INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAINEERING AND CLIMBING FEDERATION
UNION INTERNATIONALE DES ASSOCIATIONS D'ALPINISME

New Mountain Ethics Declaration

The UIAA General Assembly on Saturday, October 10, approved a code to serve as a beacon of mountaineering values, spelling out ethics of sportsmanship, respect for cultures and care for the environment.

The assembly named the document the UIAA Mountain Ethics Declaration. The governing body met for its annual gathering October 8-11 in Porto, Portugal.

Doug Scott, the famed British mountaineer who has achieved the seven summits, worked diligently on the document. He hopes it will guide alpinists well.

"The Mountain Ethics Declaration, the updated statement on best practices in mountaineering, is very timely," Scott said, "especially to help those climbers in areas where there is no strong consensus of opinion as to the best way forward."

The declaration addresses mountaineering issues such as the responsibility to assist others in need, the factual reporting of ascents and the use of supplementary oxygen in high altitude climbs.

The intent, say mountaineers involved in the process, is to create a document that reflects the sport's high ideals and evolves with changing times.

"We are living in times of rapid change, not least the advance of commercialism into many areas of human activity and pressures on the mountain environment from developments of many kinds," UIAA Management Committee member John Nankervis said. "It is important therefore to impart to new generations of mountaineers the inspiration and values of past mountaineers … Indeed principles and standards might change over time but an awareness of the traditional values of the sport is needed, now more than ever."

Nankervis is a New Zealand mountaineer has been a key player in working on the declaration. He shall continue involvement with the polishing of the document.

The declaration has a rich history.

The document builds upon work of American climbers and the UIAA Mountaineering Commission called the Mountain Code. That code was updated and approved at an international meeting of leading climbers in Innsbruck, Austria in 2002. The resulting document from that gathering was called the Tyrol Declaration.

The UIAA Mountain Ethics Declaration, mountaineers at the General Assembly meeting said, is intended as a living document. The organisation expects to make continuous improvements.

The Mountain Ethics Declaration will now go back for editing and inclusion of amendments agreed upon by the General Assembly. The final version will be released and published on the United Nations' International Mountain Day, on December 11, 2010.

This year's annual UIAA General Assembly meeting was hosted by the Portuguese Alpine Club.

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