Dear Mountain Forum:

The week of February 22-26, the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) held Inter-sessional Working Groups on both Consumption Patterns and Tourism. Here is where country delegations introduce statements outlining their positions on a given issue. The format, tone, style and substance of the summaries and decisions of these Working Groups frame the basis for discussions at the April session of the CSD. Thus they are important venues to introduce ideas, views and positions on issues. These particular meetings were important because we all have been focusing on highlighting the important role mountains play in tourism, and vice versa.

The Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations has been a strong and consistent advocate for mountains at these Inter-sessional Working Groups and during the CSD itself. Because tourism was a topic for discussion, I traveled to New York to work with the Swiss delegation to help make sure mountain specific values and issues were not overlooked. The University of Berne, Center for Development and Environment (CDE) mailed 150 draft, black and white copies of the report, "Mountains of the World: Tourism and Mountains," which we hand delivered to each country delegation.

The five chapters of CDE policy document on Mountains and Tourism were recently made available to the Mountain Forum for review. Any of you who sent input, your comments will be taken into account in the final document to be presented to the CSD at a special "side event" at the Ministerial-level meeting of the CSD this April. The "Tourism and Mountains" document, though in draft form, was important to be able to provide country delegations materials on mountains at this early stage of the discussions.

The summary of the discussions did have one mountain specific paragraph, as follows:

"10. Some delegations, noting that the UN had declared 2002 as the International Year of Mountains, pointed out that opportunities exist for obvious linkages with the International Year of Ecotourism, also in 2002. Mountain regions represent a significant portion of the tourism industry. These remote, fragile and highly biodiverse ecosystems are homes to unique cultures and traditions which draw tourists from an increasingly urbanized world. Tourism development in mountain regions if not properly managed, and not taking into account local communities, local control of resources, the integral role of women, equitable distribution of benefits, and appropriate infrastructure needs, threatens to undermine the ecosystems and cultures."

This paragraph is a nice step in recognizing the specific need of mountains, and we are thankful that there was discussion on mountains at all. If anyone wishes to receive the entire copy of the draft decision and summary from these working groups, please email me <jespie@mountain.org>. I can send it to you as an e-mail attachment in either a MS Word 6/95 document or as a Word Perfect document (please specify in your request).

It was also notable at these meetings, that numerous country delegations mentioned the obvious linkage between the International Year of Eco-Tourism and The International Year of Mountains, both declared for 2002. The Swiss delegation was the only country to speak out notably on behalf of mountain and tourism calling attention to the recommendations outlined by the document we distributed, and calling attention to the side event planned on tourism and mountains at the April CSD session.

Though we worked to hand-distribute mountain related material, and spoke with various country delegations and NGOs, the reality was that often discussions on the floor did not fully acknowledge mountains specifically. The above paragraph was the only exception.

It is helpful to recognize that the country delegations are professional diplomats, delivering positions developed in home-country ministries. Thus, unless the mountain mandates come from their home, there is often the feeling that not much can be said that would sway their issues. For example, the delegation from France only spoke of the importance of coastal areas to Tourism and in particularly coral reef preservation. Japan emphasized attention on domestic tourism. The Group of 77 spoke of supporting small business development programs, training, and access for domestic entrepreneurs. Samoa spoke on behalf of small island developing states (SIDS) with a long list of priorities for coastal areas and oceans (many of which were
not unlike that of mountain areas, should one replace fragile coastal areas with fragile mountain areas). Many delegations spoke of measures to combat human rights violations, notably in sex tourism and protection for women and children. These are all legitimate concerns and issues, but it outlines that mountains specifically are not high on the agenda of country delegations, even with some countries with significant mountain ranges. Coastal areas occupied a large portion of the tourism debate largely due to the recent International Year of Oceans, and because many small island country delegations (SIDS) constitute a significant voice.

In addition to the policy document, Elizabeth Byers helped by providing a three page summary of the main points that emerged from the Mountain Forum's Community-based Mountain Tourism E-Conference (March-April 1998). The main points of this summary are presented below. Both the CDE policy document on "Tourism and Mountains" and the CBMT E-Conference shared many similar case studies and viewpoints offered by you, the Mountain Forum. We greatly appreciate your contributions both in substance, advice and commentary that helped this effort. We plan on attending the April CSD sessions to distribute the final copies of both the CDE policy document and the E-conference report. Even if other agendas currently occupy center stage at CSD, we feel that the continued voice and presence of the larger mountain community has played, and will continue to play, an important role. The International Year of Mountains in 2002 is an event that shall certainly bear fruit.

We have included below the 15 summary points from the E-conference on Community-based Mountain Tourism. If you feel we did not capture something correctly, or left a critical point out, please feel free to send us your comments (send to mfmmb@mtnforum.org). We intend to use these summary points again this April when we visit the CSD to help make sure mountains are recognized on the policy agenda. We also welcome your comments and suggestions on how we can all support the work of the diplomatic community to gain support for the high ground.

Sincerely,

Jason

**Recommendations for Policy and Action in Mountain Tourism from the UN Commission on Sustainable Development**

*Inter-sessional Working Group meetings of 22-26 February 1999*

Summarized by the Mountain Forum-Global Information Server Node

March 8, 1999

Many of the CSD recommendations are intrinsically linked to mountain features such as ecosystem fragility, political and economic marginality, and cultural diversity.

1. Holistic management and marketing strategies,

2. Local ownership and control of resources,

3. Supportive national and regional policies,

4. Balance between highland and lowland resource flows and decision-making,

5. Local knowledge and traditional systems of social and environmental management,

6. External knowledge and technology,

7. Infrastructure development appropriate to fragile environments,

8. Reinvestment of tourism revenues into conservation and community life,

9. Equitable distribution of tourism benefits and opportunities,
10. Full integration of women,
11. Organizational capacity building,
12. Skill-based training,
13. Awareness-raising of all stakeholders,
14. Partnerships, and
15. Information sharing.

1. Holistic management and marketing strategies

Mountain tourism should maximize the positive impacts on local ecology, economy and culture, while minimizing the negative impacts. Tourism planning must extend beyond this sector and must be carefully integrated into the broader goals of a community. In many areas, tourism should be considered as a supplementary means of income and used in combination with other sustainable livelihood sources. Marketing strategies need to be more holistic in nature, focusing on protection of the natural and cultural environment as much as on placing, pricing, product development and promotion.

2. Local ownership and control of resources

Local control appears to be a necessary component for creating and maintaining the link between conservation and tourism. Ownership rights and control over a particular resource provide incentives for active participation and effective conservation management. Policy and action should support initiatives that (a) encourage adequate representation of local people in decision-making and (b) give them a significant degree of control over the type of tourism to be developed and their individual and collective roles in it.

3. Supportive national and regional policies

National and regional policies and legislation are extremely important in stimulating sustainable mountain tourism activities. Supportive cultural policies, environmental protection policies, and economic policies for disadvantaged areas need to be more widely developed and applied.

4. Balance between highland and lowland resource flows and decision-making

In many mountain areas, the financial, technical or institutional means to develop tourism infrastructure and programs are lacking. When the means come from urban or lowland areas, decision-making may be lost at the local level. A balance should be created which values the primary mountain resource (i.e. the destination) and the lowland inputs, while providing for equitable decision-making.

5. Local knowledge and traditional systems of social and environmental management

The recognition and valuing of local knowledge, practices and traditional systems of social and environmental management provide a means for better linking conservation to enterprise. Tourism development should not be imposed upon communities who do not wish to have it. Policies and practices that safeguard local knowledge, establish links between traditional and scientific knowledge systems, and protect communities against unwanted change can promote conservation as well as the potential for enhanced enterprise development.

6. External knowledge and new technology

External knowledge that brings new or non-traditional technology can be crucial to linking conservation and enterprise. Policies and action that strengthen the integration of external and local knowledge show the greatest promise.

7. Infrastructure development appropriate to fragile environments

Infrastructure development should conform to the type and scale of tourism desired by local communities and,
if possible, should be put in place before tourists arrive. Because of the far-reaching and often unintended negative impacts of infrastructure development in fragile mountain regions, the full range of potential cultural and environmental impacts should be taken into account prior to construction.

8. Reinvestment of tourism revenues into conservation and community life

Policy and action that foster a direct link between community conservation practices and revenue generation are key to sustainable mountain tourism. Economic leakage, i.e. the capture of revenue by outside interests, should be minimized and the economic welfare of the mountain community should be maximized through innovative initiatives that promote local reinvestment of revenue.

9. Equitable distribution of tourism benefits and opportunities

Distribution of benefits should be equitable. Women and disadvantaged groups should participate equally with more powerful groups. Policy and action that advance equitable distribution help maintain economic fairness, social well-being and community cooperation in conservation efforts.

10. Full integration of women

Mountain women, as traditional custodians of culture and resource management knowledge, have particularly important roles to play in mountain tourism. Access to training, credit, and group decision-making are critical.

11. Organizational capacity building

Policy and action should encourage the growth of institutional capability, participation, decision-making and leadership within local communities. Project time frames and commitments should be long enough to ensure that sustainable systems and organizational structures are firmly in place.

12. Skill-based training

Skill-based training is most urgently needed by communities, and especially women, who have little prior experience with tourism. The accessibility, amount and quality of skill-based training are important factors in the degree of success community-based mountain tourism initiatives will have. Skills in financial management are as important as more commonly available training in food services or lodge operation.

13. Awareness raising of all stakeholders

Awareness raising of all stakeholders involved in mountain tourism is essential for promoting an understanding of the intrinsic link between conservation and community development. Awareness raising and information dissemination to the community allows for greater self-determination and informed decision-making. For mountain communities, equitable access to information is particularly important because of their relative isolation from information bases. Awareness raising is equally important to other stakeholders involved, as it leads to greater understanding and sensitivity toward the variables involved in implementing mountain tourism.

14. Partnerships

An important condition for successful and sustainable mountain tourism initiatives is close cooperation and strong local leadership within mountain communities. Of equal importance is the communication between mountain communities, outside experts, NGOs, tour operators, travel agents and regional, national and international government authorities.

15. Information sharing

Continued information sharing and dissemination of research results are needed to identify better solutions for linking conservation to tourism enterprise. In this regard, the Mountain Forum and other networks should continue to promote the exchange of experiences and study results related to mountain tourism.