

Largest-ever conference on mountain regions will take place in Scotland

Leading scientists from across the globe are meeting in Perth this week (26–30 September) to take part in the largest-ever conference on mountain regions.

“Global Change and the World's Mountains” has been organised by Perth College UHI’s Centre for Mountain Studies (CMS) and the global Mountain Research Initiative (MRI), and will see nearly 500 scientists from 60 countries presenting their research and working on a global action plan for mountainous areas.

The conference is being opened by Professor Martin Price of the CMS, Professor Rolf Weingartner of the MRI, and Roseanna Cunningham MSP, the Scottish Government’s Minister for Environment.

Delegates can take part in keynote presentations by internationally-recognised experts, 42 sessions on social and natural sciences, a public debate on ownership of Scotland’s National Parks, and field trips to the Scottish Highlands.

Mountain areas occupy 24% of the Earth’s land surface and are home to 12% of the global population, according to Professor Price. He continued, “Globally, mountain areas are vital for providing us with water for agricultural, industrial, and domestic use. They include major centres of biodiversity and cultural diversity, and in an increasingly urbanised world, are key locations for tourism and recreation. However, mountain areas and their people are also particularly vulnerable to climate change.

“Our conference takes account of all these factors and, by bringing together leading scientists and others to look at progress since our last major conference in 2005, we aim to provide a renewed focus for mountain issues and global change.

“This will also start the process of producing an action plan for mountains in the lead-up to the ‘Rio + 20’ United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012”.

Professor Price shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize as a member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Dr Thomas Moore, the new Principal of Perth College UHI said, “This conference and the quality of those attending and presenting scientific papers demonstrate the world-class research which exists here in Perth. It is truly a centre of global excellence.”

James Fraser, UHI Principal added, “I am delighted to be chairing the opening session as the event brings together leading scientists and others working in, and concerned with, mountain areas around the world to discuss, assess and make progress in our understanding of global change in mountain regions”.

Provost of Perth & Kinross, Councillor John Hulbert, welcomed the conference by saying, “I am very pleased that the Council is supporting this event as part of the Perth 800 celebrations, the 800th anniversary of Perth being granted Royal Burgh status.

“It not only highlights the expertise we have in this field here in Perth but will also have a significant economic and cultural benefit to the area, with key names in mountain studies from across the world coming together.”

Delegates are also being invited to a civic reception with the Provost.

Perth College UHI, a leading partner in the prospective University of the Highlands and Islands, established the CMS in 2000 to create a centre of excellence for work in mountain areas. Since 2009, the CMS has hosted the UNESCO Chair in Sustainable Mountain Development.

The conference is being supported financially by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the Austrian Academy of Sciences, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research, the Scottish Government, Perth & Kinross Council, The British Council, UNESCO and its National Commission for the UK, and is sponsored by the Edrington Group.

Conference organisers are encouraging those attending to “tweet” their thoughts on interesting ideas, novel approaches and emerging themes throughout the event using Twitter. Each session has its own hash name in the conference programme, so comments about specific subjects will be tracked and used in the summary session on the last day.

To find out more, visit

<http://www.perth.ac.uk/specialistcentres/cms/Conferences/Perth2010/Pages/default.aspx>

—ENDS—

Notes to Editors

If you would like to interview Professor Price before 2pm on Thursday 23 September or 11am on Friday 24 September you can call him directly on 01738 877217.

For all other enquiries call Perth College UHI’s Marketing Department on 01738 877271/877209

Video footage from the conference will be available.

Media representatives are welcome to attend the Provost’s Civic Reception on Monday 27 September at 6.30pm in Horsecross, Perth.

The Centre for Mountain Studies (CMS) was established at Perth College UHI in August 2000, with the objective of creating a centre of excellence for work in mountain areas within the emerging University of the Highlands and Islands (currently UHI Millennium Institute). With a focus on mountain environments and the people who depend on them, both in Scotland and internationally, the CMS has four main goals: to undertake and communicate high-quality research; to convene meetings to disseminate and discuss knowledge and to develop research agendas; to contribute to informed policy-making processes; to lead in the development and delivery of academic courses and training.

To find out more about the Centre for Mountain Studies, visit www.cms.uhi.ac.uk

UHI Millennium Institute (UHI) is a higher education institution comprising thirteen partner colleges and research institutions, one associated institution and a network of over fifty outreach learning centres, located throughout the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (including Moray and Perthshire).

Currently over 6800 students are studying on undergraduate and postgraduate courses or undertaking postgraduate research with UHI.

The UHI partner institutions are working together to achieve university status, as the University of the Highlands and Islands. Taught degree awarding powers were awarded by the Privy Council in August, 2008.