

1997/45. Proclamation of an international year of mountains

The Economic and Social Council,

Mindful that mountains represent an essential component of the global life-support system and a positive asset offering opportunities for sustainable development, if adequately managed on the basis of the best available scientific knowledge and with due regard to the protection of nature and the interests of humankind,

Recognizing that, as a major ecosystem representing the complex and interrelated ecology of this planet, mountains are essential to the survival of the global ecosystem and play an important role in shaping life on Earth,

Noting that mountains are an important source of water, energy, minerals, forest and agricultural products and biological diversity, which are all of vital importance to both individual States and the international community,

Bearing in mind that mountains cover at least one fifth of the Earth's landscape and are home to at least 10 per cent of the world's population, predominantly economically poor people,

Recognizing that it is economically and socially more costly to sustain life in mountain areas than in lowland areas, and concerned about the widespread poverty, unemployment and poor health among mountain inhabitants and the loss of indigenous knowledge,

Confirming that, at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the international community recognized that there was a lack of knowledge about mountain ecosystems and called for renewed international and regional cooperation to develop an integrated approach for conserving, upgrading and using the land, water, plant, animal and human resources and promoting alternative livelihood opportunities for mountain inhabitants with a view to improving their living standards,²⁰⁹

Welcoming the various regional and subregional initiatives and international instruments, such as the Alpine Convention, which provide frameworks for international cooperation for the protection of mountain environments,

Recalling its decision 1995/235 of 17 July 1995 on the report of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and taking note of the decisions of the General Assembly at its nineteenth special session on the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21,¹¹

Bearing in mind that an international conference entitled "Mountain research: challenges and prospects in the twenty-first century" was held at Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, from 14 to 18 October 1996 and adopted a decision to draw the attention of the international community to the exceptional importance of mountain ranges for mankind and to propose that the General Assembly declare an international year of mountains,

Recalling its resolution 1980/67 of 25 July 1980, in which it recognized that the celebration of international years can promote international cooperation and understanding in accordance with the guidelines contained therein,

1. *Invites* Governments, in cooperation with relevant regional and international organizations, to undertake

awareness-raising activities concerning the problems and challenges faced by mountainous countries and communities;

2. *Encourages* Governments and intergovernmental organizations to coordinate regional and international cooperation and facilitate the exchange of information and experience among the specialized agencies and relevant regional and international organizations, research institutions and non-governmental organizations on issues related to mountain regions, including the manageability and interaction of mountains and the economy, the impact of mountains on the socio-economic development of countries and sustainable human development, and the like;

3. *Welcomes and supports* the ongoing efforts to prepare and negotiate subregional and interregional agreements on mountains, thus reinforcing legal mechanisms to protect fragile mountain ecosystems and promote sustainable and equitable development in mountain regions;

4. *Encourages* national, regional and international networking of people's initiatives and the activities of local, regional and international non-governmental organizations working on mountain development, and supports those organizations in their efforts to exchange information and experience;

5. *Requests* the Secretary-General, in consultation with Governments and relevant regional, international and non-governmental organizations, to submit to the Council at its substantive session of 1998 a report on the desirability of proclaiming an international year of mountains and on other ways and means of ensuring the sustainable development of mountain countries.

*37th plenary meeting
22 July 1997*

²⁰⁹ Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: Resolutions adopted by the Conference, resolution 1, annex II, sect. II.13.