

## **THE PAPALLACTA DECLARATION PAPALLACTA, ECUADOR, 17 NOVEMBER 2006**

Mountains provide freshwater to more than half of humanity and are major centres of global biological and cultural diversity and sources of inspiration and spirituality. Maintaining the integrity of mountain ecosystems is vital for the well-being of current and future generations. Yet mountains have low resilience and high vulnerability, and are therefore under serious threat from land transformation, infrastructure development, environmental degradation and climate change.

The maintenance and restoration of ecosystem integrity requires landscape-scale conservation. This can be achieved through systems of core protected areas that are functionally linked and buffered in ways that maintain ecosystem processes and allow species to survive and move, thus ensuring that populations are viable and that ecosystems and people are able to adapt to land transformation and climate change. We call this proactive, holistic, and long-term approach connectivity conservation.

Connectivity conservation in and around mountain areas is essential to achieve the goals of the *Programmes of Work on Protected Areas and on Mountain Biological Diversity* adopted by the 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, February 2004) and the *Plan of Implementation* of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, South Africa, September 2002).

Accomplishing these goals requires the support, involvement, cooperation and leadership of people who live and recreate in, derive economic benefit from, manage, study, gain spiritual inspiration from, and appreciate mountain environments. Therefore, we **urge** communities, governments at all levels, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations, businesses, religious groups, and academic and research institutions to take coordinated action to engage in connectivity conservation in and around mountain regions.

This will ensure that mountains continue to supply ecosystem services and many other benefits to humanity, including:

- the ability for ecological, hydrological, social and economic systems to respond to climate change;
- reliable supplies of water and renewable energy;
- reduced risks of downstream natural disasters;
- effective responses to local, regional and global impacts of habitat fragmentation and species loss, particularly in protected areas;
- the alleviation of poverty and the promotion of more sustainable economic activity;
- cultural diversity, spiritual and community values;
- shared understanding and peaceful cooperation across internal and international boundaries.

We, the participants at the Workshop on Mountain Connectivity Conservation Management (Termas de Papallacta, Ecuador, November 2006) **commit** ourselves to working with all relevant stakeholders to engage in connectivity conservation in and around the mountain regions of the world, for the benefit of our planet and humanity.

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