

## **Sustainable Mountain Development Summit-XI, Leh-Ladakh, 2022**

*Harnessing tourism for sustainable mountain development*

09-12 October, 2022

**Administration of Union Territory of Ladakh**

**Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Leh**

**Sustainable Development Forum of Ladakh**

**Integrated Mountain Initiative**

### **Background & Concept Note**

#### **Background**

The Integrated Mountain Initiative (IMI) is a civil society-led forum working across the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) that comprises 10 mountain states, two union territories and four hill districts with a vision of “Making India proud of our Mountains”. It brings mountain-specific issues to the centre stage in regional, national, and global discourses through sustained and informed dialogue among wide-ranging stakeholders. It recognises development challenges of the Indian Himalayan Region and the need to discuss mountain-specific issues through a process of continuous and sustained dialogue.

The IMI’s flagship annual event, the Sustainable Mountain Development Summit (SMDS) brings together a diverse group of stakeholders working on development issues across the mountains to discuss mountain-specific themes warranting immediate attention. In addition to the central event, two integral components of the SMDS include the Mountain Legislators’ Meet (MLM) and the Indian Himalayan Youth Summit. The organisation of the MLM stems from the recognition that discussions during the summit need to be integrated within various policies of Government of India. As such, IMI pursues recommendations emerging from the summit for actionable outputs, including through the organisation of the ‘Meet of the Mountain States’ where key policy and decision makers are made aware of the collective concerns of mountain states that are documented through the SMDSs. Similarly, the Indian Himalayan Youth Summit recognises that youth need to be engaged meaningfully to ensure future sustainability of development pathways and initiatives. The organisation of the youth summit provides an enabling environment for youth to participate at multiple levels in decision-making processes.

IMI operates through a system of state and regional chapters and collaborators aligned to IMI’s vision. In Ladakh, IMI collaborates with the Sustainable Development Forum of Ladakh (SDFL), which is an independent organisation in the region. SDFL is a collective of

various civil society organisations and individuals working towards developing knowledge for sustainable development of the Ladakh region.

SMDS-X was held in Darjeeling in November 2021. The Hon'ble Chief Executive Councillor (CEC)/Chairman of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), Leh, Shri Tashi Gyalson attended this summit and expressed interest in hosting SMDS-XI in Ladakh in 2022, which was accepted by Governing Council of IMI. It was agreed that the event would be co-hosted by the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), Leh and IMI's collaborating partner in Ladakh, Sustainable Development Forum of Ladakh (SDFL). The summit will bring together local, national and global stakeholders and experts to discuss matters that are of pressing importance to the holistic and sustainable development of the Indian Himalayan Region and more particularly the Ladakh region.

### **SMDS-XI: Harnessing tourism for sustainable mountain development**

The main theme for SMDS-XI is 'Harnessing tourism for sustainable mountain development'. Tourism activities are closely interlinked with every section of society, especially in Ladakh and the IHR region. Thus, changes in this sector reverberate across cultural, social, and environmental systems and vice versa, Mountain regions are especially vulnerable to such changes as their social and ecological systems are more fragile and vulnerable to challenges such as unplanned development, resource depletion, climate change and environmental degradation. At the same time, tourism has immense potential to empower local communities, conserve natural resources and achieve sustainable development.

IMI and SDFL members held discussions with the Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Shri R. K. Mathur and the Hon'ble CEC/Chairman of LAHDC, Leh, Shri Tashi Gyalson to identify sustainable tourism as an important topic that requires critical and sustained discussions. These discussions are important to reduce its negative impacts of tourism while harnessing its positive contributions to building climate and socio-ecological resilience and sustainability. Thus, sustainable tourism was adopted as the main theme for SMDS-XI. Once this broad framework was adopted, SDFL initiated consultations to identify specific topics for discussions at SMDS-XI. This was then correlated with frameworks for sustainable tourism in current literature on the subject, especially the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The most relevant framework for sustainable tourism integrates Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the broader 2030 Development Agenda developed by the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). It has proposed five central pillars on which tourism must

stand to make a significant and lasting contribution to achieve sustainable development goals.

These include:

1. Inclusive and sustainable economic growth (linked to SDGs 8, 9, 10 and 17)
2. Social inclusiveness, employment and poverty reduction (linked to SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, and 10)
3. Resource efficiency, environmental protection and climate change (linked to SDGs 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15)
4. Cultural values, diversity and heritage (linked to SDGs 8, 11 and 12)
5. Mutual understanding, peace and security (linked to SDG 18)

While this framework has been proposed for sustainable tourism, it can be applied to all discussions related to sustainable development agenda including in mountain regions. SDFL has adapted this framework for SMDS-XI by rearranging the five pillars into four categories: Economy, Society, Environment, and Peace and Security. In addition, related issues such as implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for improved waste management and the complex issue of plantations in the mountains are also included in the deliberations of SMDS-XI.

Furthermore, in moving forward and designing the sessions, there is a need to assess the gaps in and challenges for implementation of the existing and upcoming national policies and strategies for mountain tourism. The following policies/strategies documents are relevant (but not limited to) in the context of Ladakh region and applicability to the Indian Himalayan Region:

- 1) National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism<sup>1</sup>
- 2) Draft National Tourism Policy (2021)<sup>2</sup>
- 3) A Tourism Vision of Ladakh, Ministry of Tourism
- 4) Vision 2050 for UT of Ladakh<sup>3</sup>
- 5) Sustainability of Tourism in Ladakh, Administration of the UT of Ladakh<sup>4</sup> (reference)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://tourism.gov.in/sites/default/files/2022-05/National%20Strategy%20for%20Sustainable%20tourism.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://tourism.gov.in/sites/default/files/2022-01/Draft%20Tourism%20Policy%20Over%203%20Nov%202021%20updated.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://cdnbbsr.s3waas.gov.in/s395192c98732387165bf8e396c0f2dad2/uploads/2020/09/2020092627.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [https://nmhs.org.in/pdf/BOOKS/Dr.Pankaj Raina/Booklet\\_Tourism\\_Final.pdf](https://nmhs.org.in/pdf/BOOKS/Dr.Pankaj Raina/Booklet_Tourism_Final.pdf)

## **Objectives of SMDS-XI:**

The key objectives for SMDS-XI are:

1. To discuss and advocate for sustainable tourism policies and programmes in Ladakh and the IHR,
2. To share knowledge and inform policy and decision makers for sustainable development in Ladakh and the IHR

## **The schedule for SMDS-XI:**

09 October 2022	Pre-summit event: Indian Mountain Youth Summit Topic: Ecotourism-based entrepreneurship for youth of IHR
10 October 2022	Ten years of SMDS
	Panel discussion: Harnessing tourism for sustainable mountain development
	Technical session 1: Tourism products for the mountains – Good practices and pitfalls
11 October 2022	Technical Session 2: Inclusive society and cultural values
	Technical Session 3: Ecological restoration and natural resource management
	Technical Session 4: Environmental sustainability
	Technical Session 5: Peace and Security
	Parallel session: Mountain Legislator's meet
	Topic: EPR: Policy to practice in mountain regions
12 October 2022	Presentation of outcomes of each session
	Cross-Thematic Dialogue (Panel) including presentation of recommendations
	Adoption of recommendations and targets by mountain states
	Dr RS Tolia Memorial Lecture
	Dr RS Tolia Award 2022

## **Expected outcomes of SMDS-XI:**

1. Strategy papers for policy makers, practitioners, donor agencies and key stakeholders in the IHR
2. Policy recommendations/inputs for policy makers in the IHR on a sustainable tourism approach in key development sectors aligning with the recommendations of Carbon Neutral Ladakh
3. Post-summit plan of action for implementation of pilot projects, research studies for filling knowledge gaps with key stakeholders and funding partners across the IHR
4. Strengthening of networks and collaborations across the IHR to facilitate collective action for mountain-specific policies and sharing of innovations, lessons and resources.

## **Sustainability initiatives**

SMDS-XI will build on efforts made at previous SMDSs to integrate sustainability principles in the summit itself. These efforts include:

- i) Zero waste principles: SMDS-XI will draw on lessons from previous SMDSs to design the summit around ideas that reduce waste generation and recycling with a target to make this a zero waste summit. Each aspect will be documented to enable scrutiny and analysis to identify failures, successes and lessons for future summits. The efforts include the use of local material and skills to develop publicity material, use of digital technology, exclusion of disposable materials and plastic bottles, use of water dispensers, and collaboration with recycling agencies.
- ii) Gender-balance and social inclusion: SMDS-XI will aim for gender balance and social inclusion in the organising team and in terms of participation to ensure space for different voices and facilitate dialogues to develop pragmatic and inclusive policy frameworks.
- iii) Carbon auditing: The SMDS-XI will attempt to calculate the carbon footprint of the summit to help design more climate-sensitive summits in the future.
- iv) Hybrid summit: In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the efforts of SMDS-IX and SMDS-X, SMDS-XI will be hybrid to facilitate a more inclusive summit with participation from across the IHR and other parts of the world.
- v) Health protocols: SMDS-XI will integrate lessons from COVID-19 pandemic to ensure the safety of participants who will be attending the summit in person.

## **Institutional framework**

The four main institutional actors for SMDS-XI are:

- i) *Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Leh* ([www.leh.nic.in](http://www.leh.nic.in))  
LAHDC, Leh is a grassroots-level third-tier democratic institution introduced in Ladakh in 1995. There are two such Autonomous Hill Councils in Ladakh in Leh and Kargil districts constituted of democratically-elected public representatives.
- ii) *Administration of UT of Ladakh* ([www.ladakh.nic.in](http://www.ladakh.nic.in))  
The Administration of UT of Ladakh is the primary UT-level administrative structure to provide governance and policy-making in the region. Administration of UT of Ladakh is headed by the Lieutenant Governor who is assisted by Commissioner Secretaries, Directors and other staff members.

*iii) Sustainable Development Forum of Ladakh*

SDFL is a civil society group in Ladakh, which collaborates with various organisations and institutions to generate knowledge and facilitate sustainable development processes in the region.

*iv) Integrated Mountain Initiative ([www.inmi.in](http://www.inmi.in))*

Integrated Mountain Initiative is a civil society led network platform with a mission to mainstream concerns of the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) and its people in the development dialogue of India.