



ARMF2024 DECLARATION

Kigali Declaration on Sustainable Mountain Development in Africa Adopted at the Africa Regional Mountains Forum (ARMF) 2024 Kigali, Rwanda | December 11, 2024

We, the participants of the Africa Regional Mountains Forum (ARMF) 2024 organized by the Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS Network) in collaboration with its partners, convened in Kigali, Rwanda, under the theme “*Mountains, Water, and Climate: Innovation for a Sustainable Future,*” and representing governments, civil society, academia, the private sector, and local communities, here by affirm the following:

Recognizing the Critical Role of African Mountains

1. Mountains are vital ecosystems that provide indispensable services to humanity and the environment. They:
 - Serve as natural water towers, supplying freshwater to millions of African population living downstream.
 - Host many of Africa’s biodiversity hotspots, home to endemic species which are critical to the continent’s ecological balance and resilience.
 - Provide livelihoods for over 200 million people in Africa, many of whom depend on agriculture, forestry, and tourism.
2. Recognizing that Africa Mountain Ecosystems are among the most fragile and vulnerable, disproportionately affected by:
 - Climate change, resulting in melting glaciers, erratic rainfall, and extreme weather events.
 - Water scarcity, threatening agriculture, energy production, and communities’ well-being.
 - Unsustainable land management practices.
3. Commend the role played by ARCOS Network in leading conservation and restoration efforts across Africa’s mountain ecosystems. This exemplary leadership has not only driven the impactful change but also attracted international recognition. Notably, ARCOS was honored with the Albert Mountain Award 2024, issued by the King Albert I Memorial Foundation (KAMF) for its outstanding and sustained contribution towards mountain conservation and sustainable development across Africa.

Reaffirming and embracing alignment with National, Regional and Global Priorities

- Reaffirm the importance of Africa's mountains in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to water (SDG 6), climate action (SDG 13), and biodiversity (SDG 15).
- Embrace the 2024 International Mountain Day theme, "*Mountain Solutions for a Sustainable Future – Innovation, Adaptation, and Youth*," as a call for action to foster creativity, empower youth, and advance collaborative solutions for mountain ecosystems.
- Recognize ARMF as a regional platform for addressing critical challenges, showcasing innovative practices, and driving actionable strategies to ensure the resilience of mountain ecosystems and communities.
- Welcome the findings of the recent regional assessment on sustainable food system practices in response to climate change effects in East Transboundary Mountains; and note with concerns the problems faced by mountain communities and ecosystems.

Call for Action and Way Forward

Based on the deliberations of ARMF 2024, we intend to pursue the following actions as part of the Kigali Declaration:

1. Strengthen Mountain Ecosystem Governance:

- Advocate for the inclusion of mountain ecosystems in national, regional and global environmental policies.
- Promote transboundary cooperation and collaboration for sustainable management of shared mountain biodiversity, resources and ecosystems.
- Encourage all ARMF 2024 participants to become members of the Mountain Partnership—the only United Nations alliance committed to promoting sustainable mountain development.
- Urge all governments to become members of the UNFCCC negotiating group 'Group of Mountain Partnership' and actively support advancing the mountain agenda within the Rio Conventions (UNFCCC, CBD, UNCCD COPs).

2. Support Community and Stakeholder-Led Adaptation:

- Prioritize locally driven adaptation solutions that are scalable and innovative.
- Encourage youth engagement in climate resilience projects through engagement, funding, and capacity-building initiatives.

3. Secure Sustainable Water Resources:

- Recognize mountains as critical water sources and implement sustainable practices to conserve and manage these resources.
- Invest in technologies to monitor and improve water use efficiency in mountain areas.

4. Promote Knowledge Sharing and Innovation:

- Facilitate the exchange of best practices and knowledge through platforms like ARMF.
- Support research on mountain-specific climate adaptation and biodiversity conservation.

5. Develop Innovative Actions for Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems in Africa Mountains

- Foster practices tailored for mountainous regions, such as agroforestry, conservation agriculture, and integrated livestock systems that enhance productivity while preserving soil and water resources.
- Support the processing, storage, and marketing of mountain-specific agricultural products to increase income for mountain communities and reduce food loss and waste.
- Incorporate traditional and local farming techniques that have proven resilience to climate change while blending these with modern technologies for innovation.

6. Enhance Funding Mechanisms:

- Mobilize resources from governments, international organizations, and the private sector to fund sustainable mountain development initiatives.
- Establish specific financing mechanisms to support mountain-focused interventions and enhance the resilience of vulnerable communities.

Commitment to Collaboration

We call upon all stakeholders, including governments, civil society, academia, and private entities, to unite in:

- Elevating the importance of mountain ecosystems in policy agendas at local, regional, and global levels.
- Ensuring the voices of mountain communities are heard and their needs addressed.
- Scaling up adaptation solutions that integrate local actions into global strategies for a sustainable future.

Declaration of Intent

We, the participants of ARMF 2024, thank the government and people of Rwanda, the “Land of a Thousand Hills,” for the warm hospitality. The field visits and interactions with mountain communities inspired us and reinforced our commitment to safeguarding Africa’s mountain ecosystems for sustainable development

We commit to working collectively towards a future where Africa’s mountain ecosystem are safeguarded, their contribution to sustainable development maximized, and host communities thrive in harmony with nature.

Adopted in Kigali, Rwanda, on December 11, 2024.