

**Statement by
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Acting Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity
International Mountain Day
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Theme: Restoring Mountain Ecosystems**

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This International Mountain Day 2023, we reflect on the crucial importance for human well-being of these majestic ecosystems and seek to raise awareness of the possibility for action under the theme "Restoring Mountain Ecosystems".

Mountains encompass nearly 27 percent of the Earth's land surface, standing as some of the most unique and inspiring landscapes. They are biodiversity-rich, hosting half of the world's biodiversity hotspots, and serve as sources of freshwater for almost half of humanity.

Climate change, overexploitation, land use and contamination change represent the greatest threats to mountain biodiversity. Climate change affects water flow and glacier areas, forcing mountain species and communities to adapt or migrate. Ecosystem conversions for farming, settlements, or infrastructure on steep slopes can lead to soil erosion and habitat loss, impacting water quality downstream. Alarmingly, up to 84 percent of endemic mountain species are at risk of extinction, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Mountains, despite their magnificent landscapes, are particularly fragile ecosystems. This fragility underpins the urgency for our collective commitment and effort to restore and protect them.

Restoration is a critical action to secure the supply of crucial ecosystem services and functions that deliver direct benefits to people, such as climate change adaptation and mitigation, reducing erosions, water provisioning, and increasing soil fertility. Mountain restoration and rehabilitation support local livelihoods and reduce human-wildlife conflicts.

The adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity in December 2022 calls for the conservation of at least 30 percent of the Earth's ecosystems and for 30 percent of degraded areas of ecosystems to be under restoration. We must join forces to effectively move the Framework from agreement to action and safeguard the diversity of mountain landscapes.

On this International Mountain Day 2023, let us increase awareness and call for the restoration of mountain ecosystems that enhance resilience, reduce vulnerability and secure the well-being of future generations and our planet.