



General Assembly

Distr.: General
5 June 2025

Original: English

Eightieth session

Request for the inclusion of an item in the provisional agenda of the eightieth session

Observer status for the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development in the General Assembly

Letter dated 28 May 2025 from the Permanent Representative of Bhutan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Pursuant to rule 13 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and to decision 49/426 of the Assembly, of 9 December 1994, the Royal Government of Bhutan submits a request for the granting of observer status in the General Assembly to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), an intergovernmental organization formally established in 1983 and currently based in Kathmandu, Nepal.

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development is the leading intergovernmental knowledge and learning centre working in the Hindu Kush Himalaya. The Centre is based in Kathmandu, Nepal, and works in and for eight regional member countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan. The Centre works to build and share knowledge that drives regional policy and action and attracts investment that enables the diverse countries and communities of the Hindu Kush Himalaya to transition to greener, more inclusive and climate-resilient development. It generates knowledge to influence policy in three core activity areas: climate and environmental risks, resilient economies and livelihoods, and regional and global cooperation.

We are confident that the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development meets the legal and substantive criteria for the granting of observer status in the General Assembly, given its composition and consistent national, regional and global engagements in transboundary climate impacts, disaster risk reduction, livelihoods, biodiversity, resource efficiency and sustainable development at large.

In the light of the foregoing, I have the honour to request the inclusion in the agenda of the eightieth session of the General Assembly of an item entitled “Observer status for the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development in the General Assembly”.



In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, enclosed herewith are an explanatory memorandum (see annex I) and a draft resolution (see annex II). I should be grateful if the present letter and its annexes could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Pema Lektup **Dorji**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex I

Explanatory memorandum

1. Background

The Hindu Kush Himalaya¹ extends over 3,500 km, from Afghanistan in the west to Myanmar in the east and crossing Pakistan, India, China, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. It is home to the world's highest peaks, unique cultures, diverse flora and fauna, and a vast reserve of natural resources. As the source of 10 major Asian river systems, the Hindu Kush Himalaya provides essential resources, especially water and biodiversity, to nearly 2 billion people. The region is vital for the food, water and power security of up to 2 billion people and is a habitat for countless irreplaceable species.

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) is the leading intergovernmental knowledge and learning centre working on behalf of the people of the Hindu Kush Himalaya. The Centre was established in 1983, is based in Kathmandu, Nepal, and works in and for eight regional member countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan.

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development maintains a non-political and neutral status and respects the concerns of the eight regional member countries. As an impartial convener and coordinator across the region, the Centre plays a critical role in significant technical matters that arise from research and evidence and as reinforced by the Hindu Kush Himalaya Call to Action.²

2. Composition and founding documents

The Government of Nepal and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) signed an agreement providing the legal basis for the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development as an autonomous international centre in 1981. The statutes for establishing the Centre were drafted and approved at the first meeting of the interim Board of Governors in Kathmandu in 1982. Article 1 of the statutes specifies the eight regional member countries of the Centre. The Centre was formally established and inaugurated in 1983, with its headquarters in Lalitpur, Nepal, and legitimized through an Act of Parliament in Nepal in the same year.

Over the last four decades, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development has built on its visionary founding mandate to facilitate exchange and learning on regional and transboundary mountain issues. This has established confidence, recognition and credibility among the eight regional members, as well as international partners.

3. Objectives

The Hindu Kush Himalaya region is acutely fragile and at the front line of the impacts of the triple planetary crisis. The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development builds and shares knowledge to drive regional policy and action and attract investment to enable the diverse countries and communities of the Hindu Kush Himalaya to transition to greener, more inclusive and climate-resilient development.

¹ See www.icimod.org/who-we-are/the-hindu-kush-himalaya/.

² See www.icimod.org/hkh-calltoaction/.

The Centre's activities range from hands-on research and piloting of solutions to policy implementation with governments, global mountain advocacy on climate and environmental risks, resilient economies and livelihoods, and regional cooperation. Enhancing livelihoods, sustaining resources and valuing culture are the three fundamental common objectives that cut across the Centre's work.

4. Institutional structure

The highest governing body of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development is the Board of Governors, which consists of one representative from each regional member country and independent members nominated by the ICIMOD Support Group based on their recognized professional expertise and experience. Serving on the ICIMOD Support Group are representatives from among donor organizations and institutions. The Centre conducts activities through four action areas that correspond to long-term impact areas:

- Transboundary risk reduction and adaptation to enhance safety and socioeconomic security
- Air quality to reduce adverse health impacts while securing mitigation co-benefits
- Biodiversity and environmental health to restore landscapes and sustain ecosystem services
- Green mountain economies to promote just transitions to green and low carbon enterprises

This work is housed in three strategic groups: climate and environmental risks, resilient economies and livelihoods, and regional cooperation. Finance, administration, monitoring and evaluation units provide institutional support, as do cross-cutting communications and gender equality and social inclusion functions.

5. International engagement

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development is mandated to lead global efforts to protect the people, mountain environments, resources and culture of the Hindu Kush Himalaya through a range of activities spanning hands-on research and piloting of solutions to policy implementation with governments, mountain advocacy on regional and global stages through advocacy, implementation and science policy dialogues.³ The knowledge created and shared strengthens regional cooperation for conservation and sustainable mountain development.

The Centre's transboundary programme design helps countries to address shared challenges by developing and customizing methodologies and tools, as well as carrying out innovative applied research to support programme development. The programmes include regional and operational partners, such as government agencies, which support programme implementation for shared impact through the strategic implementation of interventions informed and strengthened by cutting-edge research.⁴

6. Relations with the United Nations

From the time of the conceptualization of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development to its establishment as an autonomous entity in 1983, UNESCO has played a critical role in the Centre.

The Centre's goals are aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and it is committed to broader United Nations objectives. The Centre continues

³ See www.icimod.org/get-informed/events/.

⁴ See www.icimod.org/who-we-are/staff/strategic-cooperation-regional/.

to work in conjunction with United Nations activities, processes and protocols at the national, regional and global levels.

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development is accredited to the Adaptation Fund and holds observer status at the Green Climate Fund and in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change process. It also collaborates and co-organizes regional workshops and meetings with the United Nations Environment Programme and in connection with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

7. Reasons for requesting observer status in the General Assembly

Observer status would greatly enhance the ability of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development to support its regional member countries, which are members of the United Nations General Assembly, in addressing common challenges in the region. This would also provide a platform for the Centre to contribute to the objectives of the General Assembly and to delivering the Sustainable Development Goals.

Observer status would allow the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development to contribute meaningfully in policy discussions from a regional perspective and contribute to decisions impacting sustainable mountain development in the Hindu Kush Himalaya region and beyond. Observer status would also enable the Centre to share knowledge, data and best practices from the Hindu Kush Himalaya region with a wider audience across the members of the General Assembly, fostering a more informed and cohesive approach to timely global mountain discourses.

The evidence is clear: the time for action is now. The science is irrefutable: mountains are warming at an alarmingly faster rate than the global average, experiencing earlier than others a cascading series of climate impacts, with major implications downstream. Global warming at 2°C, and beyond, will result in the loss of half the volume of the region's glaciers and destabilize Asia's river systems, with enormous downstream consequences for billions of people. Likewise, air pollution has profound impacts on health, the environment, the economy and food security in the Hindu Kush Himalaya region.

This is a pivotal moment in human history. Climate change presents threats at a scale and pace previously unknown. We are witnessing rapid climate change, biodiversity loss, increased disaster risk and rising poverty and inequality. The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development therefore seeks strong collaborations to ensure that this critical global asset is protected through regional and global cooperation, more consistent and synchronized data sources, more sharing of innovative solutions and more global attention.

8. Satisfaction of the legal criteria

The legal nature of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development is that of an intergovernmental body composed of eight States Members of the United Nations, as clearly determined in article 1 of the Centre's revised statutes. It therefore satisfies the legal criteria set out in General Assembly decision 49/426 of 9 December 1994, in which the Assembly, on the recommendation of the Sixth Committee, decided that the granting of observer status in the General Assembly should be confined to States and to those intergovernmental organizations whose activities cover matters of interest to the Assembly.

9. Conclusion

In the light of the above, the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Bhutan respectfully requests that observer status in the General Assembly be granted to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development. This status would not only strengthen the organization's ability to support and advance the interests of its member countries but also enhance collaborative efforts between the organization and the United Nations towards achieving common goals. The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development is committed to contributing its expertise and resources to the global community, and observer status would significantly bolster these efforts.

We look forward to a positive consideration of our request and to the opportunity to further our collaborative engagement with the General Assembly and Member States.

Annex II

Draft resolution

Observer status for the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development in the General Assembly

The General Assembly,

Wishing to promote cooperation between the United Nations and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development,

1. *Decides* to invite the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer;
 2. *Requests* the Secretary-General to take the action necessary to implement the present resolution.
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