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The event was the second mountain village conference in Central Asia, after a conference in the Kyrgyzstan capital Bishkek in September of last year. At the time Andreas Götz, Executive Director of CIPRA, the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps, had reported on the experience CIPRA had gained with the Alliance in the Alps community network. The network itself focuses on sustainable development within the member communities, and is involved in organising an intensive exchange of experience at the international level.

The recently founded Alliance of Central Asian Mountain Communities pursues a similar objective. Its villages aim to achieve healthy economic, social and ecological development, and to exchange experience so they can learn from one another. Although the founding of the network proper took place only last week, the communities have already started to implement a schedule of visits.

The Alliance members currently include seven communities from Kyrgyzstan, two from Kazakhstan and one from Tajikistan. Four other Tajikistan communities are on the waiting list for accession. For formal reasons it was not possible to integrate them in the Alliance at the Conference.

The founding was effected in co-operation with CIPRA. The project itself is integrated in the Central Asian Mountain Partnership (CAMP) programme of the Swiss Directorate for Development and Co-operation. Financial support for the founding and development of the Mountain Village Alliance is also being provided by Liechtenstein and Germany.

CIPRA is supporting the Alliance's exchange of experience by processing the findings it has acquired in the Alps for use in central Asia, and also by participating in the publication of a magazine for central Asian mountain villages.

Information: <http://www.camp.elcat.kg/CAMP/ENG/index.htm> (en/rus),
<http://www.cde.unibe.ch/programmes/regional/reg23.html> (en)

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Carpathian Convention signed in Kiev

(05.06.2003) At the summit meeting of environmental ministers in Kiev at the end of May the states bordering the Carpathians signed the Convention for the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians. The Convention aims to combine nature preservation with the development of gentle tourism and an economic upturn. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) sat in on the negotiations.

"Although perhaps less well known than the neighbouring Alps the Carpathian region boasts landscapes full of natural and cultural wealth," said UNEP Director Klaus Töpfer. "This new Convention promises to help the region in preserving its areas of wilderness while offering the population new opportunities for greater prosperity."

Sources and information: http://www.unep.ch/roe/assets/programme_activities/environmental_law/04_emi/carpathians.htm (en), http://www.kyiv-2003.info/main/press/Konvency_eng.doc (en), <http://www.europaworld.org/week130/newtreaty23503.htm> (en)

Alpine population divided over future of nuclear energy

(22.05.2003) On May 18 the Swiss population rejected the two people's initiatives against nuclear energy, namely *Strom ohne Atom* [Electricity without Nuclear Energy] and *MoratoriumPlus*. However, as there is no denying the consistent promotion of the efficient use of electricity and renewable sources of energy, Swiss environmentalist associations are calling for a binding schedule for power supply beyond the nuclear age.

Greenpeace Austria is to launch a petition for a referendum to oblige the members of the federal government to advocate a withdrawal at EU level from the use of nuclear energy. The petition can be signed at local government offices throughout Austria between June 10 and 17. According to Greenpeace the many nuclear power plants in Switzerland and southern Germany represent a permanent threat to the Austrian alpine region. It maintains that due to the high levels of precipitation at high altitudes increased radioactive pollution is to be expected there. The Austrian umbrella organization for the environment [*Umweltdachverband*] is vehemently against plans to adopt the EURATOM Treaty into the European Constitution without amendment.

Sources: WWF Switzerland 18.05.2003, Greenpeace Austria 20.05.2003, *Umweltdachverband* 15.05.2003

Cross-border co-operation for the alpine Rhine and Rhine



(03.07.2003) The comprehensive survey into the current situation conducted as part of the "Alpine Rhine Development Concept" is now completed. On July 1 experts presented the results before representatives of local communities, environmentalists, anglers, energy suppliers and other parties with a vested interest. For the first time the groups concerned are able to take part in a planning project within an international framework. As far as the alpine Rhine is concerned, experts believe that action is required particularly in the ecological sector. Development objectives are to be defined by the end of 2004, after which concrete measures are to be put forward. The Alpine Rhine Development Concept is a joint initiative by the neighbouring countries Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Austria through the Alpine Rhine International Government Commission and the International Rhine Regulation.

On July 1 the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine, a co-operation between the EU and local inhabitants living along the Rhine downstream from Lake Constance, paid tribute to the rehabilitation of the Rhine as one of the greatest environmental successes in Europe. "The successes achieved in keeping the river clear of chemicals must now be matched by efforts aimed at its biological renewal," said Olaf Tschimpke, President of Germany's *Naturschutzbund*.

Expert Report, sources and information: <http://www.alpenrhein.net> (de), <http://www.iksr.org> (de/fr/en/niederl.)

Better flood protection for the densely populated Rhine valley



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Italy: School education to combat depopulation in Piedmont

(05.06.2003) The Italian Ministry of Education and the Piedmont Region have pledged to draw up a report by 2005 on measures with which school education can be lastingly guaranteed in mountain regions. The statement argues that adequate school education is a key factor in preventing further depopulation of mountain regions.

Many schools in the Piedmont with low numbers of pupils have already been shut down as part of rationalisation measures, which is why special arrangements are needed for schools in mountain regions. The report is to be drawn up by a task force made up of representatives of the mountain communities, the Region itself and the school authorities.

Source: Piedmont Region 22.05.2003 <http://www.regione.piemonte.it/cgi-bin/informa/comunicato?Scuole%20di%20montagna2.txt> (it)

Improvement in the situation of women in alpine countries

(22.05.2003) A 200-page study commissioned by Arge-Alp and drawn up by political scientists Erna Appelt, Monika Jarosch and Klaudia Resch has concluded that women have taken a step forward in education, careers and politics in Arge-Alp countries (i.e. Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg/D; Lombardy, South Tyrol, Trentino/I; Grisons, St Gallen, Ticino/CH; Salzburg, Tyrol, Vorarlberg/A).

The study aims to highlight the options and the need for action in the area of women's policy and gender policy. It provides the basis for international co-operation in equal opportunity issues between men and women.

The findings of the study underscore the current situation in Western Europe. Women take different education decisions to men; women less frequently have access to management positions and as a rule earn significantly less; even today women still do most of the housework, and look after and care for the family; in Arge-Alp countries women are under-represented politically, particularly in key decision-making positions.

However the share of women involved in education has risen sharply in Arge-Alp countries over the last few decades, and it is now the norm for women to be involved in earning a living. Men do not, however, take charge of family and caring work as a matter of course. While the share of women involved in politics has increased significantly, they are still clearly under-represented at the municipality level.

Women's bureaux and equal opportunity offices have been set up in all the Arge-Alp countries, and they have carried out a number of successful projects particularly in education, politics and labour. However contradictions and conflicts still remain between the equality of status postulated between men and women and the way families organise themselves. "Even today a policy of equality still has to take on the task of promoting awareness of equal opportunity for women, and highlighting the antiquated nature of traditional role models," concludes the study.

Source and information: <http://homepage.uibk.ac.at/homepage/c402/c40238/gleichstellung.html> (de), Press Office for Southern Tyrol 07.05.2003 http://www.provinz.bz.it/lpa/news/news_d.asp?art=50400 (de)

European alpine mountaineers on a peace mission in Afghanistan

(18.06.2003) On 25 June a team of European alpine mountaineers (from France, Italy, Switzerland and Slovenia among others) is to set off on a 45-day expedition to the highest summits of Afghanistan's Hindu Kush. The main objective of the campaign, which is entitled "Mission Oxus – Mountains for Peace", is to spread the message that it is now safe once again to travel through Afghanistan's Hindu Kush. The campaign is the initiative of Mountain Wilderness International.

Mountain Wilderness also submitted an education project to the Afghan government. Under the project interested parties in Afghanistan are to be trained as trekking guides, enabling them to contribute to the region's economic and social upswing and to nature preservation.

Mountain Wilderness also advocates the founding of a national park in the Hindu Kush region. Indeed the region is of significance as the natural habitat for species such as Marco Polo sheep and snow leopard, among others, both of which are at risk from extinction.

The mission is being conducted in close co-operation with the Afghan government and the Italian region of Friuli, the Afghan embassy in Italy, the World Conservation Union (IUCN), the International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation (UIAA), the Italian Africa and Orient Institute, WWF Italy and the Italian alpine association.

Information: <http://www.regione.fvg.it/missioneoxus> (it/en), source: Regione Friuli-Venezia Giulia 12.06.2003

International alpine children's summit: Children shape the future of the Alps

(18.06.2003) 40 children from seven alpine countries took part in the first international alpine children's summit held in Innsbruck/A from 11 to 14 June. With the help of examples of best practice they were able to learn how they can actively shape the future of the Alps in their living environment. On the last day of the event adults such as Alpine Convention Secretary Noël Lebel and Andreas Weissen, President of the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps (CIPRA), fielded questions put to them by the children at the plenary session.

The children's summit was the highlight of the environmental education campaign "Kids for the Alps" organised as part of the WWF Alpine Programme. Christine Radler, who organised the children's summit, summed up the objective: "The aim of Kids for the Alps is to motivate children to take part. Children are well aware of their responsibility for the environment they live in – we want to help them to take an active part."

Source: WWF 10.06.2003 <http://www.wwf.at/News/news878/index.html> (de), Information: <http://www.kids-for-the-alps.net> (de/fr/it/sl)



Fire across the Alps 2003



(18.06.2003) The annual "High Fires" event is being held once again throughout the alpine region on 9 and 10 August. These high fires, which are visible across huge distances, are intended as an impressive symbol of the preservation of the natural and cultural legacy of the alpine region as a whole. The high fires are to act as an incentive to work towards sustainable development across the Alps.

In keeping with the UN's International Year of Freshwater this year's theme is also "Water". The organisations staging the event are to address the following topics: "Making sustainable use of and protecting water and waterways", "Protecting against the dangers of water" and "No life without water".

The "Fire across the Alps" campaign is far more than just a spectacular event: it is a means of promoting networking among people and organisations for sustainable development in the Alps. The joint event staged through all these high fires will communicate messages and demands that are literally on a higher plane. So the presence of the media at each of these events is an important element of the campaign.

Registration and information: <http://www.feuerindenalpen.org> (de/fr/it/en), CIPRA Switzerland cipra@cipra.ch

Miscellaneous

Sadrudin Aga Khan: An idealist passes away

(22.05.2003) On May 12 the former UN Commissioner for Refugees Prince Sadrudin Aga Khan died in the United States at the age of 70. Besides his commitment on behalf of human rights he took an active part in the protection of nature and the preservation of life in all its forms. He was the founder of "Alp Action", the association for environmental protection in the Alps, and the Bellerive Foundation. Information: <http://www.bellerive.org> (fr/en)

Potential for hiking tourism in Germany remains largely untapped

(22.05.2003) Today's hiker is a "feel-good sports person". He (or she) prefers to hike moderate routes at a comfortable pace, is individualistic and demanding, aged 45 on average, and belongs to the higher social strata. He chooses a dense and varied network of routes at medium altitudes, and likes cultural diversity and sights of interest. Such are the findings of a new study by nature sociologist Rainer Braemer, which were presented at a seminar by the Tourist Association of Eastern Bavaria and Germany's *Naturschutzring*. According to Braemer hiking's potential as a form of "tourism of the gentlest type" has been barely tapped in Germany compared for example with Austria. He added that there was an overall lack of professional marketing, such as faultless route markings and descriptions of hiking routes as well as facilities along those routes. Information: <http://staff-www.uni-marburg.de/~braemer> (de)

BIO ALPE ADRIA: Founding of a cross-border "bio-region"

(18.06.2003) The BIO ALPE ADRIA Project has now given rise to a cross-border "bio-region" through the co-operation between organic farming associations from Slovenia, Friuli-Julian Venetia/I, Belluno/I and Carinthia/A. The associations have launched a joint programme aimed at establishing a zone free of genetically engineered produce so that natural diversity in organic farming can be preserved and various initiatives in the eco-sector can be networked. The BIO ALPE ADRIA macro-region covers some 6,000 organic farms. The project's trilingual web site provides a wealth of information, from suppliers and produce in the various regions to events and recipes, not to mention the guidelines set out for organic farmers.

Information: <http://www.bioalpeadria.info> (de/it/sl), source:

<http://www.bioinformation.at/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=1000> (de)

Agenda

CIPRA Annual Specialist Conference 2003: "All systems Go! for the Alpine Convention?! Traffic as the focus of implementation"

This year's CIPRA annual specialist conference is to address the implementation of the Alpine Convention with a special focus on the issue of (transit) traffic. Politicians and experts from different countries are to include the Austrian Minister for Transport Hubert Gorbach, the Secretary of the Alpine Convention's Permanent Secretariat Noël Lebel, and Peter Hasslacher, nature preservation delegate of the Austrian Alpine Association. The Conference is to be held in Salzburg/A on 23 and 24 October.

For the Conference programme and further information visit <http://www.cipra.org> (de/fr/it).

3rd International Annual Conference: "Sustainable Development of Mountainous Regions of the Caucasus"; 11-12.07.2003, Tbilisi, Georgia; Organisers: Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus, Information: http://www.rec-caucasus.org/conf_2003_eng.htm (en)

2nd GMBA Symposium: "Linking mountain diversity with fire, grazing and erosion"; 20-23.08.2003, La Paz, Bolivia; Organisers: Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment; Information: <http://www.unibas.ch/gmba/workshops.html> (en)