

Mountains Connect Brief

Experience exchange between the Andes, Alps and Carpathians

Exploring mountain governance paths for climate resilient development



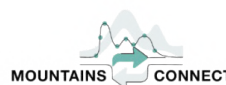
Andes



Alps



Carpathians



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"The observation mission allowed us to ascertain that the path taken so far by the Andean Mountain Initiative is similar to the processes experienced by the Alpine Convention and the Carpathian Convention. Cooperation ties were strengthened at all levels, giving us the opportunity to develop projects that promote common interests in the future."

Luis Fernando Becerra
Humboldt Institute, Colombia
AMI Regional Coordination Representative

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The Andes meet the Alps and the Carpathians

The Study Trip of Andean Mountain Initiative (AMI) delegates to Europe was developed with the idea to promote exchange with their counterparts in the Alpine Convention and the Carpathian Convention, with the fundamental objective of strengthening cooperation between the world's regional mountain platforms. The trip took place during the first half of June of 2023, covered visits to three countries (Austria, Poland, Slovenia), and was centered on sharing approaches and mechanisms for regional governance in mountain ranges for the benefit of people and ecosystems.

A series of meetings of AMI representatives with their peers from both conventions as well as field visits provided opportunities to share the history and recent milestones of the Initiative. Above all, participants learned from each other through collaborative formats, presentations and participatory methods. With an agenda focused on opening spaces for dialogue and cooperation, the visit of the AMI delegates allowed them to share experiences on the consolidation of governance platforms and the initiatives for sustainable



AMI delegates visiting the Slovenian Presidency of the Alpine Convention
Luis Daniel Llambi

development that are being carried out in the mountain ranges of both continents.

The trip was organized by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Consortium for the Sustainable Development of the Andean Ecoregion (CONDESAN), the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention (PSAC) and the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention (SCC).

The Andean delegation was composed of María Argüello, Executive Director of CONDESAN; Luis Daniel Llambi, coordinator of the Adaptation at Altitude - Andes program; Karen Price, Technical Secretary of the Initiative; Carlos Montoya, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Peru; and Luis Fernando Becerra, from the Humboldt Institute of Colombia (representatives of the previous and current Regional Coordination of the AMI). This Mountain Governance Brief aims to summarize the trip, lessons learned, and recommendations for action for policy representatives involved in mountain range governance.



Alps near Chamonix, France
Luis Daniel Llambi

Three ranges, three approaches to mountain governance and sustainable development



Alpine Convention



The first international treaty that covers an entire mountain range crossing the national borders of Germany, Austria, Slovenia, France, Italy, Liechtenstein, Monaco and Switzerland with more than 30 years of continuous work. Its objective is to protect and sustainably develop the Alps and their unique natural and cultural heritage.

<https://www.alpconv.org>

Carpathian Convention



A multinational environmental agreement established in 2003 by seven countries - Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine - to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the area while promoting sustainable development in the Carpathians.

<http://www.carpathianconvention.org>

Andean Mountain Initiative



A platform formed by the seven countries of the Andes: Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Peru and Venezuela. Seeks to strengthen the regional dialogue with the purpose of promoting and undertaking joint actions aimed at the conservation and sustainable development of the Andean mountains.

<https://iam-andes.org>



Beyond the Valleys: importance of mountain governance in a changing climate



Nestled in the high Andes of Bolivia and Peru, water levels of the transboundary Lake Titicaca have fallen almost 4 meters since 1986, reaching a recent record low in August 2023 of 3,087.8 meters above sea level, due to severe drought and high temperatures. This threatens century old ways of life of farmers, fishermen and indigenous communities (Associated Press, 2023).



Heavy rains in the South-Eastern Alps have led to catastrophic flooding in Slovenia and Austria in August 2023, at least eight people lost their lives, and infrastructure damage exceeded one billion euros. When the water masses drowned entire villages, downstream Slovenia requested the Austrian authorities not to release more waters from upstream dams.



More than 130 km² of spruce forest in the High Tatra mountains, stretching across Poland and Slovakia, disappeared in the early 2000s due to strong winds, drought and bark beetle infestations. This in turn has led to increased erosion, accelerated runoff and other challenges across the mountain range (Faltan et al. 2021).

These brief excerpts from the Andes, Alps and Carpathians share a common thread: mountains are highly susceptible climate change hotspots. The impacts of the climate crisis know no boundaries and regional collaboration and transboundary governance are key to managing and protecting our vast mountain resources. To address current and future climate change risks, mountain countries need to come together, share data and information, form joint committees, develop and implement jointly policies and take decisions that benefit all countries equitably. A lack of cooperation may lead to missed opportunities to address climate risks and adequately manage mountain resources, which could cause social unrest and spark conflict within and between countries. (IPCC AR6 WGII Cross-Chapter Paper 5 on Mountains (Adler et al. 2022)).

The IPCC's Special Report on Oceans and Cryosphere (2019) refers to governance as an *'effort to establish, reaffirm or change formal and informal institutions at all scales to negotiate relationships, resolve social conflicts and realize mutual gains'*.

Regional cooperation and governance in transboundary mountain ranges has a long history, with a wide range of institutional arrangements and practices having emerged since the Rio conference in 1992. Mountain range governance aspects can be analyzed along six dimensions (Balsiger et al. 2020), namely:

- Territoriality
- Formality
- Cross-sectoral integration
- Civil Society organisations participation
- Science-policy interaction
- Climate change adaptation


More information about these dimensions and where different mountain regions stand can be found on the knowledge space: www.mountains-connect.org

How does this work in the context of mountains?

Governance not only refers to government, which is a formal arm of the state; other agents such as community organizations, non-profit organizations and businesses play a vital role in society, influence individual or collective decisions, and can participate in addressing climate change impacts, sustainable resource management and resilient development. To comprehend the processes of governance in mountain areas, we need to recognize how each of these stakeholders adds to the enduring task of enabling and managing change at the system level, but also to preserving social structures and reconciling disputes.

Mountain governance must include not only countries located in the mountains, but all those who benefit from their resources.

For the sustainable and resilient development of mountain regions, governance mechanisms may be different than those applied to the management of other socio-ecosystems, such as coastal zones or lowland forests. Mountain governance, therefore, is about managing resources across political boundaries for the benefit of all countries and their inhabitants, including downstream areas that rely on resources from the mountains such as fresh water.

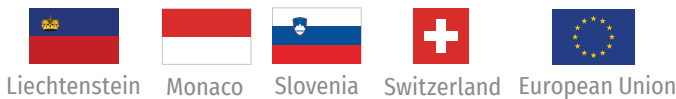
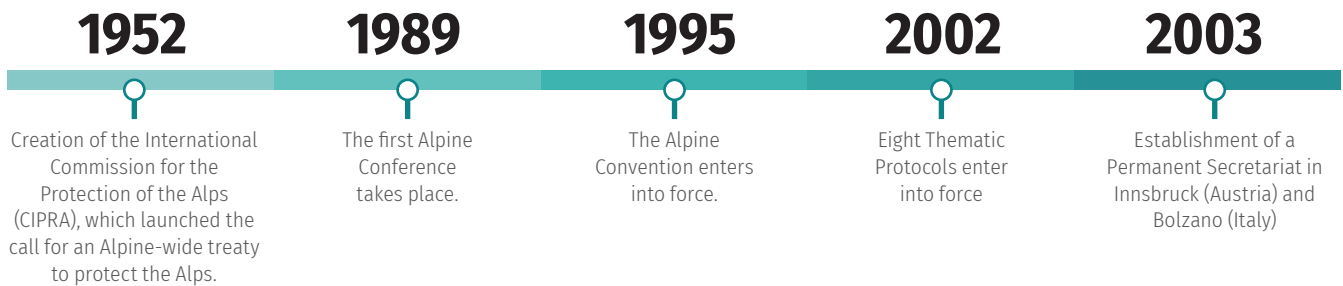


Mountain governance, describes actions of national and sub-national governments, non-governmental organizations, civil society, research and private-sector institutions for establishing institutional strategies, rules and norms for managing resources such as pastures, forests, glaciers, highlands or biodiversity hotspots, across political boundaries for the benefit of all.



Alpine Convention

<https://www.alpconv.org>



Objective

"To promote a comprehensive policy for the preservation and protection of the Alps by applying the principles of prevention, payment by the polluter and cooperation through the prudent and sustained use of resources, in particular in the following areas: population and culture, spatial planning, prevention of air pollution, soil conservation, nature protection and landscape conservation, mountain farming, mountain forests, tourism and recreation, transport, energy and waste management".



Carpathian Convention

<http://www.carpathianconvention.org/>



2001

An intergovernmental consultation process among the Carpathian countries with the aim of drafting an international convention on the Carpathian Mountains.

2003

Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians was adopted.

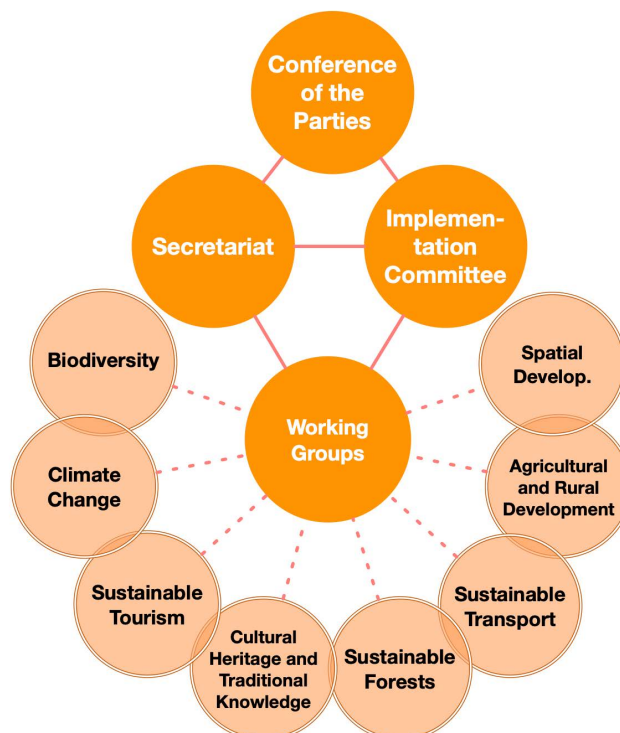
2004

The Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention (SCC), hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), was opened.



Objective

"To pursue comprehensive policy and cooperation in order to guarantee protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians. The improvement of the quality of live, the strengthening of local economies and communities, and the conservation of natural values and cultural heritage should go hand in hand in the Carpathian area".





Andean Mountain Initiative

<http://iam-andes.org>

2007



Tucuman Statement. Agreement to create a regional platform in the Andes.

2017



Coordination mechanism was adopted by the countries.

2018



Council of Members Countries was created.

2020-2023



Action Plan 2022 – 2026 formulated, Governance Roadmap adopted and Task/Thematic Groups are operating.



Argentina



Bolivia



Chile



Colombia



Ecuador



Perú



Venezuela

Objective

"To encourage cooperation and agreements between the countries in order to facilitate decisions aimed at the sustainable development of mountain areas and their populations, promoting adequate management, handling, conservation and governance of mountain ecosystems and the development of policies, strategies, plans and programs focused on the development of the mountain populations of the member countries, and on facing climate change."



Why a Study Visit?



- **To foster interregional exchange** between mountain regions and learn from each other through collaborative formats, shadowing, field visits, presentations and participatory learning.

- **To strengthen the AMI** for the implementation of its Action Plan 2022-2026 and Governance Roadmap.

- **To co-create knowledge and learning** from the Alpine, Andean, and Carpathian experiences as mechanisms of regional cooperation, through in-person exchanges.

- **To build capacity and transfer knowledge** as well as experiences between the AMI, the Alpine Convention and its Contracting Parties and the Carpathian Convention and its Contracting Parties.

- **To exchange in-depth** on issues and concrete learnings of mountain range governance, including:

- Formality of agreements between member countries
- Institutional and financial sustainability of the platforms
- Participation of civil society and academia
- Governance levels / strategies
- Implementation of regional policies, strategies and projects.

- **To identify opportunities** and mechanisms for sustained interregional cooperation about:

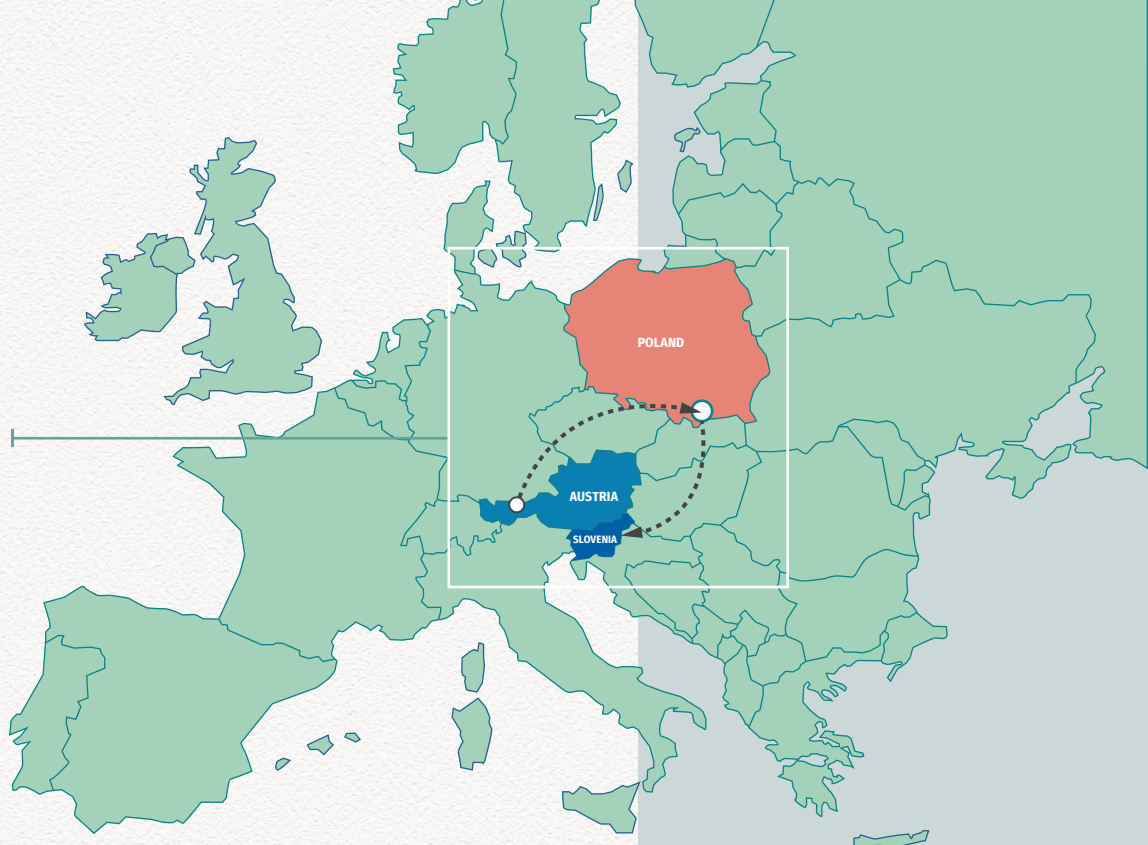
- Climate change and adaptation.
- Promotion of sustainable tourism and economic development
- Strengthening of regional identities.
- Alliances and collaboration networks.

UNEP facilitated the study visit together with CONDESAN, the PSAC and CCS under its interregional work of the Adaptation at Altitude Programme. UNEP acts as leading voice for the global environment and has longstanding experience negotiating and implementing Multi-lateral Environmental Agreements, both on global as well as regional level. Over the past years, UNEP has supported mountain regions in strengthening dialogue and cooperation for their sustainable and climate-resilient development.

AUSTRIA
Innsbruck / June 13

POLAND
Mszana Dolna / June 14-16
Gorczański National Park / June 15

SLOVENIA
Ljubljana/ June 19
Triglav National Park/ June 20
Radovljica/June 21-22



The Agenda


Tuesday, June 13
Innsbruck, Austria

Meeting at the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention, with UNEP and the AMI Technical Secretary, to share experiences and visions on priority areas of governance.

Exchange between Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention and Technical Secretariat of the Andean Mountain Initiative

The delegation from the Technical Secretariat of the AMI visited the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention in Innsbruck, Austria. Delegates learned about the history and organization of the Convention, and how it structures its activities under the Multi-annual Work Programme 2023-2030, around the three key themes: Biodiversity and Ecosystems, Climate Change and Quality of Life. Among other aspects, it was discussed how each country under the Convention maintains monitoring of the actions implemented, and how the Permanent Secretariat is funded through core contributions by the Contracting Parties, secondments and EU projects. The importance of the report on the State of the Alps published under each Presidency (currently, Slovenia focuses on the topic of Quality of Life) was highlighted. There was also space to learn about the Convention's cultural outreach initiatives, such as the "Reading Mountains" literature festival, held in connection with International Mountain Day. In turn, the PSAC learned about the history, the institutional set-up, the working methods and the priorities of the current Action Plan of the AMI. Lastly, the whole team went up more than 1,300 meters in altitude to the "Seegrube" to be inspired by Alpine views and discuss more informally the ins and outs of mountain governance over lunch.



AMI, UNEP and PSAC delegates
Innsbruck


Wednesday, June 14
Mszana Dolna, Poland

"From the Carpathians to the Andes" event. An exchange on regional approaches to sustainable mountain development, it included presentations by the AMI and the Carpathian Convention, and an open space for exchange.

Thursday, June 15
Mszana Dolna and Gorczanski National Park, Poland

Internal meeting of the AMI. Participation in the Shadow Session I of the 14th Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee (14th CCIC) focused on reporting on progress in implementation of the Convention and preparation for the 7th Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention (COP7), including the negotiation of the COP7 resolutions. The meeting celebrated as well the 20th Anniversary of the Carpathian Convention.

Friday, June 16
Mszana Dolna, Poland

Participation in the Shadow Session III of the 14th CCIC Meeting. Continuation of the process of negotiation of the draft COP7 decisions.

Study visit to the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee (CCIC)

Poland, as the Presidency of the Carpathian Convention, hosted the 14th Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee, where the AMI delegates participated as observers. There they met their counterparts from the Carpathian countries, as well as the Carpathian Convention Secretariat, and learned about the Carpathian Convention's process, structures and operations. While having the opportunity to follow as observers the official proceedings of the Implementation Committee, which is a monitoring body of the Convention, the AMI delegates learned as well how this the Convention promotes the participation of civil society in its actions, inviting observers from key institutions linked to research and management in the Carpathians to actively participate in its meetings. The delegates discussed topics such as financing mechanisms, the formality of existing agreements and the processes of science-policy dialogue. Regarding this last aspect, the importance of the Forum Carpaticum events was highlighted. This is a series of scientific conferences in which scientists and delegates of the Convention share advances in research in the region, later synthesized into a series of concrete recommendations for the formulation of policies; it is inspired by its Alpine counterpart, the Forum Alpinum. During the meeting the participants discussed about opportunities for cooperation and further exchange between the mountain regions, including a possible development of a joint memorandum of cooperation between the mountain regions.

The delegates were invited to join celebrations of the 20th anniversary of the Carpathian Convention, hosted by Poland, which gave an opportunity to learn further about the history of the Convention and the relations that have been built through years-long cooperation based on trust and mutual understanding.

Furthermore, the delegation had the opportunity to visit to the Gorczanski National Park, and discuss current issues for its management and conservation in the face of climate and land use change.



Mszana Dolna National Park
AMI



14th Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee
AMI



Meeting Venue
AMI



Visit to the Mszana Dolna National Park
AMI

- **Monday, June 19**
Ljubljana, Slovenia
Meeting with the Alpine Convention Presidency at the Ministry of the Natural Resources and Spatial Planning.
- **Tuesday, June 20**
Mojstrana, Slovenia
Visit to the Slovenian Alpine Museum, Excursion to the Triglav National Park and the Alpine Convention Infopoint.
Bled, Slovenia
Meeting at the Triglav National Park Center with National Park staff.
- **Wednesday, June 21**
Radovljica, Slovenia
Participation in PC 76 meeting. Excursion to the eco-garden, with participants of the meeting. official dinner at Bled castle.
- **Thursday, June 22**
Radovljica, Slovenia
Participation in PC 76 meeting. Presentation of the AMI, open discussion with members of the Permanent Committee of the Alpine Convention.

Study visit to the Alpine Convention Permanent Committee

In Slovenia, the country that holds the presidency between 2022-24 of the Alpine Convention, the AMI delegation first met in Ljubljana with the team of the Presidency and the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention, at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning of Slovenia. There, they discussed how the Alpine Convention sets up the Multi-Annual Work Programme, the priorities of presidencies and some anecdotes for overcoming challenges in cooperation between diverse partners. Slovenia's identity is closely linked to the mountains, with the Alpine Association of Slovenia being one of the largest NGOs in the country in terms of membership. The AMI shared its own history and governance set-up with the colleagues and built personal relationships. Next, the delegation visited the Triglav National Park, the only one in the country, where the last glaciated area is about to disappear and the Alpine Convention Infopoint in Mojstrana. In a meeting with the Park's directors, aspects such as the complex challenges for its management, the communication strategies using the Alpine InfoPoints model, and education for climate change were discussed.

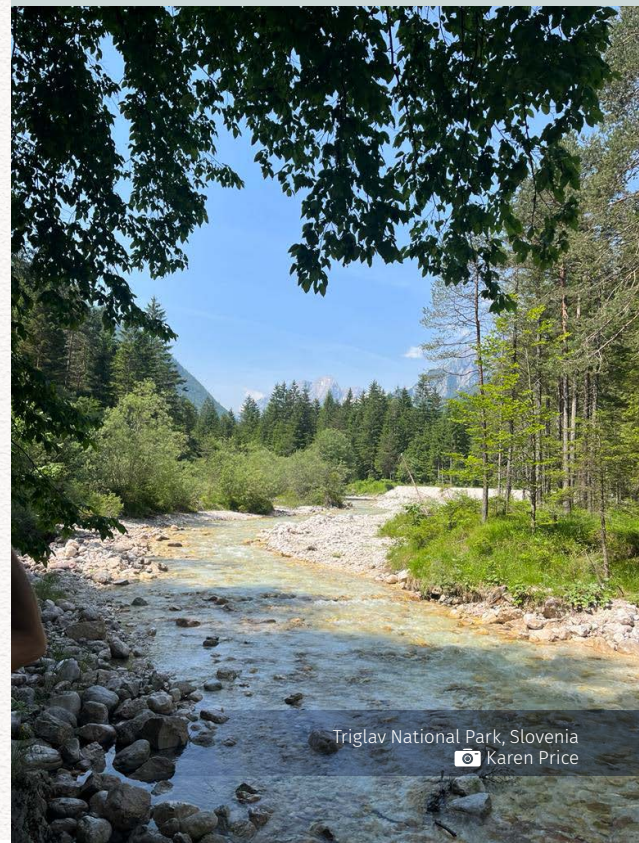
Finally, in the city of Radovljica, the delegation attended as guests the 76th Meeting of the Permanent Committee of the Alpine Convention, where they witnessed first-hand discussions around the actions promoted by the Alpine Climate Board, including the climate education strategy, as well as the active participation of the Youth Parliament of the Alpine Convention (YPAC) and a number of observer organizations, including the Alpine Network of Protected Areas (ALPARC). Concrete follow-up actions include e.g. future joint events at global level such as the UNFCCC COP, a possible Andean edition of the Reading Mountains festival and an invitation to Alpine Convention representatives to participate at the next in-person meeting of the AMI for exchange of information. The added value of interregional exchange and cooperation between mountain regions was also highlighted by the representative of the incoming Presidency, Italy.



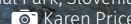
Meeting of Permanent Committee of the Alpine Convention in Radovljica, Slovenia



Delegates of AMI, UNEP and Alpine Convention, Slovenia



Triglav National Park, Slovenia



Karen Price

Mountains Connect Brief

Inside Mountain Governance »

• Governance and Sustainability

• Thematic Working Bodies

• Civil Society Participation and Science

• Policy Instruments and Strategies

Inside Mountain Governance

Governance and Sustainability



Alpine Convention



Carpathian Convention



Andean Mountain Initiative

- **Alpine Conference:** The political decision-making body of the Alpine Convention meeting at ministerial level. Decisions are adopted by consensus.

- **Presidency:** Rotating every two years. The responsible country can set priority issues.

- **Permanent Secretariat:** Has its own legal personality, with staff from different disciplines. Assumes the technical and administrative support of all bodies of the Convention. Disseminates information about the Convention, its Protocols and its achievements. Operates the Alpine Observation and Information System (SOIA).

- **Sustainability of financing:** The legal status of the Permanent Secretariat allows to manage funds. Its fixed costs are covered by the countries contributions. The area and population in the Alps determine the size of each country's monetary contribution: GDP (10%) + Alpine population (45%) + Alpine area (45%). The budget covers staff costs, meetings, and activities related to the Presidency, Contracting Parties and observers and own activities. The Permanent Secretariat participates in projects co-financed by the EU.

- **Conference of the Parties:** The main decision-making body of the Convention. Adopts COP Decisions, scale of contributions, budget and the Program of Work. The COP meetings are organized at ministerial level every 3 years.

- **Presidency:** Rotating every 3 years. Has the power to define priorities.

- **Secretariat:** It has a legal basis for its operation. UNEP provides the Secretariat in its Vienna Programme Office with full-time staff. It supports the work of the different bodies of the Convention by coordinating the Programme of Work; assisting in project development and implementation; coordinating the COP; facilitating research, communication, information exchange; and representing the Convention and coordinating its activities with external relations.

- **Sustainability of financing:** Based on the COP decisions and agreed scale, the Parties provide annual contributions for the operations of the Convention's bodies, including its Secretariat. In cooperation with stakeholders, the Secretariat obtains funds for the implementation activities from EU programmes and other donors, while UNEP provides additional support to the Secretariat.

- **Council of Member Countries (CMC):** Main decision body of the AMI, meets one of more times per year face-to-face or online. It includes political and technical focal points from each country.

- **Regional Coordination:** It is assumed by one country, rotating every two years based on postulation and formal decision of the CMC. Currently held by Colombia.

- **Technical Secretariat:** Offers technical and administrative support to the CMC and the Regional Coordination. Currently held by CONDESAN.

- **Sustainability of financing:** The operating costs of the Initiative, which includes the Technical Secretariat, activities, materials, etc., are supported by regional projects developed with cooperation funds (e.g. SDC/COSUDE).

The Technical Secretariat (currently CONDESAN), with the support of strategic partners such as UNEP, facilitate the development of proposals and promotion of alliances for the financing of the AMI.

Thematic Working Bodies



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Alpine Convention

1. Biodiversity
2. Climate Change
3. Large Carnivores, Wild Ungulates and Society
4. Mountain Agriculture and Mountain Forests
5. Soil Protection
6. Natural Hazards
7. Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development
8. Transport

Led by countries. Implement bi-annual mandates which may include the development of strategic guidelines, reports and recommendations. Example: Alpine Climate Board developed Climate Action Plan. (www.alpineclimate2050.org)



© barnyz

Carpathian Convention

1. Biodiversity
2. Climate Change
3. Sustainable Tourism
4. Cultural Heritage and Traditional Knowledge
5. Sustainable Forests
6. Sustainable Transport
7. Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD)
8. Spatial Development



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Andean Mountain Initiative

WORKING GROUPS

1. Governance
2. Finance
3. Knowledge Management and Communications

THEMATIC PRIORITIES

- Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
- Climate Change and Risk Management
- Water Resources and Food Security
- Health and Reduction of Poverty

Inside Mountain Governance

Civil Society Participation and Science



Alpine Convention



Carpathian Convention



Andean Mountain Initiative

The NGO CIPRA initiated the idea of the **Alpine Convention** in 1952.

15 transnational public and private bodies are currently observers with an advisory function in the bodies of the **Alpine Convention**.

The **International Scientific Committee on Research in the Alps ISCAR** promotes international cooperation in Alpine research. In its function as Observer to the **Alpine Convention** bodies **ISCAR** provides research and scientific expertise and takes up research needs.

Observers play a crucial role in implementing the **Carpathian Convention**, presenting relevant information and reports, and contributing to activities related to the Convention's work.

Civil society organizations are allowed to participate in meetings as observers.

Science for the Carpathians (S4C), is a network of scientists, that develops and implements the **Research Agenda for the Carpathians**, promoting research coordination and collaborations across disciplines and national boundaries. Holds a biannual conference, Forum Carpatikum.

Project **"Strengthening the Environmental, Political and Societal (ESD) network in the Carpathian Convention via science-policy-practice interface"** recommends strategies and actions on how best to integrate ESD into **Carpathian Convention** activities.

Strategic Agenda for Adaptation to Climate Change

Promote the implementation of strategies for adaptation to climate change, sustainable land management, conservation, restoration and sustainable use of biological diversity.

Strengthen inter-regional exchange and cooperation processes. Recognize the relevance of scientific research and technological development.

The Governance Roadmap of the **AMI** calls for developing mechanisms to increase participation and exchange with civil-society and academia.

Inside Mountain Governance

Policy Instruments and Strategies



© Luis Daniel Etambi

Alpine Convention

8 Protocols entered into force in 2002:

- Spatial planning and sustainable development
- Mountain farming
- Nature protection and landscape conservation
- Mountain forests
- Tourism
- Energy
- Soil conservation
- Transport

Declarations:

- Population and Culture (2006)
- Climate Change in the Alps (2006)
- Green Economy in the Alps (2016)
- Climate neutral and climate resilient Alps 2050 (2019)
- Water management in the Alps (2020)
- Mountain Biodiversity (2020)

3rd Multi-Annual Work Programme (MAP) 2017-2022:

People & Culture – Climate Change
Biodiversity & Landscape – Green Economy
Sustainable Transport

4th Multi-Annual Work Programme (MAP) 2023-2030:

Biodiversity & Ecosystems
Climate Change
Quality of Life



© Pawel Kosmala

Carpathian Convention

5 Thematic Protocols of the Convention:

- Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Landscape Diversity
- Sustainable Tourism
- Sustainable Forest Management
- Sustainable Transport
- Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development

Recent Ministerial Declarations:

- COP7 Ministerial Declaration – Empowering the Carpathian Vision 2050
- Carpathian Convention commitments on the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework
- Declaration of the Carpathian Convention on the impact of war on the environment in Ukraine and the need for cooperation and assistance

COP7 Decisions, including the Programme of Work 2024-2026

Carpathian Biodiversity Framework – regional instrument for supporting implantation of the Global Biodiversity Framework in the Carpathian region.



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Andean Mountain Initiative

- The Huaraz Call to Action, (2022)
- Declaration on Mountain Ecosystems (2023, under final revision).
- Participation in international fora:
 - COP, Monfu (2023),
 - World Paramos Congress (Colombia, 2023), Mountains Connect (Vienna, 2022),
 - 6th meeting of the Mountain Partnership (Aspen 2022).

Infographic pieces on Andean Biodiversity, Andean People, and Climate Change

Communication strategy: development of the AMI webpage (in English, Spanish, Quechua and Aymara), diffusion of activities through social media.

Focus on the Mountains

For the AMI, a communication strategy is of paramount importance. Special attention was paid during the Mission to study the communication, diffusion and awareness-raising activities of the Conventions, as an input for the challenges ahead. Some examples of these efforts in the three ranges include:

Event of the Alpine Town of the Year Association, aimed at encouraging tourism. AC



The Andes Infographs, synthesis up-to-date information on themes such as Climate Change, Biodiversity, and Andean People and Cultures. AMI



Science for the Carpathians: Scientific conference and science policy forum. Solution-oriented science competition. The themes vary, the winners present the results to the member countries. CC



Communication Strategy: social media, information on webpage and videos promote Andean culture both in Spanish and Andean Quechua and Aymara languages. AMI



Champions of the Earth Award, celebrates and honors every year outstanding personalities, groups and organizations whose achievements have a transformative impact for the environment. [UNEP]



AC Alpine Convention

CC Carpathian Convention

AMI Andean Mountain Initiative

[UNEP] United Nations Environment Programme



Annual photography contest, with a printed and virtual calendar prepared with the winning photos. AC



Event **Youth at the Top**, a project of the Alpine and the Carpathian Networks of Protected Areas, to promote the development of audiovisual materials (short films, photographs, etc.). AC CC



Digital platform Alpine Observation and Information System (SOIA). Based on secondary information and official data from Contracting Parties. Includes the regular **Reports on the State of the Alps and the Alpine Atlas**, showcasing the current state of the mountain range through a series of detailed maps. AC



Youth Parliament, at the secondary and high school level. Sessions take place once a year with topics that closely follow the protocols of the Alpine Convention. AC



Reading Mountains, a literature festival about the Alps within the framework of International Mountain Day. Aimed at the general public and students, it is organized with the participation of libraries and schools. AC



Young Academics Award, for outstanding master theses carried out on relevant Alpine topics. AC

Lessons Learned and Opportunities

Working together: platforms unite

- **The main value of the platforms is working together and building trust on personal as well as institutional level.** Regional platforms can supersede the changing international political context, and keep building relationships and taking on common challenges around a mountain range. This continuity of cooperation, personal connections between individuals and organizations, and established mechanisms allow the implementation of long-term programs and policies.
- **Strengthening the vision of belonging to the mountains,** as a common heritage, is a challenge assumed jointly. Common messages from the member countries, their individuals, civil society organizations and local actors define shared goals and are reinforced in each convention.
- **Cooperation between Conventions (Alpine, Carpathian, CBD, and others...),** and close relationship between the secretariats facilitates the access and exchange of information, in a timely and direct manner from the organizations in charge of generating it. In October 2023, for instance, the Alpine Convention, Carpathian Convention and Convention on Biological Diversity signed a Memorandum of Cooperation.

Institutionalize cooperation

- **Importance of formality for institutional and financial sustainability:** Legal formality, such as a legally binding Convention, provides international recognition, decision-making capacity and increasing the political impact of these decisions. Establishing formal cooperation structures has been a long and progressive construction process. One of the main achievements of the Alpine and Carpathian Conventions has been a consolidated technical secretariat, with self-financing and dedicated multidisciplinary and international staff, mostly from the Convention Contracting Parties.
- **Promoting existing collectives or thematic initiatives,** such as protected area or thematic working groups, and events such as international conferences, facilitates the integration process, the exchange of learning and enhances the use of resources.
- **Mainstreaming gender and equity approaches,** integrating gender and equity approaches into all mountain-related strategies and policies is emphasized. The exchange highlights that gender equity and inclusion are fundamental pillars for sustainable development in mountainous regions and must be considered in all actions and projects.



Integration: all actors needed

- **The participation of academia and civil society as observers.** For the Alpine and Carpathian Conventions this has allowed social oversight, exchange of visions and contributions, contact with territorial realities, promoting spaces for science-policy dialogue and strengthening decision-making based on evidence; also, the generation of contributions from the Conventions through reports on the state of the mountains, integrated and easily accessible information systems; active participation of civil society and academia contributes to performance evaluation and transparency.
- **Importance of inter-sectoral work:** Transversal activities of strategic sectors such as agriculture, energy, infrastructure, health, protected areas, etc. based on strategies and legally binding thematic protocols are necessary to meet the complex challenges of mountain regions.
- **Working with multiple stakeholders,** each playing a role in mountain management, contributes in various ways to a common goal of mountain sustainability and resilience and guarantees a wider participation of relevant stakeholders across a wider diversity of important issues. The Alpine and Carpathian Conventions are structured to make this happen, with mechanisms to formally include observers in their activities and decision-making.
- **Promotion of alliances with the private sector.** The possibility of establishing strategic alliances with the private sector is identified to promote investment in sustainability initiatives in the mountains.

Knowledge and communication

- **Technological resources for knowledge management:** Initiatives such as the Alpine Atlas use technology and digital platforms to strengthen monitoring and manage data in mountainous regions. Data management and its availability through open online platforms allow greater efficiency in project coordination and resource optimization, in addition to facilitating the development of timely information.
- **Development of effective communication strategies,** that promote awareness and public commitment to the protection and conservation of mountains is highlighted. Strategic and accessible communication is crucial to mobilize support and resources in the implementation of policies and actions for sustainable mountain management.
- **Communication, education and sensitivity relevant activities:** Cultural activities that strengthen the population's relationships with the mountains, promote globally the mountain agenda, and disseminate knowledge on mountain regions are sponsored or facilitated on a regular basis.
- **Promotion of environmental education and awareness:** A key opportunity lies in the promotion of environmental education in schools and local communities. This approach seeks to raise awareness of the challenges and importance of mountains, as well as inspire individual and collective actions for the environment and sustainability.



Looking Ahead: fostering interregional cooperation

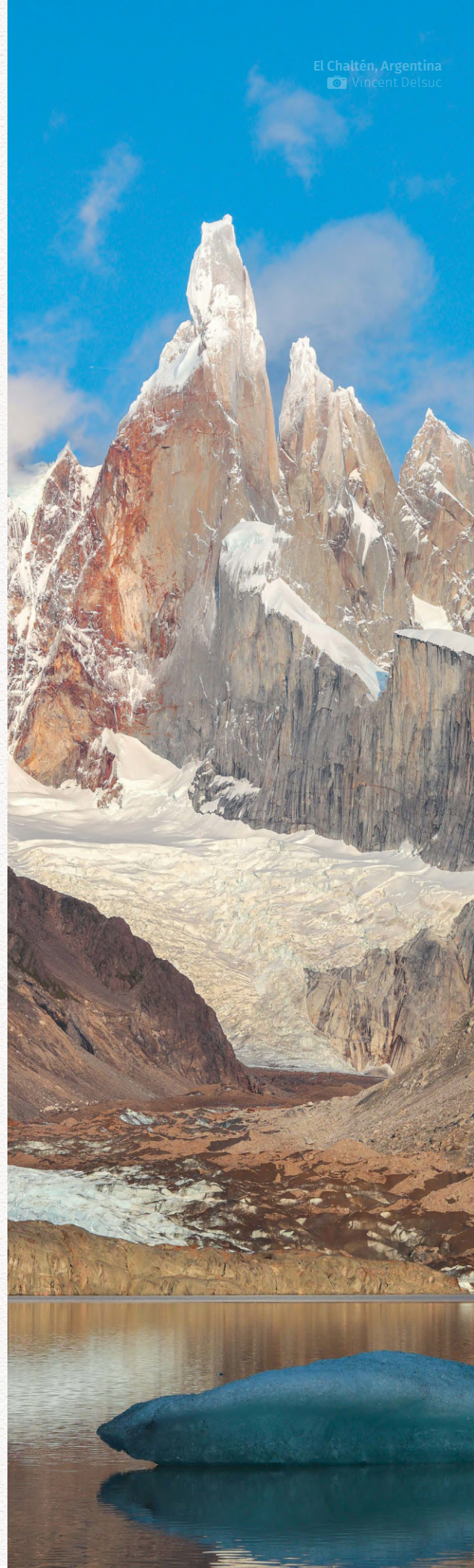
Recommendations for regional mountain platforms

- **Alliances and collaboration networks:** Identify opportunities to establish alliances and collaboration networks within and between mountain ranges and between key actors, including local governments, civil society, academic institutions and the private sector, with the objective of promoting long-term cooperation to address common challenges and goals of sustainable development in mountainous regions.
- **Gender and equality:** The exchange highlights that gender equity and inclusion are fundamental pillars for sustainable development in mountainous regions and must be considered in all actions and projects.
- **Resource optimization through technological collaboration:** Strengthen or develop digital information platforms, support monitoring efforts and knowledge management, promoting dissemination of knowledge and scientific data that allows for greater efficiency in project coordination and resource optimization, as well as science-policy dialogue and informed decision making.
- **Strengthening regional identity:** Facilitate cultural exchange and strengthening regional identity among communities in mountainous regions, promoting the preservation of local traditions, language, products, food, crafts and other cultural expressions unique to each region.
- **Promotion of environmental education and awareness:** A key opportunity lies in the promotion of environmental education in schools and local communities. This approach seeks to raise awareness of the challenges and importance of mountains, as well as inspire individual and collective actions for the environment and sustainability.
- **Mainstreaming of climate change:** Considerations of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to unavoidable impacts of climate change should be mainstreamed across all activities, working groups, and stakeholders of a mountain platform. Mountain regions can be models and leaders in the transition towards climate neutrality and resilience, fostering innovation and traditional knowledge.



Recommendations for interregional cooperation

- **On climate change and adaptation:** Exchange experiences and learnings on how mountain regions are facing the impacts of climate change, sharing effective strategies and lessons learned to strengthen adaptive capacity.
- **On promotion of sustainable tourism and economic development:** Analyze sustainable tourism and economic development practices in mountainous regions, exchanging ideas on how to promote responsible tourism that contributes to local socioeconomic development and at the same time preserves the natural and cultural environment.
- **Continue to strengthen spaces for interregional exchange** such as the Mountains Connect initiative and study visits between mountain platforms is key to further consolidate regional mountain range governance, strengthen its structures and the capacities of key stakeholders.
- **Collaborate for advocacy on global level:** Strengthen the development of a common voice from mountain regions and an increased participation of mountain countries and regional governance structures in global fora and negotiation spaces, building mountain advocacy from the bottom up.
- **Discuss, develop and implement innovative approaches for climate-resilient development:** Many successfully implemented and tested methodologies and formats exist to communicate the importance of climate-resilient development, regional mountain-wide exchange and adaptation solutions, e.g. through serious games, escape rooms, interactive infopoints and summer schools to name a few. More joint innovative and engaging approaches should be developed to reach a wide audience of policy makers, practitioners, researchers and the general public.



Mountains Connect Brief

Experience exchange between the Andes, Alps and Carpathians

Exploring mountain governance paths for climate resilient development

Links

Alpine Convention: <https://www.alpconv.org>

Carpathian Convention: <http://www.carpathianconvention.org>

Andean Mountain Initiative: <https://iam-andes.org>

UN Environment Programme: <https://www.unep.org>

Consortium for the Sustainable Development of the Andean Ecoregion: <https://condesan.org>

Adaptation at Altitude: <https://adaptationataltitude.org>

Adaptation at Altitude – Andes: <https://adaptacion-alturas.condesan.org>

Mountains Connect: <https://mountains-connect.org>

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