

Preface

Established in 1992, prior to the Rio Earth Summit (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development), the Mountain Agenda is an informal consortium comprising individuals from academic and development cooperation sectors globally, who possess a professional interest in elevating the status of mountains within the global development and environmental discourse. In 2022, the United Nations General Assembly designated the year as the International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development, aiming to enhance awareness regarding the significance of sustainable mountain development, as well as the conservation and sustainable utilization of mountain ecosystems. Notable advancements have been achieved across various domains, including mountain biodiversity conservation, cultural preservation, education, scientific research methodologies, tourism development, and the arts. The inaugural Sustainable Mountain Development Conference was convened by Dhananjay Regmi, Alton C. Byers, and Teiji Watanabe, and took place at the Chandragiri Hills Resort in Kathmandu from 1st to 3rd December 2022.

Following the success of the inaugural conference, the organizers recognized the necessity for further investigation into mountain-related issues and subsequently convened the 2nd Sustainable Mountain Development and Tourism (SMDT) Conference. This event took place in Pokhara, Nepal, from 6th to 8th October 2023. The conference was collaboratively organized by Hokkaido University, the University

of Colorado at Boulder, the GLP Japan Nodal Office, Kathmandu University, and the South Asian Institute for Advanced Research and Development. The primary objective of the conference was to examine various sectors through the lens of globally esteemed experts in the fields of physical and social research sciences, education, development, art, filmmaking, conservation, and geotourism and ecotourism. The SMDT Conference featured 21 sessions, comprising 95 oral presentations, eight poster presentations, and seven keynote speeches delivered by speakers from Nepal, India, and numerous other countries and regions worldwide.

This special issue was conceived to concentrate on presentations pertaining to geotourism. Nepal, characterized by its geological and geomorphological activities, has garnered the attention of numerous geologists, geomorphologists, geographers, and other researchers globally. Nevertheless, the concept of a geopark has yet to be introduced in Nepal, resulting in the absence of a systematic framework for offering geotourism and geoeducation. This situation is regrettable. The 2nd SMDT Conference featured numerous significant presentations and valuable discussions concerning geotourism. It is anticipated that this special issue will serve as a favorable opportunity to advance research and education related to geotourism in South Asia. It is also hoped that this special issue will lead to establishment of geotourism and geoparks as venues for practicing geotourism in Nepal.

Teiji Watanabe, on behalf of the conveners
Lalu Prasad Paudel, on behalf of the guest editors