

**Seventy-first session**

Item 19 (j) of the provisional agenda*

Sustainable development**Sustainable mountain development****Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

Mountain and upland areas have a universal importance: they provide water and other global goods and services to humanity. However, mountain ecosystems are highly vulnerable to climate change, extreme weather events and land degradation and recover slowly from disasters and shocks. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States pledged to leave no one behind and stressed the importance of reaching those furthest behind first. Mountain communities in developing countries are particularly vulnerable and require special attention, given that one in three people in those areas is at risk of hunger and malnutrition.

To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the targets relating to mountains as well as to poverty, hunger, sustainable agriculture, climate change and gender equality, there is a need to prioritize mountain areas by focusing on the specific challenges they face and the opportunities they provide. Mountain-specific policies and the inclusion of mountain communities in decision-making processes and capacity development can improve the livelihoods of communities while also conserving and restoring mountain ecosystems. In particular, efforts should be made to increase scientific knowledge of mountains and collect disaggregated data for sound analysis, policy advice and, ultimately, for change.

39. The Utah International Mountain Forum hosted the fourth International Women of the Mountains Conference at Utah Valley University in October 2015 to address the critical issues faced by women and children living in mountainous regions across the globe and provide a forum to discuss gender equality. The outcome document contained the following observations:³

- (a) Goal 5 could be achieved through strong support for improving women's rights and welfare, including women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life;
- (b) Successful implementation of target 6.6 could be achieved by supporting the vital role that women play in the protection of the environment and water sources, particularly as custodians of traditional knowledge that builds resilience and allows for adaptation to climate change;
- (c) With respect to target 15.1, women play a critical role in joint planning as promoters of innovation, development and cooperation for common benefit.

* A/71/150.

³ "The final document of the fourth International Women of the Mountains Conference". Available from www.womenofthemountains.org/images/2015/16-03-31-WOMC-Finalized.pdf.

