

## Inaugural Session of the Fourth Annual National Workshop of Indian Himalayan Region States under National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem, 30 January 2017

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Secretary DST, Prof. Ashutosh Sharma, Dr. Gupta, Advisor DST, Distinguished representatives of the Himalayan states, Government of India officials, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome all of you and address you to the Fourth Annual National workshop of the Himalayan States.

At the outset, I'd like to commend the Department of Science and Technology (DST) for its commitment to advancing the agenda of climate-resilient development and for the critical role it is playing in preserving the Himalayan ecosystem.

The partnership between DST and Swiss Development Cooperation is indeed an example of fruitful collaboration between the two countries in areas of mutual interest. It plays a crucial role in the implementation of the National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem (NMSHE) – one important Mission within the Government of India's National Action Plan on Climate Change. It thus further enhances our longstanding collaboration to strengthen research capacities and the exchange among researchers of the two countries.

Starting in 2012, the collaboration under the Indian Himalayas Climate Adaptation Programme (IHCAP) has achieved good results, such as the training of 54 young researchers in the field of glaciology or also the capacity building on planning for climate change adaptation of over 120 officials of the state government of Himachal Pradesh. The experience from IHCAP implementation has also established a solid multi-stakeholder coalition to realise the ambitious agenda of NMSHE.

Despite all the good work that is taking place to address the impacts of climate change in the Himalayan region, there remains much to do. The Himalayas are one of the world's most sensitive hotspots to global climate change, with impact showing at a particularly rapid rate. The Himalayas not only provide a critical habitat but also act as repositories of natural resources such as forests and water, provide ecosystem services and are valued for their aesthetic and spiritual characteristics.

The impacts of climate change in the Himalayas are real. Changes in Himalayan glaciers, erratic and unpredictable weather conditions, changing rainfall patterns and increasing temperatures are impacting the livelihoods of the people and wildlife in the

region. The scale of weather-related disasters in recent years is the face of the foreseeable future as climate change intensifies.

We must step up our efforts to put climate change at the centre of our development efforts. The partnership between Switzerland and India is based on this premise: to ensure that development dividends from joint cooperation and investments are maximized for the benefit of local, most impacted populations. Over the next three years, the IHCAP will facilitate implementation of the NMSHE across Himalayan States as a technical and knowledge partner.

As the Swiss Ambassador to both India and Bhutan, I have noted that there is significant scope for regional cooperation and exchange of knowledge and experiences among the mountain countries of South Asia. This requires providing space for the exchange of experiences. I am glad to learn that DST and SDC are planning to organise workshops with the involvement of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD).

Switzerland played an important role in the setting-up of the ICIMOD; this inter-governmental organisation remains our valued partner. As a mountain country, Switzerland has been active in promoting sustainable mountain development and we are fully committed to this cause.

The aim of today's and tomorrow's workshop is to discuss the implementation of the planned activities under the IHCAP and the NMSHE, to review the ongoing initiatives and to launch a discussion on the emerging critical issue of how to manage springs in the Himalayan states. I wish you fruitful deliberations. We are looking forward to working with all partners represented here today to bring ahead the vision of the NMSHE in order to move towards a sustainable Himalayan region.

Once again let me thank Prof. Sharma, Dr. Gupta and the team at DST for their leadership in implementing the NMSHE mission. We are happy to partner with you in this important journey.