

The Orem Declaration of Mountain Women

We, the participants of the international “Women of the Mountains” conference, held March 8-9, 2007 in Orem, Utah, USA, under the banner “International Year of the Mountains+5+Rocky Mountain States” within the framework of the decisions of the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit (BGMS 2002), The Celebrating Mountain Women conference (CMW) in Bhutan (2002), and in the context of priorities of the Mountain Partnership, the U.N. Millennium Development Goals (2000) and other leading international instruments advocating universal human rights, gender equality and sustainable development, declare that:

1. **Women play a crucial role in achieving sustainable mountain development worldwide.** They are central to the advancement of the Bishkek Mountain Platform goals, such as protecting mountain ecosystems, eliminating poverty and food insecurity in mountainous areas, and assisting mountain communities in creating conditions in which they can attain their own goals and aspirations.
2. **The best practices and indigenous knowledge of women in sustainable mountain development needs to be encouraged and documented.** Despite experiencing serious challenges and setbacks in mountain life, women continue to prove themselves as very creative and very innovative with undocumented indigenous knowledge in a number of areas. Such positive experiences need to be specially acknowledged and encouraged around the world.
3. **Economic justice needs to be promoted for empowerment of mountain women.** This includes the development of relevant employment skills, promotion of high-value-added products and increased micro-credit loans. Economic justice should be promoted through the support of fair-trade business practices for mountain women, including a policy of equal pay, of equal access to beneficial credits and of female-centered and non-traditional entrepreneurship.
4. **Women in mountain regions will not achieve sustainable and equitable development unless local and national governments create mechanisms to reduce the isolation and the impoverishment of rural women.** Governments shall provide infrastructure that will connect mountain communities with markets and capital. This is particularly important due to the increasing rate of male emigration from many mountain communities and the resulting negative implications on women, children and the poor who remain behind.
5. **It is recognized that mountain women play a key role in forest and environmental conservation.** We advocate the empowerment of women in the care and the conservation of the ecological base and the environment upon which all mountain women and their families depend.
6. **Policies should promote mountain women’s increased access to services.** Legislation and policies should promote and protect women’s rights, including equal access to all aspects of civil life, such as educational resources and new

opportunities given by ICTs, medical and legal services, reproductive rights, and comprehensive disease control, including surveillance, prevention, treatment and management. These efforts must specifically address HIV/AIDS and pandemic influenza.

7. **Discriminatory traditions and cultural practices experienced by mountain women should be abolished.** Laws have to be enforced to protect women and other socially excluded groups from trafficking, violence, slavery, divorce, exploitation, child marriage, emotional trauma, dowry system, widowhood exclusion, property rights, and others, without damaging the traditional integrity. One of the measures to achieve this should be a partnership between governments and civil societies to raise public awareness worldwide and to generate practical actions to prevent it.
8. **It is critical for the improvement of mountain societies that women participate in decision-making processes and play a leadership role.** They have many important skills to contribute, including improving communications and networking, facilitating cooperation in lieu of conflict, post-conflict resolution and giving greater priority to community goods. To achieve this goal, opportunities should be created for women's participation at all levels of the political arena, in the institutions of higher learning, as well as in the business sector. We recognize that empowerment of women is not at the expense of men and benefits the whole community.
9. **The unique contribution of mountain women as mothers who face particular challenges needs to be acknowledged.** Pregnant women and mothers should have access to pre- and post-natal care, accessible insurance, child care, and other health care and employment-related policies that promote the wellbeing of mothers and children by decreasing maternal and newborn infant mortality and morbidity.
10. **Greater attention should be paid to the development of female youth.** Today's female youth must be provided with protection and with encouragement to become tomorrow's leaders and parents. Gender-based discrimination against females before and after birth must be eradicated; and all children should enjoy growing up in a loving family environment and be entitled to parity in education, leadership training, and opportunities for optimal development. International educational exchanges between youth will play an important role in achieving gender equality.
11. **We recognize that in order to promote a peaceful and prosperous society, men and women need to cooperate one with another in mutual respect and on equal terms.** We also recognize that respect and equality must be the key concepts to promote stable and nurturing family life. Therefore, we declare that efforts should be focused on programs which support the integrity of the family

and of parents of both genders, as well as the public promotion of gender equality and mutual respect.

12. **Networking and creation of alliances among mountain women needs to be encouraged.** Exchange of information and best practices among mountain women and communities are crucial to their sustainable development.

In view of this, we the participants of the Women of the Mountains Conference:

- Support the proposal from Utah Valley University (UVU) to convene an international conference on an annual or biannual basis to illuminate problems facing mountain women and their communities, exchange best practices in dealing with them, develop specific recommendations to resolve them and to evaluate the success of alternative approaches.
- Support the proposal to alternate convention sites between Utah and the other mountainous countries around the world, with the aim of identifying and resolving mountain women problems in particular regions of the world.
- Support the preliminary invitation of Albania to be the country to host the next conference on mountain women in 2008 and invite all interested institutions to take part in it.
- Encourage membership in the Mountain Partnership and Mountain Forum in order to strengthen existing alliances on national levels, in particular and create new ones addressing gender equality in mountain regions around the world.
- Encourage the development of a networking and a communication system with assistance from and as a part of the Mountain Forum that enables conference participants, organizations, and government agencies to continue a dialogue beyond the conference, as well as to create outreach programs with the participation and the support of individuals and institutions, interested in mountain women cause.

We call upon the United Nations, the international community, and regional, national and local authorities and organizations to:

- Welcome and recognize the conference “Women of the Mountains” in Orem, Utah, and its decisions as continuation of the process started in Thimphu, Bhutan (2002);
- Welcome this Conference as a grass-roots initiative among the mountain communities in the Rocky Mountain States and Provinces of North America, which aim to be more involved with the Gender Initiative of the Mountain Partnership, and sustainable mountain development as well;

- Welcome and recognize the importance and encourage the use of such regional and local populations, including volunteers and resources in conjunction with external ones to improve women's lives and those of their families and their communities. To recognize also that the adoption of the multi-sectoral approach will return a maximum result in a minimum amount of time, effort and resources.

We Recommend the Following:

That all concerned stakeholders take appropriate action on the above issues to ensure that mountain women are respected, empowered, protected and are able to contribute fully to the sustainable development of their families, communities and regions, and in particular that specific action be taken on the proposals from the Rocky Mountain representatives and conference participants from other regions to share and assist in implementing a variety of positive experiences related to sustainable mountain development in mountain communities worldwide, including:

1. The proposal from the State of Montana regarding national investment in the partnership with the Kyrgyz Republic, which, in the last decade, witnessed the expansion of an existing program with the military into activities involving civilians and grass-roots level exchanges in health care, disabled children, disaster preparedness, education and rule of law;
2. The proposal from Brigham Young University to cooperate in collecting and compiling data on women in mountainous areas and contributing to the database depository "WomanStats", which allows the evaluation of the effectiveness of efforts to improve conditions of mountain women and documents achieved progress;
3. The proposal of UVU, in cooperation with private corporations, to implement ICT educational projects in conjunction with the American University of Central Asia, as well as the proposal of UVU to co-host with Mountain Forum assistance an interactive platform for communication and information dissemination on mountain women issues.
4. The proposal presented by members of the Gender Initiative of the Mountain Partnership to promote a global campaign to include a gender perspective in the curricula of mountain schools and our commitment to join forces in obtaining the needed resources.
5. The proposal presented by participants of the Conference to develop a Gender Watch Professional Group to monitor state actions.
6. The ongoing activities of various Rocky Mountain universities for service-learning activities in developing nations conducted by students and faculty of those universities. These resources are numerous and we encourage their full utilization.

We invite all interested governments, organizations and individuals both in the Rocky Mountain States and overseas to endorse this Declaration and to promote and engage in activities for its implementation.

We encourage Mountain Partnership, Mountain Forum and UVU to create specific mechanisms to follow-up the decisions of this declaration.

April 12th, 2007