



## INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN DAY

**The United Nations General Assembly designated 11 December** «International Mountain Day».

As of 2003, it has been observed every year to create awareness about the importance of mountains to life, to highlight the opportunities and constraints in mountain development and to build alliances that will bring positive change to mountain peoples and environments around the world.

«**Mountain Cultures: celebrating diversity and strengthening identity**» is the theme chosen for this year's celebration of International Mountain Day.

The concept of traditional heritage, culture and spirituality is intrinsically linked with peoples' livelihoods in the mountains, where it is often traditional lifestyles that determine the way people make a living and subsist. Many mountain areas host ancient indigenous communities that possess and maintain precious knowledge, traditions and languages.

Mountains have a spiritual meaning for most religions: Mount Olympus, Mount Sinai, Machu Picchu, Mount Athos, the four Holy Buddhist Mountains, just to name a few. Mountain peoples have developed remarkable land use systems, which are rich in globally significant biodiversity and have evolved over centuries thanks to the harmonious co-existence of communities with the environment.

For mountain peoples, land, water and forests are not simply natural resources. Following in the footsteps of their ancestors, new generations understand that their well-being, their sense of identity and their children's future depend on careful stewardship of the environment. Their traditional knowledge and techniques are key to managing and enhancing the resilience of fragile mountain ecosystems.

Mountains are also places of tourism and cultural trails. From skiing to climbing to visiting the rock churches in Ethiopia, mountains offer all types of possibilities to all kinds of tourists. If sustainably managed, mountain tourism can have a role in promoting and protecting traditional cultures as well as creating incentives for the protection of mountain ecosystems, their goods and services.

**International Mountain Day 2016** provides an occasion to highlight the variety and richness of mountain cultures, promote the vast array of mountain identities and ensure that indigenous rights are recognized and traditional ways endure.

While **Mountain Culture** is the suggested theme for 2016, countries, communities and organizations are welcome to celebrate International Mountain Day through the choice of a different theme that might be more relevant to them.

Please contact [sara.manuelli@fao.org](mailto:sara.manuelli@fao.org) from the Mountain Partnership Secretariat for news of the celebrations you are planning, so they can post them on their interactive map.

### **International Mountain Society**

The goal of the *International Mountain Society* (IMS) is to advance knowledge and disseminate information about mountain research and mountain development throughout the world. The IMS aims to promote sustainable mountain development through improved communication among institutions and individuals, with a particular focus on mountain ecoregions in the developing world.

In order to further this purpose, the association publishes a quarterly journal, *Mountain Research and Development* (MRD). The IMS and MRD's donors cover the costs of operating the journal and its networking activities in excess of the portion covered by publication fees paid by authors of articles published in MRD.

The IMS is an association legally registered in Bern, Switzerland, with institutional and individual membership. It is the copyright holder and publisher of *Mountain Research and Development*.

### **Institutional members**

The following organizations are Institutional Members of the International Mountain Society (IMS):

- SDC, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Bern, Switzerland
- ICIMOD, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, Kathmandu, Nepal
- FAO, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, Italy
- CONDESAN, Consortium for the Sustainable Development of the Andean Ecoregion, Lima, Peru
- CDE, Centre for Development and Environment, University of Bern, Switzerland
- MRI, Mountain Research Initiative, Bern, Switzerland
- UCA/MSRI, Mountain Societies Research Institute, University of Central Asia, Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic
- ICAS, Interacademic Commission for Alpine Studies, Bern, Switzerland
- CMS, Centre for Mountain Studies, Perth College, University of the Highlands and Islands, Perth, Scotland
- DIG, Department of Integrative Geography, Institute of Geography, University of Bern, Switzerland
- IMHE, Institute of Mountain Hazards and Environment, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Chengdu, China

### **Become an Institutional Member of the IMS**

Institutions interested in supporting the cause of sustainable mountain development by improving communication and exchange between the research and development communities can join the IMS as an Institutional Member. Membership is open to national and international institutions active in the fields of mountain research and/or mountain development and must be approved by the current Institutional Members of the IMS. Institutional Members pay an annual membership fee of US\$ 5000. They benefit from the possibility of publishing statements about their organization and mountain-related activities in MRD's Mountain Platform section, on a rotating basis, and are listed on MRD's website, related websites, and promotional material.