

ICIMOD's Statement from the recently held International Symposium - Benefiting from Earth Observation: Bridging the Data Gap for Adaptation to Climate Change in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Region' from 4-6 October, Kathmandu.

Important dignitaries including the Right Honourable Subash Chandra Nemwang, Chairman of the Constituent Assembly, Nepal; Honourable Thakur Prasad Shrama, Minister of Environment, Government of Nepal; Honourable Shri Jairam Ramesh, Minister of State for Environment and Forests, Government of India; Mr Charles F. Bolden Jr., NASA Administrator; Mr Michael Yates, Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator of USAID; and Professor José Achache, Director, Group on Earth Observation (GEO) Secretariat, Switzerland; together with many high-level delegates from ICIMOD's regional member countries and beyond attended International symposium in which more than 250 participants from 24 countries were present. Altogether 68 papers were presented on application of earth observation in seven thematic areas namely,

- *Remote Sensing of snow cover monitoring*
- *Remote Sensing of glacier inventory and mapping*
- Spatial decision support system (DSS) for ecosystem management
- Space-based information for disaster management
- *Land Cover Monitoring and Carbon Stocks*
- *Transboundary Air Pollution Monitoring*
- *Spatial Data Infrastructure for Climate Change Adaptation*

Key messages of the International symposium:

- The symposium recognized the immense value of empowering youth with earth observation information for enhancing their understanding, being aware of the issues and enabling them to take climate decisions and actions in their communities;
- The symposium emphasized the use of earth observation data in making effective decisions for disaster preparedness and risk management and acknowledged the contribution of JAXA for commissioning the WINDS satellite receiving station at ICIMOD;
- The delegates reaffirmed the importance of earth observation and appreciated a coordinated effort by ICIMOD through this symposium in fostering regional and international cooperation in order to bridge the data gap for climate change adaptation in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region;
- The symposium recommended to build synergies among national, regional and global initiatives for integrated approaches and cross-cutting collaborations - for sharing earth observation information and application methodologies to address the climate change issues for the benefits of mountain communities;
- The symposium emphasized the need for adoption of standards and harmonized approaches in building regional databases in conformity with international efforts to effectively deal with broader climatic and environmental issues of regional dimension and, their implications at the global level;
- Given the emerging dynamics of earth observation both at the regional and global levels and recognizing the differentiated capacities among the ICIMOD region member countries, the symposium

recommended to continue regional and international support for sustained capacity building efforts in the region;

- The launching of the SERVIR-Himalaya initiative in the presence of distinguished delegates was an important milestone for promoting regional cooperation and participation of ICIMOD member countries in utilizing earth observation for regional visualization and decision support.