



Statement from UN Mountain Partnership Members:
The Mountain Institute and the Russian Academy
of Natural Sciences

**Presenter: Mary “Jesse” Chapman-Bruschini, Communications Director,
The Mountain Institute**

I would like to thank the UN for the opportunity to provide a statement during this Session. I am representing The Mountain Institute and the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences. We are speaking for the Mountain Partnership—a United Nation’s voluntary alliance with 288 members including NGOs and 57 governments dedicated to the sustainable development of mountain regions.

I am here to highlight the role of mountains in sustainable development and to address the needs of mountain people and ecosystems that continue to be left behind in the global agenda.

We tend to view mountains as unchanging, enduring and massive. But in fact, mountain ecosystems are quite fragile and severely threatened by climate change—and by our disregard. Mountain regions simply do not receive the attention they deserve given the services they provide us.

Mountains regulate climate. They collect, channel, and store freshwater and are essential to the planet’s water cycle. Nearly all of our major rivers begin in mountains. Every single day, over half of humanity relies on mountain water sources for drinking, agriculture, industry, and hydropower.

We are all connected to mountains much more than we realize. And what happens upstream doesn’t stay upstream. The conditions at the top of our watersheds are intrinsically tied to life downstream.

If we continue to overexploit and degrade mountain ecosystems, we’ll undermine their health and resilience. And this will have cascading consequences—upstream and down.

As we know, food security, good nutrition and sustainable agriculture are the cornerstones for sustainable development. Without them humans cannot lead healthy and productive lives. Societies cannot flourish and be inclusive.

The good news is that poverty and food insecurity levels have fallen—in lowland areas. The bad news is that they are rising in mountains. A recent FAO study showed that one in every three mountain residents face hunger and malnutrition. This means that more than 300 million mountain people are at risk of hunger.

Governments and societies must mobilize for mountains. Investments, specific policies, empowerment of local authorities and communities, climate smart development, equitable trade conditions, efficient and transparent markets, and protection of land rights can enable mountain communities to prosper.

Mountains must be at the center of our actions if we are to fulfill the Paris Agreement, the latest [UN resolution on sustainable mountain development](#) and the commitments of the 2030 Agenda that “no one be left behind.”

The Mountain Partnership and its members ask that a permanent, official UN entity be created to insure that mountain stakeholders have a voice in implementing UN processes and the 2030 Agenda.

We invite States and other actors to end the marginalization of mountain lands and peoples.

Thank you.