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Editorial



Biodiversity encompasses the variety of ecosystems, species and genetic resources, and mountains have many endemic varieties. The differentiated topography in terms of altitude, slope and exposure in mountains offers opportunities to grow a variety of high-value crops, horticulture, livestock and forest species. Mountains loom large in some of the world's most spectacular landscapes. Their unique topography, compressed climatic zones and isolation have created the conditions for a wide spectrum of life forms. Mountain glaciers are losing their glaciers at an unprecedented rate. Snow depth in high mountains is expected to decrease by 10 to 40 per cent between 2031 and 2050. Mountains are home to stunning biodiversity. Mountain regions host more than a quarter of terrestrial plants and animals and 30 per cent of key biodiversity areas on land. At a time of accelerating climate change and land degradation, this year's observance of International Mountain Day highlights these threats and the importance of mountain ecosystems.

Mountains must move to the centre of our attention and it is time to move mountains to secure the changes we need to secure the health of our planet and to build a sustainable future for all. Mountain biodiversity is the theme of this year's International Mountain Day, so let's celebrate their rich biodiversity, as well as address the threats they face. Mountain wildlife is also at risk. Snow leopards in Central Asia, mountain gorillas in Virunga, Royal Bengal tigers in Bhutan and other species are affected by changes to wider ecosystems and human uses of the landscape that could, in turn, lead to further encroachment into remote and high-altitude areas and increased human-wildlife conflict. The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2021 – 2030 the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. And the United Nations continues to work with local and national partners to protect mountain ecosystems and species and to promote mountain products. Nearly 70% of mountain land is used for grazing and provides manure that enhances soil fertility. Livestock not only produces food items such as milk, butter and meat, but also valuable by-products, such as some of the most precious yarns, like cashmere wool.

However, climate change, unsustainable farming practices, commercial mining, logging, and poaching all exact a heavy toll on mountain biodiversity. In addition, land use and land cover change, and natural disasters, accelerate biodiversity loss and contribute to creating a fragile environment for mountain communities. Ecosystem degradation, loss of livelihoods and migration in mountains can lead to the abandonment of cultural practices and ancient traditions that have sustained biodiversity for generations. The sustainable management of mountain biodiversity has been increasingly recognized as a global priority. Sustainable Development Goal 15, target four, is dedicated to the conservation of mountains' biodiversity in consideration of its global relevance.

Celebrate and create awareness attention of this International Mountain Day 2020 with our community and friends preparing an event or joining the conversation of the biodiversity in the mountains near by you.

Vijikumar.S

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Credit : FAO/UNO