



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ASIA
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DEVELOPMENT
Mountain Societies Research Institute

INSTITUTE OF GEOGRAPHY
Russian academy of sciences



founded in 1918

AKDN

AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK



Freie Universität Berlin



Centre for
Development
Studies

ICIMOD



Dushanbe Declaration 2017

Preamble

The *Silk Roads in the Mountains of Central Asia* workshop aimed to broaden, deepen, and strengthen our understanding of recent and anticipated developments in the context of China's *One Belt, One Road* policy and related initiatives. The impacts on the Pamir, Tien Shan and Altai mountain regions and societies of Central Asia were the main focus of discussions, attained through inclusive dialogue with participants from many countries, from multiple academic and professional backgrounds, and people working in academia, government, the financial sector, civil society, and in many instances with close ties to communities.

Discussions aimed to assess the current state of knowledge about *One Belt, One Road* initiatives, and led to the preliminary, broadly agreed identification of priority areas for future transdisciplinary research in Central Asia's mountainous regions. The workshop has thus helped advance the global Sustainable Mountain Development (SMD) agenda as well as encourage research and action on a broad range of mountain-relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are anticipated to be affected, positively or negatively, by China's increasing engagement and investment in the region.

Recommendations emerging from the workshop

Based on two days of dialogue and discussion, drawing on recent experience and observations from across Central Asia, the following ten core recommendations are highlighted:

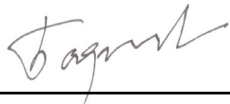
- Local, national and regional stakeholders including mountain communities directly and indirectly impacted by China's One Belt, One Road (OBOR) Initiative should be engaged in the planning and implementation of proposed projects.
- Regional cooperation should be encouraged through mechanisms such as transboundary collaborations, interstate agreements, knowledge platforms, and exchange networks.
- In times of regional and global changes, building local resilience through key development interventions

and strategic approaches will be of critical importance for local communities.

- Use of emerging information and communications technologies (ICTs) can help advance and strengthen the participation of local communities and reinforce the positive impacts of development interventions.
- The geophysical, ecological and socio-cultural dimensions of mountain landscapes impacted by OBOR should be studied with diverse approaches and perspectives, including the use of scenario planning to ensure that sustainable and inclusive development plans are made.
- ‘Transport routes’ should transition to and be perceived as development corridors for regional development, with increased attention given to localize the benefits of development in mountain regions as well as mitigating potential negative sociocultural, economic, or environmental impacts.
- Experiences from UNESCO’s model of transboundary biosphere reserves may be used to facilitate dialogue and cooperation in conservation of biological and cultural diversity in regions affected by OBOR initiatives, with relevant experiences drawn from the “Great Altai” Transboundary Biosphere Reserve, as well as ICIMOD’s transboundary landscape conservation programme.
- Research on the immediate, mid- and long-term impacts of OBOR-related projects should be undertaken, including inter-disciplinary studies about socio-cultural dimensions of change, economic regionalization and globalization, climate change and adaptation, biodiversity and ecosystem services, natural resource governance and regional institution, local and regional security, and the administration of regional connectivity including goods and services.
- Several priority research topics pertaining to OBOR were identified at the workshop, included the following:
 - Host regions’ and nations’ ability to decide, structure and/or influence OBOR projects, to be undertaken alongside institutional and personal capacity building, along with a strengthening of partnerships with Chinese institutions and the private sector
 - Transport and market access – people’s connectivity and exchanges in farming/ pastoral contexts, and migration, focusing on production, processing, flow of goods and marketing including ICT based e-commerce platforms
 - Water – understanding the influences of environmental conditions including climatic change and weather extremes, and anthropogenic interventions e.g. infrastructure development and agricultural intensification, with focus on agricultural development, sustainable urbanization, and disaster risk reduction (e.g. mountain hazards)
 - Mountain ecosystems – assessing, monitoring and managing rangelands, wetlands and deserts for sustaining food production, water security and nature’s contribution to people; and strengthening the conservation of high altitude wetlands with further attention given to Ramsar sites in Pamirs
 - Climate change – enhancing the capacities of local communities in adaptation, mitigation, and promoting the assessment of carbon footprint of key projects, including implementing eco-friendly technology (e.g. renewable energy)
 - A network of universities and research institutions, or an international panel of experts, should be established – possibly under the umbrella of UCA – in order to foster exchange of information and scientific data, build partnerships, and facilitate thematic research that extends our understanding of OBOR’s impacts on the environment and local communities.

The *Silk Roads in the Mountains of Central Asia* workshop was organized and hosted by University of Central Asia (UCA) through its Mountain Societies Research Institute (MSRI). The workshop was co-initiated by the Institute of Geography, Russian Academy of Science, and Free University of Berlin; and was co-sponsored by University of Oxford and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD).

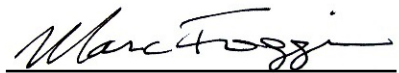
We the undersigned, acting as representatives of the participants of the Silk Roads workshop held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, maintain the significance of all the *above recommendations* for local and regional sustainable development in Central Asia, especially in light of China's growing engagement in the region. These recommendations can help advance 'sustainable mountain development' by strengthening opportunities and enhancing benefits for local and regional mountain stakeholders. As much as possible, these jointly developed and agreed recommendations, as presented herein, should be incorporated into future development programmes and projects, including Chinese-led infrastructure projects under OBOR, as concrete ways to advance our common goals of promoting people's wellbeing, while also protecting our shared natural and cultural heritages for the present and future generations.



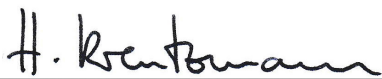
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Participants of Silk Roads in the Mountains of Central Asia workshop, on 3-4 October 2017

