information and communications technologies, supporting the real economy and folk crafts, establishing and developing regional intellectual property markets, spreading knowledge and building technical capacity for the benefit of local communities of mountain areas, empowering youth through education and

training in the field of sustainable mountain development, increased involvement of research stakeholders in the development and expert assessment of mountain territories development projects, and full and fair consideration of local communities' perspectives in the implementation of these projects;

— to recommend that relevant CIS ministries and agencies consider the possibility of creating research centers on sustainable mountain development, as well as introduce the studies of mountain territories and the life of mountain populations as part of educational frameworks, in particular, to recommend that the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation joined by the Russian Academy of Sciences consider the possibility of creating a mountain research center in the Republic of Dagestan on the basis of Dagestan Federal Research Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences;

— to recommend that public and non-governmental organizations, in particular public chambers of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation, which include mountain territories, step up cooperation with authorized regional government agencies with a view to identify relevant issues of the people living in mountain territories, consolidate efforts to create conditions for the sustainable social and economic development of mountain territories and develop a set of measures to support their inhabitants, with due account of the specific context of particular settlements;

— to recommend that all governance levels take an active part in the preparation of proposals to develop the criteria for the definition of mountain territories and targeted state support measures in the field of development and protection of mountain territories, with due account of their specific context, accessibility, availability of transport and energy supplies, as well as considering the requirements and limitations of the existing modes of protection and economic activity;

in the field of protecting natural environments of mountainous countries:

— to promote the expansion of links across biosphere reserves/ specially protected natural areas (SPNAs), including the development of transboundary protected areas, the conclusion of regional agreements (conventions) in the field of natural/cultural heritage conservation and sustainable development, strengthening cooperation between SPNAs and scientific organizations with a view to promote international research aimed at understanding global change processes and developing models of adaptation to them;

— to consider viable the establishment of the CIS International Alliance of Mountain Protected Natural Areas to ensure sustainable development of mountain regions;

— to recommend the parliaments of the CIS Member Nations to provide legal support for the activities of transboundary and other SPNAs having an international status (UNESCO biosphere reserves, geoparks, transboundary reserves, etc.), and, in this vein, to ask the IPA CIS to develop proposals for national legislators detailing the status and legal regime of such SPNAs, with due account of national and international practices;

— recommend that the IPA CIS explore the possibility of developing model documents on managing the spread of invasive species (including in SPNAs);

— to ask the relevant ministries and agencies of the CIS Member Nations to work in due course on the introduction into the legislative framework of the "geopark" concept, which is necessary for the development of tourism and the conservation of geological, natural and cultural heritage;

in the field of mineral resource management:

— to promote optimization of mineral resource management in the mountains with a view of finding the best trade-offs of traditional extensive and innovative industries, using and developing the innovation infrastructure potential (technological platforms, regional clusters and

technoparks), reclamation of mountain landscapes for recreational purposes, effective interaction of mineral resource management with local subsoil usage modes through state, market and local mechanisms;

— to ask the relevant ministries and agencies of the CIS Member Nations to make provisions on the holding of events dedicated to UNESCO Geoparks, such as the international symposium *UNESCO Global Geoparks: from Idea to Implementation* at the premises of the Yangan-Tau Geopark;

in the field of legal support of the development of mountain territories:

— to promote the sustainable development of mountain territories through comprehensive protection of the constitutional rights of the citizens living there and their social guarantees;

— to pay special attention to the legal support of the traditional life of mountain peoples, the development of entrepreneurship in mountainous areas with balanced preferences and restrictions, the building of favorable legal conditions for investments leveraging the intellectual property economy potential;

— apply and develop the international law practices in the field of sustainable development of mountain territories, in particular, the IPA CIS model lawmaking;

— to recommend that the parliaments of the CIS Member Nations consider the viability of sponsoring dedicated laws as well as state policies aimed at the sustainable development of mountain territories;

— to promote legal support of transboundary biosphere reserves/ SPNAs, including legal support of concluded agreements (treaties, conventions, etc.) in the field of sustainable development and ecology;

— to recommend that the IPA CIS consider the viability of developing a Model Law on the conservation of natural and cultural heritage in transboundary territories;

in the field of ensuring seismic protection and disaster prevention:

— to recognize the need to ensure seismic safety in the process of development of mountain regions and the relevance of improving the existing seismic risk and expected seismic hazard level assessment methodology, especially in urban mountain territories, in the form of detailed seismic zoning and seismic microzonation;

— to promote coordination of actions and exchange of information at all levels on monitoring of natural and manmade hazards in mountain territories of the Commonwealth countries, development of mechanisms for assessment of environmental impacts of natural disasters (earthquakes, volcanic activity, avalanches, landslides, mudflows, etc.) and early warning systems, including in transboundary territories;

— to note the importance of developing innovative scientific concepts for the effective development of submountain and mountain territories, as well as the key requirements, which take into account the specific features of urban development, including structural systems, life support elements, construction technologies in inherent mountainous conditions associated with potential natural disasters, primarily earthquakes;

— to support the idea of creating an international research center with the participation of CIS countries, as well as the idea of creating international seismic test sites in the Trans-Ili Alatau (in the area of the city of Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan) and to replicate this practice to other mountain regions of the Commonwealth countries, to propose the Kazbek Volcanic Center in the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania as a test site for complex instrumental geophysical surveys;

in the field of research backup of sustainable development of mountain territories:

— to stress the importance of conducting fundamental and applied research in the field of development of the methodology and ways of sustainable development of mountain territories, coordination of efforts with academic institutions and the centers of mountain regions of the Commonwealth countries;

— in the context of a tight deficit of data on changes of the nature, population and economy of mountain regions, regular field work and developing a network of observations of changes in glacial-nival and periglacial zones are required, as well as at the interface of mountains and submountain areas, where large-scale changes of land cover, increased population density and increased pressure on natural ecosystems are taking place;

— to consider it necessary to hold regular events focused on studying the specific features of the Central and North Eurasian mountain regions, creating conditions for cooperation and exchange of practices across states, organizations of these regions and international structures, conducting research of the climate change impact on the progress of transformation of land cover and landscapes, as well as the development of mountain regions of Central and North Eurasia;

— to recognize the importance of establishing cooperation networks of scientific and educational centers of mountain regions (Eurasian Scientific Cooperation Network) for exchange of practices, personnel training in the field of mountain research (mountology), spread of modern achievements in ecosystem services assessment and geoinformation modeling;

— to support the strengthening of interaction and the development of scientific partnership across the Commonwealth countries, as well as other countries of the region, in studying vulnerable mountain natural and social and ecological systems: glaciers, mountain forests, settlement and natural resource management frameworks with their traditional mechanisms of adaptation to changes;

— with due account of the outstanding position of the Northern Eurasia's mountains, which include Arctic territories and play an important role in the entire cryosphere of the Earth, it is appropriate to maintain a close connection of mountain research and polar and Arctic research, to develop and strengthen cooperation with organizations carrying out both international and national joint mountain and polar research;

in the field of education and outreach:

— considering the initiative of the Kyrgyz Republic, endorsed by the UN General Assembly, to support the idea of creating a global mountain university, to recommend taking concrete steps to form a network of national and international academic institutions with research laboratories for joint research of mountain communities' livelihoods;

— for the purposes of education and outreach, improving the environmental awareness of the population of mountain territories, as well as unleashing the tourist potential of mountainous regions, to consider of value the creation of a system of regional information portals reflecting the current status of mountain territories in various aspects (geography, ecology, history, ethnography, economy, etc.); in case of availability of specific methodological guidelines, regional branches of national geographical societies (Russian Geographical Society, Tajikistan Geographical) can supervise such portals;

in the field of tourism development in the mountain regions of the Commonwealth countries:

— to support the initiatives to build interstate tourist mountain routes, creation of the Eurasian Alliance of Mountain Resorts, to spread positive practices in implementing mountain tourism development projects in the Commonwealth countries, to develop network educational programs on personnel training for the tourism and hospitality industry of mountain regions of the CIS countries;

- to initiate the development of mechanisms for efficient management of tourist flows in the mountains, with due account of the ecological capacity of landscapes and the capabilities of the social and economic infrastructure;
- to recommend the IPA CIS to promote the building and improvement of the legislative framework on managing the use of green technologies for the development of the recreational infrastructure in mountain SPNAs.

The Forum participants consider it necessary:

- to recognize the role of the Forum as an important platform to discuss the issues of mountain regions of the CIS Member Nations and the entire world;
- to increase the importance of mountain issues in intergovernmental, national and regional initiatives and projects aimed at addressing the problems of sustainable development of mountain territories, avoid sectoral unilateralism and take into account the close links of nature, population and the economy of mountains;
- to support international cooperation and integration of positive global practices in the sustainable development of mountain territories to improve the social and economic well-being of mountain populations and to address the problems caused by climate and geopolitical changes, initiatives on the monitoring and reduction of the risks of natural destructive processes in the mountains, preservation and optimization of the resource and ecological environment for the traditional nature management by indigenous peoples living in mountain territories, protection of biodiversity in mountain regions, developing the network of SPNAs, incl. transboundary networks, in particular, mountain reserves, sanctuaries, biosphere reserves, World Natural Heritage sites located in the mountains;
- to strengthen the cooperation of national agencies for sustainable mountain development with the Mountain Partnership, an international alliance based on the platform of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and with FAO regional offices.
- with due account of the current global challenges, to support efforts on interdisciplinary cooperation and interaction of scientists and policy makers for timely identification of development problems and building mechanisms for proactive adaptation to the new conditions, to promote coordination between sectoral agencies in the field of agriculture, forestry, water management, mineral resource management and other areas for balanced and sustainable development of mountain territories;
- with due account of the gained experience of the Kyrgyz Republic in the development of the national mountain policy, as well as the Republic of Dagestan in the implementation of the regional mountain policy, to recommend the authorities to work on spreading and exchanging these practices in similar mountain regions of the CIS countries;
- to recommend the authorities of the CIS countries to engage actively in the implementation of the UN General Assembly Resolution “Five Years of Action for the Development of Mountain Regions” of 14 December 2022 with further participation in the second Global Mountain Summit in Bishkek in 2027;
- to consider the possibility of discussing mountain issues at the highest governance levels, in particular the State Council of the Russian Federation;
- to recognize as timely the stepping-up of international action in the field of sustainable development of mountain territories, initiated by the IPA CIS, through the preparation and adoption of model legislative acts; to recommend the consistent hosting of conferences and seminars in this field; to support the initiative to hold an international mountain forum on a regular basis.