

Mountain communities, climbers and scientists sound alarm from Everest and call for world leaders to decarbonise now

The climate emergency is here for Earth's tallest mountain, 70 years on from first ascent

Hindu Kush Himalaya is in danger, with two-thirds of glaciers projected to vanish by the end of the century

Leading mountain bodies ICIMOD, Mountain Research Initiative, Nepal Mountaineering Association launch call for world to save Earth's snow and ice before it's too late

Kathmandu, Nepal (29 May 2023) – Today, 70 years after Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay first scaled Mount Everest, the Earth's tallest mountain is undergoing unprecedented and largely irreversible change caused by global warming.

Global temperature rises are jeopardising Everest and the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region, which extends 3,500km across eight countries. In the next 70 years, under the current emissions scenario, scientists project that two-thirds of glaciers in the region will disappear.

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), supported by mountain institutes globally, including Mountain Research Initiative, Nepal Mountaineering Association and the United Nations Mountain Partnership, is calling on members of the public to back the #SaveOurSnow campaign. The campaign asks the public to:

- share stories and photographs from the mountains around the world, highlighting climate impacts using the hashtag #SaveOurSnow
- sign a declaration calling for governments to make good on their commitments to limit warming to 1.5 degrees at www.icimod.org/saveoursnow/declaration/

The 79 glaciers that surround Everest have thinned by over 100 metres in just six decades, and the rate of thinning has nearly doubled since 2009. Among those is the iconic Khumbu glacier, the starting place for most expeditions, including Hillary and Tenzing's all those decades ago, which scientists say is just degrees away from vanishing.

The HKH region is seeing an increase in adverse impacts from climate change, which will only increase in intensity and frequency. **Pema Gyamtsho**, ICIMOD Director General, said: "The dangerous impacts of global warming are already being felt throughout the Hindu Kush Himalaya in record-breaking heat waves, droughts, natural disasters, unpredictable snowfall, and precipitous and largely irreversible glacial melt. We need urgent global action to protect the lives and livelihoods of the two billion people in this region and to safeguard the countless, irreplaceable lifeforms that exist only here."

The HKH is home to more than 240 million people, and nearly a quarter of the world's population depends on the water that flows from its mountains. The fight against climate change is therefore critically important and requires urgent global action.

Kilian Jornet, a world leading endurance athlete and ski mountaineer, said: "Everest is changing, fast. Over the years I have witnessed with my own eyes how

the mountains are being affected by climate change and at unprecedented speed. The melting of glaciers is making mountains more dangerous for climbers, and more importantly, it's jeopardising the lives of the billions of people depending on its resources."

ICIMOD and partners including Mountain Research Initiative, Nepal Mountaineering Association, UNDP and the Mountain Partnership is also asking people to sign its declaration which calls on Governments to honour their commitments under the Paris Agreement, make rapid and deep emission cuts, end

all new coal, oil and gas exploration, and accelerate the transition to renewable energy.

Rt Hon Helen Clark, former Prime Minister of New Zealand, Renate Christ, former Chair of the International Panel for Climate Change, Reinhold Messner, descendants of Norgay and Hillary, and Jornet are among those that have already signed the declaration.

More information on the #SaveOurSnow campaign and declaration can be found on ICIMOD's website: www.icimod.org/saveoursnow

NOTES TO EDITORS

Photos, b-roll, spokespeople are available on request email: annie.dare@icimod.org

Additional quotes from spokespeople

Tenzing Chogyal Sherpa, ICIMOD glaciologist and grandson of Kanchha Sherpa, the last remaining survivor of the first expedition, said: "Those of us who study, live or climb in the mountains are eyewitnesses to the terrifying speed of changes happening in our cryosphere – often caused by actions taken millions of miles away. We are calling on everyone that loves these fragile places to raise their voice about the impacts of continued inaction on emissions reductions and to call for world leaders and businesses to speed up the transition to renewables to save our snow."

Dr Carolina Adler, Executive Director, Mountain Research Initiative (MRI), said: "As we commemorate the 70th anniversary of the first ascent to Mount Everest, we are also reminded about the great heights we still need to scale when it comes to addressing climate change. On behalf of the Mountain Research Initiative (MRI), we strongly support the urgent plea from mountain communities, climbers, and scientists for immediate global action to address climate change. We encourage our mountain research community to join us in amplifying the effort by signing the declaration and sharing first-hand stories showcasing the transformations in our changing mountains. Let's support the call to protect Earth's mountains, snow, and ice."

ABOUT ICIMOD

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), based in Kathmandu, is the leading institute for the study of the Hindu Kush Himalaya. An intergovernmental knowledge and development organisation with a focus on climate and environmental risks, green economies and sustainable action, it works in and for its eight regional member countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan.

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