



# YUKSAM DECLARATION

HIMALAYAN REGIONAL MEETING

World Mountains People Association

Sikkim April 2002

# Introduction to Himalayas as



∨ **As a whole, the Himalayas do share with other mountains in the world the five following physical features:**

1. Slope
2. Altitude
3. Sensitivity of environment  
(slow regeneration processes,  
high interrelations between the  
components)
4. Remoteness
5. Wilderness



These five features, diversely combined throughout the massif and under various climates, had been turned by the populations inhabiting or having come to the Himalayas into assets in the course of history:

1. Close, respectful and highly spiritual relationship with nature and environment
2. Homogeneity of micro culture at local level and solidarity within the communities at local level
3. Diversity of cultures, resources and production systems at regional level
4. Diversity, complementarities of neighbouring eco-zones and direct interrelations between them through barter trade and interpersonal relations
5. Seasonal migrations allowing namely the introduction and adaptation of technical innovations.



But these assets have slowly turned into drawbacks and this process has been accelerating in the recent past. Following are some of the reasons for this evolution:

1. Local and endogenous decision making processes have been replaced by “ready made packages” from outside and have deprived the local communities of their ability to manage their resources and territories and to autonomously adapt to new conditions and challenges. See the laws restricting the utilisation of forests or pastures

2. Indiscriminate application of non adapted general rules and regulations conceived for plain conditions, namely concerning school programmes, but also quotas (water points or schools, veterinary hospitals...)



3. Demographic growth has increased the pressure on natural resources



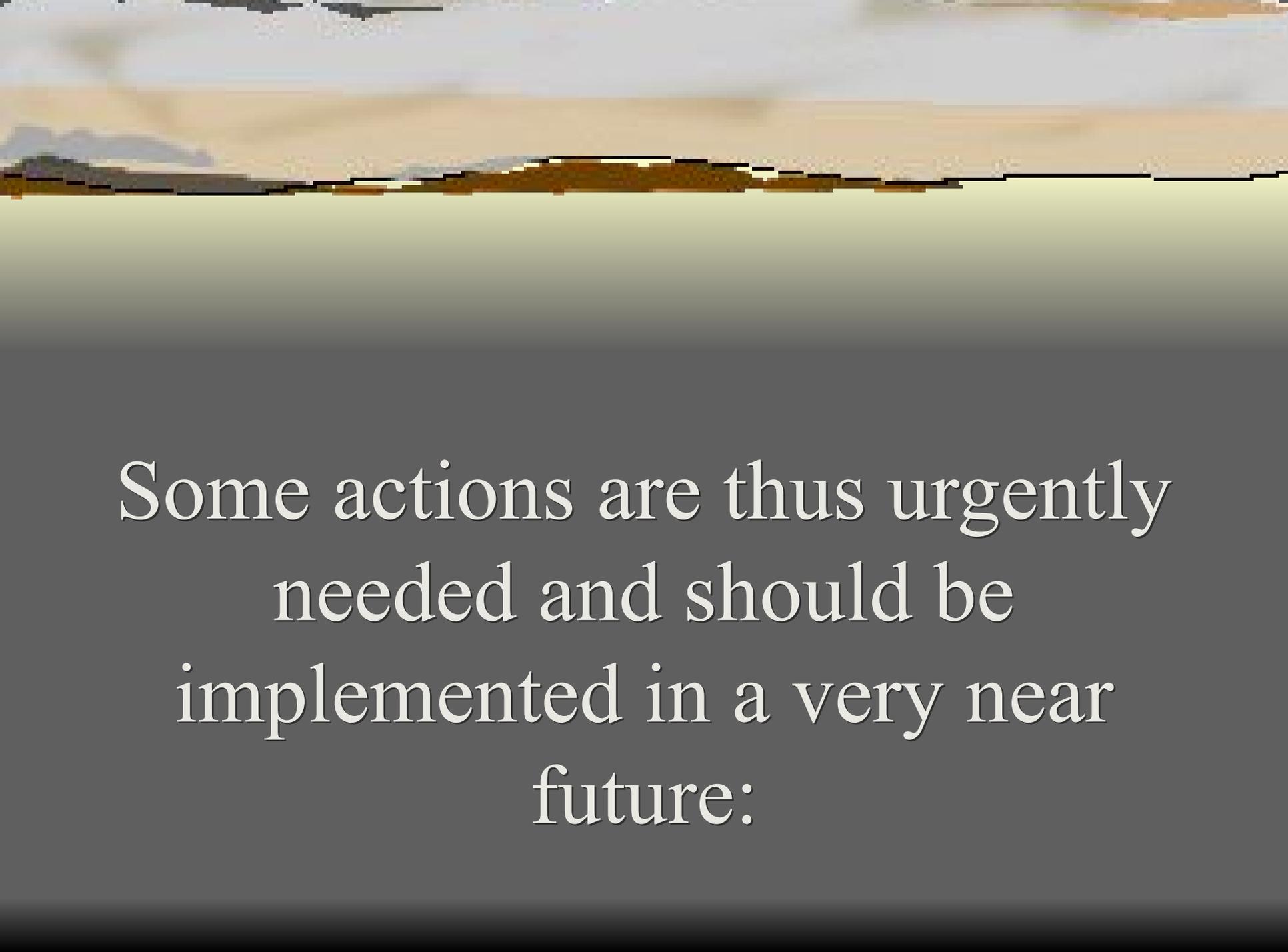
4. Roads without proper previous preparation to competition of local agricultural and handicraft products with easily available plain productions and globalisation

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5. Some customs and traditions at times inhibit the development process



The consequences of this evolution are numerous and some of them are common to the majority of the Himalayan regions:

1. Loss of power of initiative at the local level and culture of assistance
2. Loosening of society cohesion and solidarity
3. Social discrimination of the mountain people and increased gender discrimination inside mountain societies
4. Lack of adapted education and information.
5. Un-adapted health system all the more that local at times quite efficient know-how has been lost to a great extent
6. Increased fragility and degradation of environment
7. Loss of competitiveness of local products both outside and inside the mountain and lack of choice of appropriate productive activities
8. Undue and uncompensated exploitation of mountain resources by outside economy
9. Impoverishment
10. Long term migrations for low paid work or emigration because of overpopulation or inability to take advantage of local resources

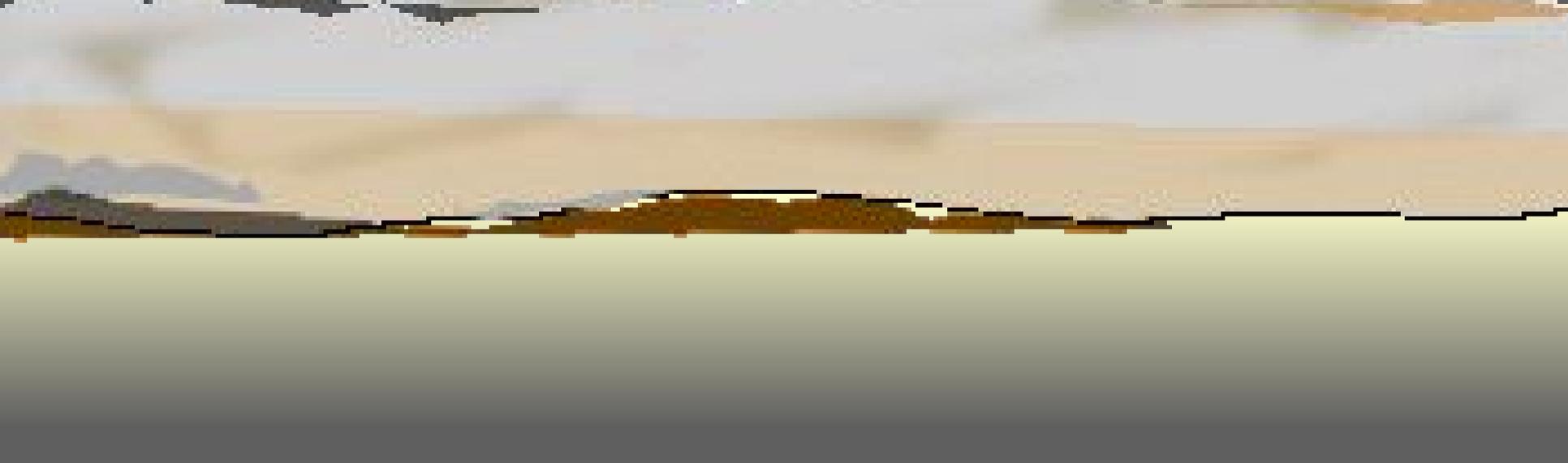


Some actions are thus urgently  
needed and should be  
implemented in a very near  
future:

1. Management of the resources should be handed over to their users with full responsibility, which includes due and equitable compensation when these resources are utilised by the outside (plains, cities, down hill...).

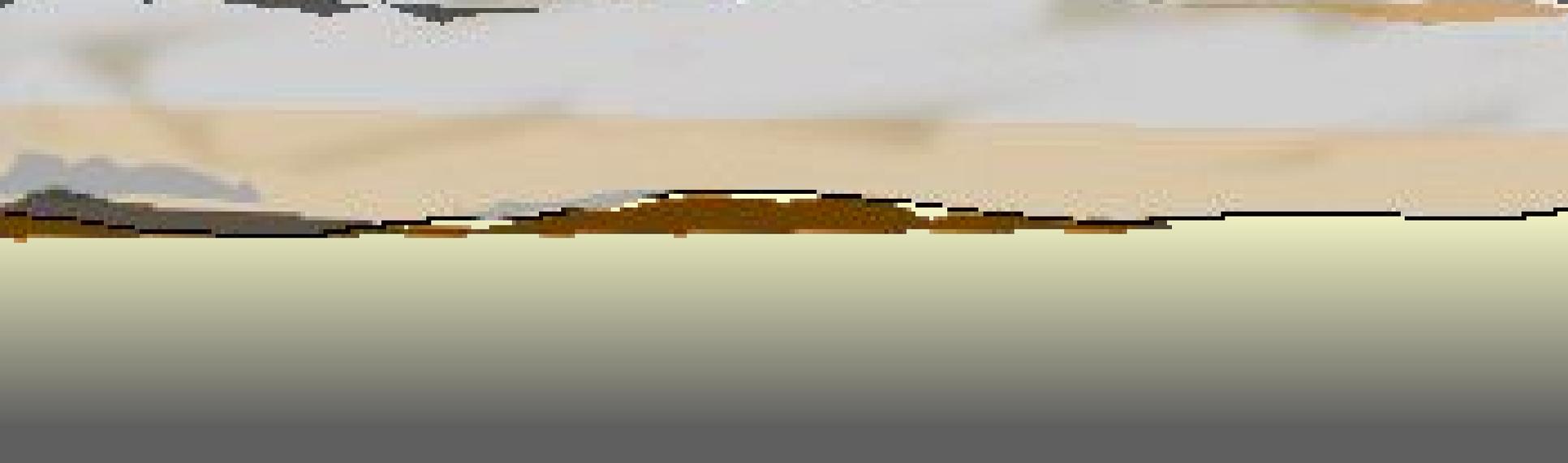


2. Institution of community initiated governance systems with full involvement of local people in order to allow a holistic, democratic and participatory territorial and resource management.

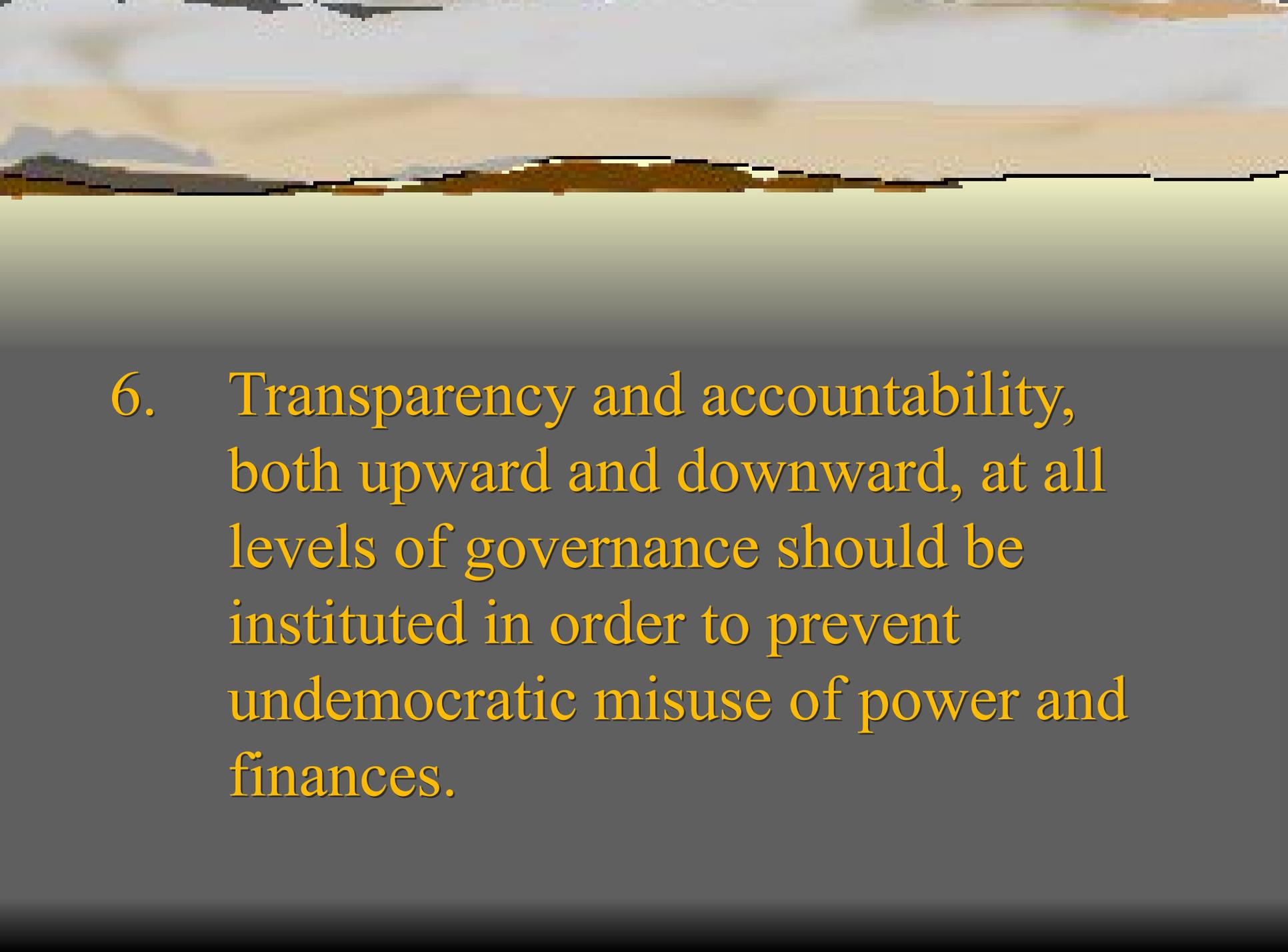


3. Empowerment of women (social, economic and political) and gender sensitisation should be the integral part of all development initiatives.

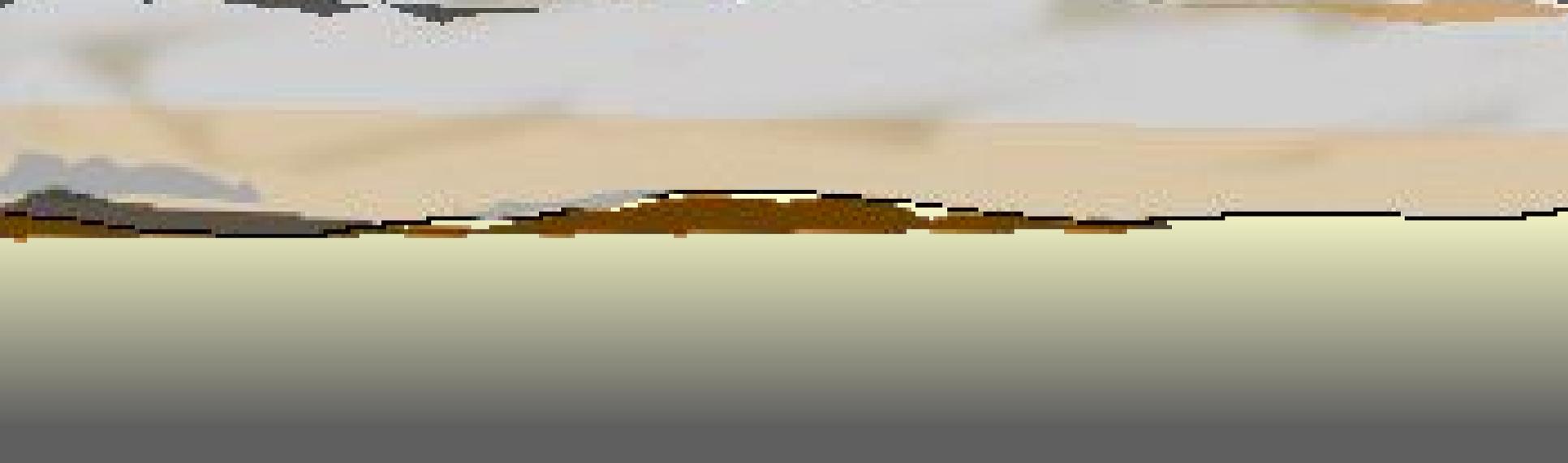
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4. To be efficiently carried out at each level, the functions should be decentralized to that very level covering the services like education, health, infrastructure, natural resources management (water, forest, land, etc.) following subsidiary principle.



5. Devolution of function to local people should be followed by full devolution of financial authority.



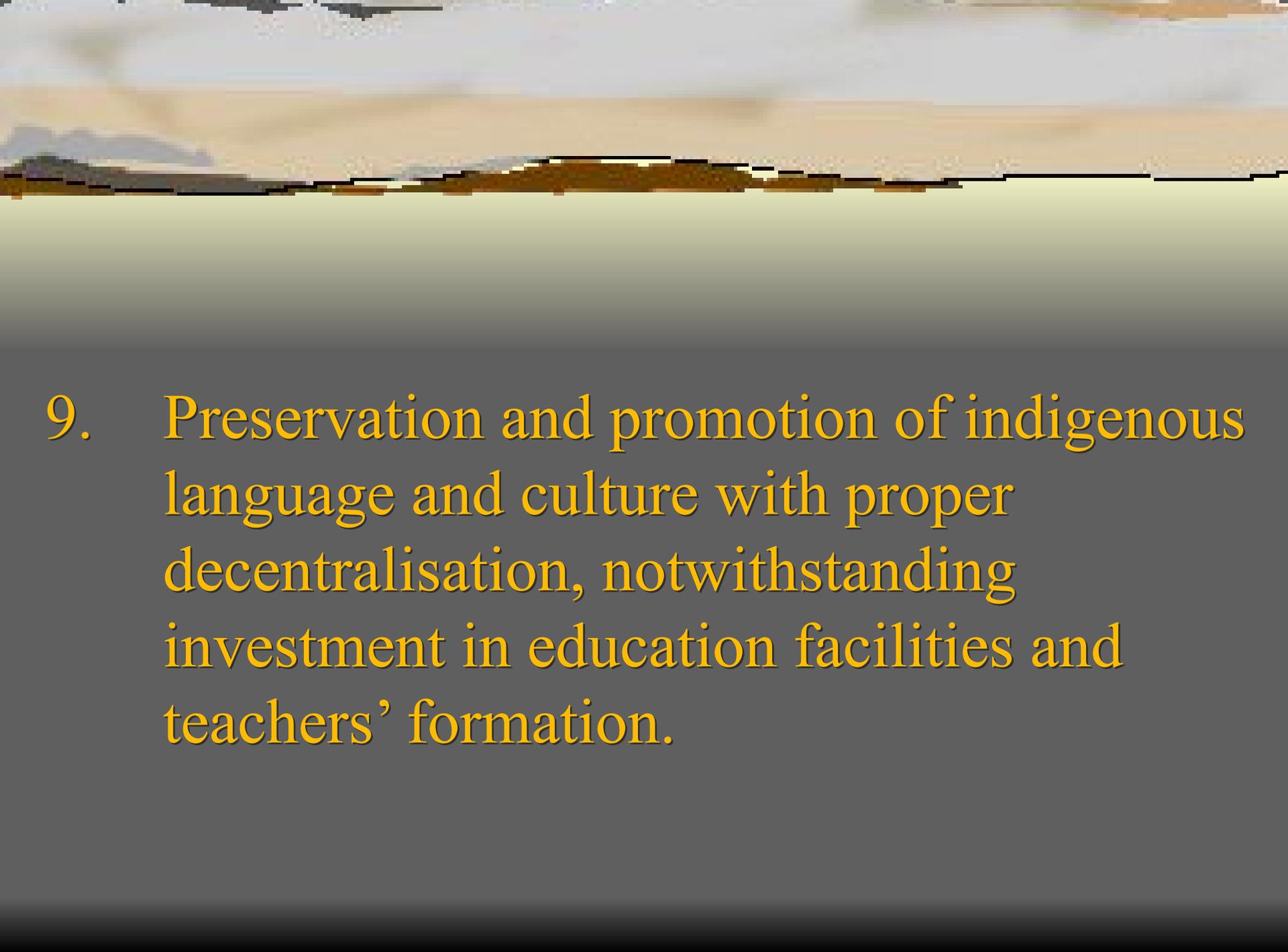
6. Transparency and accountability, both upward and downward, at all levels of governance should be instituted in order to prevent undemocratic misuse of power and finances.



7. Policy and laws need to allow for constant adaptation to local specificities.



8. In order to improve competitiveness of the mountain systems and ensure equity and sustainability, specific local labelled products have to be identified and, for that purpose, technological and scientific investment, appropriate policy and institutions are required.



9. Preservation and promotion of indigenous language and culture with proper decentralisation, notwithstanding investment in education facilities and teachers' formation.

A scenic landscape featuring a range of mountains under a sky with soft, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The foreground is a dark, silhouetted area, possibly a field or a road.

10. Communication and information within the mountain areas and between the various mountains of the world should be promoted in order to facilitate the comparison, adoption and local adaptation of technical innovations and answers to comparable problems and issues.