



2nd UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries 3-5 November 2014, Vienna, Austria

Side Event

“How to facilitate sustainable and resilient infrastructure development in Landlocked Mountain Countries”

The Post-2015 Development Agenda/SDGs dimension

Date: 5 November 2014, 1315 – 1445 hours

Venue: Vienna International Centre, M-Building, Room: MOE79

Organizers: UNEP, Austria, GRID-Arendal

Background and rationale:

Landlocked (LL) developing mountain countries are considered as the poorest of the developing countries. According to the Human Development Index ranking (2012), several developing mountainous countries are among the world's 100 least developed countries. Despite different locations, these countries and the mountain regions that they share have much in common: Their mountain systems offer several opportunities for sustainable development: the transition to a green economy and poverty alleviation by providing key environmental services including water for irrigation and energy production or natural heritage for sustainable tourism, agriculture for food production. Services those are not only essential for mountain communities but also lowland areas.¹ At the same time, these mountain countries' economies and inhabitants are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation, climate change and increasing natural disasters.

Following the call for Sustainable Mountain Development (SMD) in Chapter 13 of Agenda 21, the action plan endorsed by the 'Earth Summit' in 1992, and the recent Rio+20 outcome document, "The Future We Want" SMD needs to be further promoted and strengthened in LL mountain countries as well as the current discussions on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and SDGs. Moreover, the latest outcome of the Open Working Group consultations on the SDGs proposes an SDG 9.a "*facilitate sustainable and resilient infrastructure development in developing countries through enhanced financial, technological and technical support to African countries, LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS*".

In this context, sustainable development in mountain regions includes also environmentally sound and climate change proofed solutions. Since poor infrastructure is one of the limiting factors to the development of the LL mountain countries, introduction of sustainable infrastructure in key economic areas including **transport, energy** (e.g. hydropower) and **tourism** would help to foster their economies while at the same time maintain their natural capital and help to avoid environmental and socio-economic impacts that also threaten future generations. Hydropower, generated by water from mountain glaciers and snow cover, is an important source of energy in mountain regions like the Caucasus, Hindu-Kush Himalayas and East Africa and can significantly contribute to energy security. However, to ensure the sustainability of this energy sector, adequate environmental and social safeguards are needed. Also infrastructural systems for transport need to be designed in line with the special needs of mountain environments, including climate proofing as well as avoiding and minimizing fragmentation and enhancing connectivity of habitats and ecosystems. Sustainable forms of tourism and relevant infrastructure have a great potential to foster sustainable development, reduce poverty of mountain livelihoods and avoid negative effects, such as environmental degradation and the disruption of local cultures. Several mountain countries are directly capitalizing on the intact nature, endemic mountain species and wild life, thus investment into protection of countries' natural capital would directly benefit the tourism sector.

¹ See also Rio+20 Outcome document "The Future We Want" and respective mountains chapter, paras.210-212.

Objective and structure of the event:

The event aims to bring together different stakeholders (environmental and mountain experts, private industry representatives and political leaders from key LL mountain countries) to 1. Present and discuss challenges and opportunities (also for the private sector) related to sustainable and resilient infrastructure measures, by drawing from experiences and best-practices in selected key areas including transport, energy and tourism; and 2. Renew countries' commitment to SMD and discuss ways how foster further partnership between the various mountain regions in the global (LLDC, Post-2015 process and other platforms) and inter-regional (including the share of experiences and best-practices with other mountain regions such as the Alps and Carpathians) context.

By linking the event to the LLDC Conference, the further main objectives of this event are to: (a) reaffirm (Agenda 21 Chapter 13, Rio+20 outcome and UN GA Resolution on SMD, current SDGs discussions) the global commitment, in particular, by LL mountain countries to sustainable mountain development addressing the special development needs of and the challenges faced by the LL developing countries (b) mobilize further international support and action by and in favour of the LL mountain countries and formulate and adopt a renewed development partnership (also linking to the current discussions on Post-2015/ SDGs) with a particular focus on sustainable mountain development.²

The event will be held in the format of a panel discussion (key note presentations followed by a panel discussion) involving high level representatives from key LL countries covering various mountain regions (e.g. HKH, East Africa) and representatives from the private sector and experts in the context of sustainable mountain development.

Draft programme:

Time		
1315-1325	Welcome statement	Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, <i>USG and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States</i> (tbc!)
1325-1345	Keynote presentation followed by questions and answers from the audience	Mr. Wolfgang Holzleitner, <i>CEO, Bernard Ingenieure ZT.-Ges.m.b.H.</i>
1345-1445	Panel discussion involving high-level representatives from mountain countries³	Moderator: Mr. Jan Dusik, <i>Director and Regional Representative, UNEP, Regional Office for Europe</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-level representative of Uganda (tbc!) • High-level representative of Ethiopia (tbc!) • High-level representative of Bhutan (tbc!)

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² Mountains have been reflected (at the level of targets and indicators) in the context of the recently adopted outcome document of the OWG discussions (notably in the area of biodiversity and water). The relevant goal related to infrastructure does not mention mountains at this stage.

³ Alternatively: Macedonia (Balkan), Armenia (Caucasus), Central Asia countries