

HIMALAYAN FUTURE FORUM 2024

16 & 17 February



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Himalayas in Peril

The Himalayan region, with its vast mountain ranges, plays a pivotal role in influencing climate patterns across South Asia and the world. As with many areas, this region faces its own set of various unique challenges. Its topography hinders its economic growth; climate change is causing frequent disasters; and the political economy is impeding its path to harmoniously work on solutions. Further, there is a disconnect between the people of the Himalayas to solve the problems of its region. And this very void is what the Himalayan Future Forum (HFF) strives to fill, by building a platform to connect the people of the Himalayas to discuss their challenges and share solutions and futuristic perspectives.



Past Initiatives by NEF

Nepal Economic Forum (NEF), the parent organization of HFF, is an impact-driven economic and development research institution that seeks to redefine Nepal's development discourse. It ranks among the top 100 think tanks in the Asia Pacific region and has been working on enhancing the role of the private sector in development. Over the years, NEF has built a strong network of regional institutions by engaging in partnerships and initiatives to address challenges in the Himalayan region.

NEF partnered for the **Himalayan Consensus Declaration** in 2014. Then, NEF acted as the secretariat for the **Himalayan Consensus Summit** - an annual event organized by the Himalayan Consensus Institute from 2014-2019. The event brought civil society grassroots and environmental organizations together with business, finance, and government to address the challenges of the Himalayan region. In 2020, NEF independently organized the **Himalayan Circular Economy Forum** which expanded the discourse on a sustainable model of production and consumption in the Himalayan region, specifically Bhutan, India, and Nepal.



Himalayan Future Forum

Himalayan Future Forum (HFF) is initiated to encourage multi-faceted dialogues on the Himalayas by bringing together stakeholders from different countries and sectors within the region. More specifically, this region in focus consists of countries that host the Himalayas, such as Bhutan, Nepal, and India, as well as countries directly affected by the Himalayas – such as Bangladesh. Currently incubated as a center as part of the Nepal Economic Forum, it will emerge as a separate not-for-profit entity over a period of time.

Mission

The mission of HFF is to proactively take charge of development drivers in the Himalayas to orient them toward the region's environmental, social, and economic wellbeing.

Vision

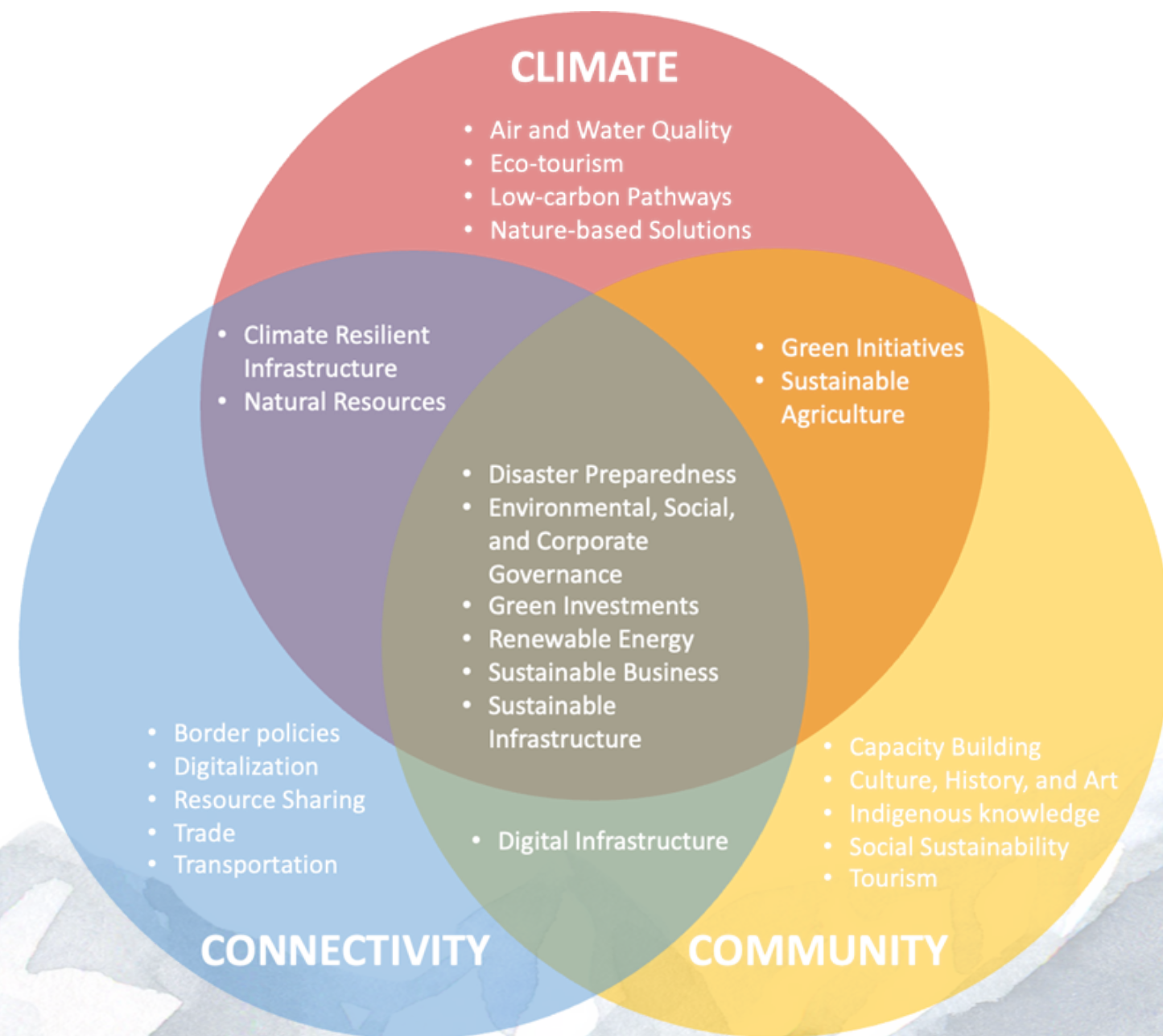
Our vision is a prosperous Himalayan future where development and growth are sustainable, inclusive, and tailored to the needs and priorities of the region and its people.



Objectives

1. To create a collaborative platform transcending national boundaries, connecting stakeholders from the government, civil society, environmental organizations, academia, and businesses.
2. To strengthen stakeholder networks and promote partnerships among individuals, organizations, and institutions working on Himalayan issues.
3. To facilitate knowledge sharing through discourses addressing the region's practices, opportunities, challenges, and needs.
4. To engage the private sector and leverage their capabilities to promote sustainable development practices and support pragmatic initiatives in the Himalayan region.
5. To establish a robust institution capable of challenging and improving existing policies, and support stakeholders and their initiatives through operational mechanisms, feedback systems, scaling strategies, and tracking procedures.
6. To provide long-term support to ventures that promote sustainable development practices in the Himalayan region; ensuring access to expertise, stakeholder network, and steady funding mechanisms.

Themes - 3Cs



Climate disturbances pose significant risks to the Himalayan region, impacting its environmental, socio-cultural, financial, and political systems due to the anticipated effects of global change.

In the face of climate change and global issues, addressing challenges goes beyond borders. **Connectivity** between people, communities, institutions, and resources is crucial for Himalayan sustainable development in a globalized world.

Community engagement is equally vital. Integrating social inclusion into climate action, preserving local knowledge, and supporting environmental leadership foster robust community growth.



HFF 2024

HFF 2024 is the first flagship event of HFF. It is a two-day event scheduled for February 16 and 17, 2024 at the Yak & Yeti Hotel in Kathmandu, Nepal.

It will comprise of four types of sessions: keynote speeches, panel discussions, conversations, and presentations. The event will be broadcasted live on social media platforms and later, curated videos will be produced and uploaded. There will also be an event studio, established to record conversations, that will form an HFF Talk Series. Additionally, following the event, the HFF team will compile and publish a comprehensive report on the proceedings. In particular, the major envisaged sessions for the event are as follows:



Tentative Sessions

Session I: Towards Himalayan Connectivity

Focusing on Himalayan connectivity, the session aims to investigate solutions for enhancing regional connections, to fight common problems, while recognizing historical ties that have come to be affected by national borders.

Session II: Green Finance & Green Growth

This session will discuss the possibility of green financing and growth in the Himalayas to address the compounding impacts of climate change, including those on biodiversity, economy, lifestyle, and health.

Session III: Green, Resilient, Inclusive Development (GRID)

This session will update and reflect on Nepal's adoption of the World Bank's GRID program in 2021, addressing climate vulnerability, infrastructure, and job creation. Additionally, it will discuss the prospect of expanding this approach to other South Asian nations affected by climate issues.

Tentative Sessions

Session IV: Agriculture in the Himalayas

GIZ Nepal's GRAPE project tackles Himalayan agriculture challenges via stakeholder engagement in economic governance, research, and scaling. This session examines this project's Himalayan adaptability as well as further discussions on alternative sustainable agriculture.

Session V: Insurance and Resilience

This session will delve into the reasons behind the Himalayan region's limited adoption of climate insurance despite the fact of disproportionate climate crisis impacts and warnings from international agencies. It will also probe the insurance's significance through expert dialogue.

Session VI: Recalibrating Himalayan Spaces - Urban landscapes

This session aims to redefine Himalayan infrastructure, acknowledging the topographical challenges, policy ambiguities, and a modest economy, while also emphasizing cultural preservation, environmental conservation, and sustainable tourism.

Tentative Sessions

Session VII: Renewable Energy

Deliberating on the shift from fossil fuels and exploring renewable energy commitments within Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal, this session aims to underscore the implications of the COP28 dialogue for the Himalayan region.

Session VIII: E-mobility in the Himalayas

This session will discuss the region's potential for transitioning to electric mobility, exploring its current status, capability, and associated policies, given the area's capacity for renewable energy generation and dependency on larger economies for affordable electric vehicles.

Session IX: Digi-Himalayas: Digitalization, digitization, digital transformation

Centered on the Himalayan Digital landscape, this session delves into the region's evolving digital sphere, examining how technological progress can empower communities, stimulate economic growth, and safeguard cultural heritage and ecological diversity.

Tentative Sessions

Session X: Tourism - From Product to Experience

This session aims to transform product-based Himalayan tourism into a sustainable model that prioritizes experiences over products, while emphasizing value over volume, and ensuring local communities benefit from tourism.

Session XI: Harnessing Himalayan Indigenous Knowledge

This session aims to spotlight Himalayan indigenous knowledge in sectors like climate action and spiritual healing, offering a platform for organizations and individuals championing local wisdom to share their insights and objectives.

Session XII: Art, Culture, and Literature

This session will delve into the rich art and literature of the culturally diverse Himalayan region, seeking insights from experts to illuminate opportunities for promoting these assets globally while discussing strategies to empower communities and preserve these cultural treasures.

List of Speakers (so far)

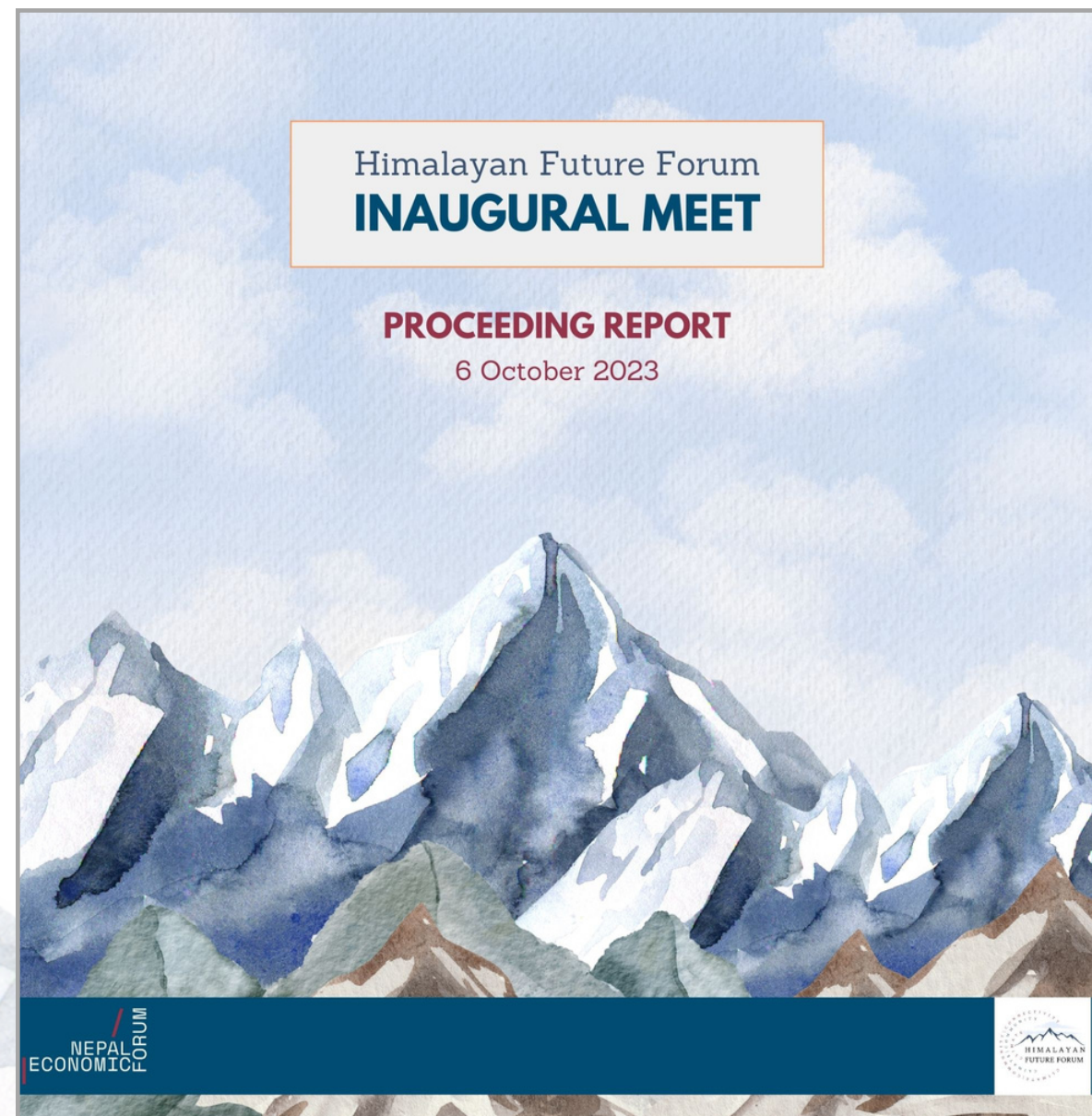
1. Arnico Panday, Climate Scientist, Advisory Board Member Nepal Economic Forum
2. C. Raja Mohan, Senior Fellow, Asia Society Policy Institute
3. Cecile Fruman, Director, Regional Integration, South Asia, World Bank Group
4. Hon. Conrad Sangma, Chief Minister, Meghalaya, India
5. Faris H. Hadad-Zervos, Country Director for Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka, World Bank
6. Amb. Felicity Volk, Ambassador of Australia to Nepal
7. Hon. Helen Clark, former Prime Minister, New Zealand (TBC)
8. Kul Chandra Gautam, Advisory Board Member, Nepal Economic Forum; Former Assistant Secretary-General, United Nations
9. Mahendra P. Lama, Senior Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University
10. Mahendra K. Shrestha, Chair, Himalayan Everest Insurance

List of Speakers (so far)

11. Mashfee Binte Shams, Rector, Foreign Service Academy, Bangladesh
12. Nyema Zam, Founder, Samuh Mediatech
13. Amb. Riina Rikka Hekka, Ambassador of Finland to Nepal
14. Shivshankar Menon, Former National Security Advisor and Former Foreign Secretary, India
15. Sonam Jatso, CEO and Founder, Green Bhutan Consultancy
16. Amb Torun Dramdal, Ambassador of Norway to Nepal
17. Tariq Karim, Director, Centre for Bay of Bengal Studies
18. Dr. Tshering Cigay, Director, SELISE Digital Platforms



Inaugural Meet 2023



As of now, on 6th October 2023, HFF hosted the Inaugural Meet where 43 stakeholders joined in to share their work in the Himalayas and their vision for the future of this forum. The proceedings report for this event can be accessed by clicking on the alongside picture.

Advisory Board Members



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India



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