

Sagarmatha Sambaad: Nepal Initiates Biennial Global Dialogue

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Summary

Nepal has initiated a biennial global dialogue called ‘Sagarmatha Sambaad’, which translates to ‘Everest Dialogue’, after the name of the world’s tallest mountain. The inaugural edition of the Dialogue focused on the impacts of climate change on mountains and the future of humanity. It did not turn out to be a huge success as expected but it was successful in coming up with an outcome document. More importantly, a small country like Nepal taking such an initiative is in itself a commendable task.

The Nepal government organised the first edition of the Sagarmatha Sambaad, which literally translates to ‘Everest Dialogue’, from 16 to 18 May 2025 in Kathmandu. This was [planned initially](#) for April 2020 but it was cancelled then due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan is to organise the dialogue once every two years.

This initiative perhaps draws inspiration from other global dialogues such as the Boao Forum in China and the Raisina Dialogue in India. Similar to these established initiatives, the [Sagarmatha Sambaad](#) intends to gather “global leaders involving heads of state/government, parliamentarians, policy makers and local governments, as well as leaders from inter-governmental organisations, private sector, civil society, think tanks, academia, women, youths and media to discuss on the ways of cooperation, exchange of ideas and sharing of experiences on prominent global issues.” The [name of the initiative](#) has been so chosen considering Sagarmatha, or Mount Everest, as a symbol of friendship and the tallest witness of the unfolding global events.

The theme of the first edition of Sagarmatha Sambaad was ‘Climate Change, Mountains and the Future of Humanity’. The impacts of [climate change on the mountains](#) are evidenced by rapid receding of snow covers, extreme floods, natural disasters, change in water availability conditions, biodiversity loss, rise in glacial lake formations and glacial lake outbursts, among others. Nepal and other mountainous countries have been experiencing these impacts in increasing numbers and intensity. Almost coinciding with the Sagarmatha Sambaad, there was a [glacial lake outburst](#) in western Nepal that triggered floods and landslides and displaced 19 households.

It is also interesting to note that the first edition of the Sagarmatha Sambaad, after the cancellation of the earlier plan in 2020, happened to take place in 2025, the year the United Nations has declared as the [International Year of Glaciers’ Preservation](#) (IYGP). The objective of the IYGP 2025 is “to raise global awareness about the critical role of glaciers, snow and ice in the climate system and the hydrological cycle, and the economic, social and environmental impacts of the impending changes in the Earth’s cryosphere.”

A country known for its mountains, with the [highest number of peaks](#) above 8,000 metres in the world, Nepal is best placed to initiate the global dialogue on climate change and mountains. It is not only the mountain regions and the people living there that suffer from the impact of climate change on the mountains. Billions of people living downstream are also affected by changes in hydrological cycles and natural disasters, among others. Hence, the need to accelerate dialogues on the theme of climate change, mountains and the future of humanity has never been so urgent for all the countries in the world.

The Nepal government [sent invitations](#) to 350 delegates, including several heads of state/government, with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi prominent among them. Around 200 foreign delegates participated in the dialogue, but there was no participation of any [head of state/government](#). This might reflect the lack of adequate preparation and diplomatic efforts on Nepal's part, or less value given by foreign governments to the Dialogue, or a combination of both. Nevertheless, the first edition of the Dialogue was successful in that it came up with a [25-point Call for Action](#) as an outcome document. The Call for Action highlights some of the aspects specific to mountain countries, such as the establishment of a dedicated fund to mobilise targeted financial resources for climate action and sustainable development in mountainous regions. However, it also calls for the need to take climate actions in general by all countries to limit global average temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, and the need to provide financial and technological support to developing countries in relation to climate change.

This is not the first time that Nepal has attempted to highlight climate change impacts on the mountains to the global community. On 4 December 2009, before the climate summit in Copenhagen, Nepal's government organised a [cabinet meeting at Kala Patthar](#), the base of Mount Everest, and adopted a 10-point Everest Declaration. However, while this was a unilateral symbolic act that was important in its own right, the Sagarmatha Sambaad is a multilateral gathering, and its inaugural edition has made a collective call to address climate change impacts on the mountains for humanity's better future. The Sagarmatha Sambaad has also been conceptualised as a dialogue in continuity, not a one-off event.

As the Sagarmatha Sambaad has been presented as a platform for the exchange of ideas and sharing of experiences on prominent global issues, there are possibilities that future editions might not remain confined to mountains and climate change. Keeping the options open to discuss any prominent and challenging issue of the time is a good idea. However, since there are multiple other platforms to deliberate on a plethora of issues, Nepal should identify and focus on its niche areas to make the dialogues effective and impactful.

Several [weaknesses and failures](#) have been reported in the organisation of the first edition of the Sagarmatha Sambaad. However, for a small country like Nepal to take an initiative such as this is commendable. The weaknesses and failures of the inaugural edition should serve as important lessons for the future.

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