

## Press Release

# UIAA responds to Everest age restrictions

The UIAA welcomes China's decision to ban people under 18 years of age from climbing Mount Everest.

According to press reports and climbing and trekking agencies in Nepal, the decision was taken on June 10 by the Lhasa-based Chinese Tibet Mountaineering Association (CTMA) - a branch of the Chinese Mountaineering Association, which is a UIAA Member.

The move was welcomed by the Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA).

"While concerned about the restrictions on the freedom for exploration and human endeavour, the **UIAA Access Commission** applauds the actions of the CTMA and the NMA to protect minors by placing a lower age restriction on summiting Everest," said commission president Clare Bond.

UIAA President, Mike Mortimer, also greeted the Chinese decision, saying young mountaineers lacked not only climbing "experience", but also maturity.

However, Mortimer is critical of the maximum age of 60 set by the CTMA.

"The issue of an upper age limit would seem to be very arbitrary and should be of concern," Mortimer said. "Many climbers over the age of 60 have safely climbed Everest and other high peaks. Although medical considerations might present problems, the older climber often has a wealth of experience missing from younger people."

### Climbing for all ages

For her part, Bond emphasises that the UIAA continues to "encourage the active participation of all ages and members of society in climbing and mountaineering and the freedom to participate in the sport and enjoy the mountains".

President of the **UIAA Youth Commission**, Anne Arran, added: "Climbing Everest is a great challenge but not without risk and young climbers should not be pushed to undertake it."

The UIAA co-ordinates around 10 youth events in the world's mountains each year, and in 2011 plans to run a youth project in Nepal, which, according to Arran, will "focus on an exchange of mountain skills between countries and supporting environmental and sport development challenges relevant to youth in Nepal".

### China and CTMA

The CTMA is the official channel through which climbers must apply for permission to attempt peaks in Tibet.

According to Lindsay Griffin of the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) writing on the BMC website, it is not yet unconfirmed if these age restrictions will also apply to other high peaks on the Himalayan divide.

Griffin says "the decision has been made in the aftermath of (May's) Everest ascent by 13-year-old Jordan Romero".

"Nine years ago Nepali schoolboy Temba Tshiri became the youngest Everest summiteer at the age of 16 (and 17 days) but lost several toes and fingers to frostbite. This put pressure on the Nepalese government to ban young climbers, and in 2003 it set a minimum age of 16. However, there is currently no upper limit," Griffin added.

"There do seem to be loopholes in the Chinese regulations. In exceptional circumstances the CTMA may issue a permit to a mountaineer outside the declared age range. Applications will be considered from climbers outside this age span if they can provide a medical certificate showing they are fit enough to make the ascent, though it is believed that this is most likely aimed at climbers over 60."

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