

Press Release

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Kathmandu, Nepal

Saving Mount Everest 2011-2012

Restoring dignity to the Mountain: A sustainable waste management initiative for Nepal's World Natural Heritage Sagarmatha National Park

Mount Everest, the highest point on earth 8,848 m above sea level, is the treasure of the world. Since the first successful summit expedition in 1953 the stream of visitors in the region has grown exponentially: from about 1,400 in 1972-3; to 32,124 tourists and some 80,000 support staff in 2010. The region attracts trekkers, mountaineers, researchers, scientists, movie/documentary producers, photographers and visitors from all over the globe. The enormous increase of visitors to the Everest region during the last twenty years has tremendously supported the local economy. Nevertheless, the heavy pressure exerted from tourism has also resulted in increased ecological degradation from erosion, wastes and deforestation. In addition, mountaineering expeditions have produced severe litter disposal problems on Mount Everest itself as well as along the trail from Lukla to Everest Base Camp. The garbage which is spread out all over the mountain consists of thousands of oxygen cylinders, gas cartridges, old tents, ropes, carcasses as well as all sorts of human waste. As a result, many a time the world's highest point has been referred as the world's highest garbage dump! Jeopardizing the dignity of the Mountain and its people.

To restore the dignity to the Mountain and address the gravest concern – sustainable waste management in the Everest Region, **the Government of Nepal** has commendably joined hands with members of the national and international community in **“Saving Mount Everest 2011-2012”** project.

A press conference was organized in Nepal Tourism Board to foster awareness about the project among the media personnel, private and public sectors; national and international organizations and general audience in Nepal and to garner further support. The press conference started with the launch of the project Poster by Mr. Kishor Thapa, Secretary for Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation.

Speaking during the press conference, Mr. Wangchhu Sherpa, President of Everest Summiters' Association Nepal highlighted **“Saving Mount Everest 2011-2012** is a challenging and ambitious multi-stakeholders' project with the goal to **liberate Mount Everest and its surrounding areas from garbage by 2012** and we aspire to make this an exemplary project for waste management systems, which can then be replicated across other mountain regions”.

Similarly, Mr. Phinjo Sherpa, Country Director, Eco Himal Nepal informed participants that “A clean-up expedition will be organized between 15 April to June 2011 to collect and remove approximately **eight tons** of garbage from Mount Everest and its trekking trails”. Mr. Sherpa also emphasized **“Saving Mount Everest 2011-2012** is not just a one-time clean-up expedition but we are working closely with the local, national and international institutions and solid waste management experts to develop a sustainable mechanism for responsible waste management in the region”.

Dr. Kurt Luger, Chairman of EcoHimal and UNESCO Professor for Cultural heritage and tourism, showed his full support for the project from Austria through his statement: “The project will enhance the awareness for an important issue in the UNESCO World Heritage Sagarmatha National Park: Biodiversity conservation and the preservation of a pristine landscape by cleaning the mountain and setting up a waste management concept. The project entails developing the

capacities of local communities so that they can take over the responsibility for running the facilities, thereby establishing local incentives to manage the waste generated in the region, as well as creating local work and revenue opportunities”.

Representatives of the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation (MOCTA) - Mr. Kishore Thapa, Secretary and Chief Guest of the Program and Mr. Laxman Bhattarai, Joint Secretary showed their commitment to fully support the project in every way possible to make it a success. Mr. Thapa also notified the participants that “to formulate, implement and monitor policies for responsible solid waste management in the region, with MOCTA on lead the Mountain Environment Conservation, Monitoring and Management Committee will develop a code of conduct for the sustainability of the initiative”.

Chief Executive Officer of Nepal Tourism Board, Mr. Prachanda Man Shrestha emphasized the importance of favorable policies for the success of the project. He added “‘Saving Mount Everest’ is a crucial project for Nepal Tourism Year 2011 and NTB provides its full support for it success’. Similarly Dr. Sumitra Amatya, Managing Director of Solid Waste Management and Resource Mobilization centre, Ministry of Local Development extended her full support to train the locals and provide necessary expertise for waste management.

Ang Tshering Sherpa, former NMA president explained on the consequences borne by environmental degradation in the Himalayas and should learn from Western countries by formulating an effective waste management system. General Secretary of NMA Mr. Diwas Bikra Shah and Honorary Consul General for Sweden, Mr. Gajendra B. Shrestha reiterated the support for this grand initiative.

The press conference program was graced by prominent personalities of the Nepalese Tourism Sector and almost all the media houses. Similarly, renowned summiteers and the project Goodwill Ambassadors: Johan Ernst Nilson, Oskar Kihlberg and Fredrik Sträng expressed their relentless support for “**Saving Mount Everest 2011-2012**” through their support statements specially sent out for the press conference. Furthermore, notable Everest summiteers Sir Chris Bonnington, David Breashears, Renata Chlumska, Wolfgang Nairz and Jamling Norgay Sherpa are supporting the project’s Goodwill Ambassadors.

The project partners are genuinely gratified and enthralled to receive all the support and positive response from well wishers of all around the world and convenes for further support of the international and national community, all mountaineers and well wishers of Mountain Everest’s Environment Health and that of the people living and visiting the region. The support and cooperation from all the sectors of the society – the international communities; the private sector; the public sector; national and international media; is very crucial for the success of this ambitious and challenging project to clean-up the garbage on and around – Mount Everest, an incomparable icon of nature’s splendor”.

Mr. Diwas Pokhrel, General Secretary of ESA acknowledged and appreciated the support and contribution of all project partners.

Project Implementation Partners:

‘**Saving Mount Everest 2011-2012**’ will be jointly implemented by **Everest Summiteers Association** of Nepal (ESA) and **Eco Himal** – Society for cooperation Alps-Himalaya, with full support from the **Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation (MOTCA)** of the **Government of Nepal (GON)**. The MOCTA of GON will partly fund the project, as will the **Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA)**.

Swedish Postcode Lottery and **Hannes Snellman Attorneys Ltd, Sweden** will provide major financial support to the project. The private airlines companies of Nepal – **Agni Air, Mountain**

Air Helicopters, Fishtail Helicopter, Air Dynasty, Shree Air and Yeti Airline and other private companies – **NeCo Insurance and I4 Technologies Pvt. Ltd.** has pledged to provide the necessary support in kind by sponsoring flights, helicopters and/or satellite usage. Similarly, **Gorkha Brewery Pvt. Ltd and Laxmi Bank** of Nepal will also provide financial support for the project.

Austrian specialist company UNTHA will provide three rubbish shredders accompanied by technical training of local personnel. Also part of the team is the Research Centre of Waste and Resource Management of the **Technical University of Vienna**, and the **Austrian Alpine Club**. To get the rubbish (eight to ten tonnes) down from the mountain itself the Everest Summiters Association will provide technical assistance in the form of experienced Nepali mountaineers, expedition leaders and high-altitude porters. The **Ministry of Local Development** of the **GON** will also provide technical support at the local level and so will the Lions Club of Nepal and Nepal Foundry Industries Ltd. The project is also supported by **UNESCO** and **UNEP**.

On the local level, the **Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee (SPCC)** and the **Sagarmatha National Park and Buffer Zone Management Committee** will be an active implementation partner. The required institutional support for the project will be provided by the **Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation** of the Government of Nepal, **Nepal Tourism Board (NTB)** – as the project coincides with **'Nepal Tourism Year 2011, Himalayan Rescue Association** and Primary International Coordinating Partner – **Steve Perryman Sport Travel AB, Sweden**.

Other project partners include **Trekking Agents Association of Nepal (TAAN), Pasang Lhamu Mountaineering Foundation, Nepal Women Mountaineering Association, Nepal National Mountain Guide Association, Nepal Mountaineering Instructor's Association, Everest Summiters Club Rolwaling, Expedition Operators Association (EOA), High Altitude Workers' Welfare Association (HIAWWA), Nepal Trekking, Travel, Rafting, Airlines Workers Union, All Nepal Tourism Workers Association, Pike Solukhumbu Social Welfare and Sherpa Youth Club.**

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