

MOUNTAIN ECOSYSTEMS GET BOOST FROM RIO+20

Rio+20 has disappointed most observers. But it has created opportunities for constructive work in a few areas, says *Joydeep Gupta*, writing on the website *The Third Pole*.

During the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) last week (20-22 June), country blocs protected their national interests, interest groups had mixed success, developing countries wanted money and richer countries committed none.

Another area of stalemate was national accounting systems, in which the value and cost of using air, water, soil and minerals are taken into account. Developed countries argued strongly for these, but poorer countries expressed concerns that this would encourage trade protectionism. One area, however, that will see concrete benefits from the final outcome document agreed at the meeting, is the protection of mountain ecosystems, says Gupta.

The paragraphs encourage states to incorporate mountain-specific policies into national sustainable development strategies which could include, inter alia, poverty reduction plans and programmes in mountain areas, particularly in developing countries. The Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICMOD) fought for two years for the insertion of several paragraphs, which include a clause calling for greater efforts toward the conservation of mountain ecosystems.

The insertion of these paragraphs, argues Gupta, increases the chances of development organisations, nongovernmental organisations and think-tanks obtaining funding from donor governments for sustainable development in these areas.

He argues that the absence of such a detailed pledge to help mountain ecosystems and people in the 1992 Earth Summit resolution has hampered work in this area, as compared, for example, to work on coastal areas.

Source: <http://www.scidev.net/global/pollution/opinion/mountain-ecosystems-get-boost-from-rio-20.html>