

GLOBAL MOUNTAIN NETWORK

UIAA DECLARATION ON HIKING, CLIMBING AND MOUNTAINEERING



UIAA

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UIAA DECLARATION ON HIKING, CLIMBING AND MOUNTAINEERING

The UIAA considers that the principles laid out in this Declaration are the basic norms that all hikers, climbers and mountaineers should follow:

ETHICS AND STYLE

- We report the style by which we climb with honesty
- We accept other people's styles when different from ours
- We will not harm the experience of others while hiking or climbing

BALANCING RISK, SUCCESS AND FAILURE

- We consider the effect on others before taking risks
- We help others in need, even at the expense of our own goals

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- We respect the natural ecosystems in climbing areas and mountain regions
- We recognise climate change and seek to reduce our impact
- We adhere to local regulations and respect local communities and cultures
- We support the right of access to the wilderness with responsibility



UIAA

International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation
UNION INTERNATIONALE DES ASSOCIATIONS D'ALPINISME



UIAA DECLARATION ON HIKING, CLIMBING AND MOUNTAINEERING

The purpose of the new declaration is twofold:

- To lay out the generally accepted norms for behaviour that the UIAA considers optimal. This includes the ethics and style with which we climb and the environmental and social considerations that we should be aware of.
- To clarify the best practice for climbers and mountaineers from a mountaineering viewpoint. This particularly refers to the style of rock climbs and ascents of "alpine" peaks.

These are a set of recommendations and norms, rather than rules that will hopefully resonate with climbers and mountaineers worldwide.

The 2002 Tyrol Declaration was an excellent document that has served the UIAA and the mountaineering and climbing community very well over the last 22 years and many of the maxims included in that document are still very pertinent and applicable today.

But the world has changed quite dramatically over the intervening period and climbing and mountaineering have changed with it. The developments include the rise of sport and indoor competition climbing, the rapid development of the commercial outfitters guiding clients up major peaks in the greater ranges and the influence of the internet, apps and social media that have revolutionized the availability of information and changed trends. The influence of these developments is being felt worldwide.

One of the biggest developments is climate change. Sustainability guides us all at the UIAA. This is not only about protecting mountain ecosystems but supporting the well-being of local communities and those who depend on climbing and mountaineering for their livelihood. It is about maximizing the positive environmental, social, and economic impacts associated with climbing and mountaineering, to ensure that our sport can thrive and continue to be enjoyed by current and future generations.

Mountaineering practices vary around the world from country to country and culture to culture. None of these variations are right or wrong and are usually simply differences in emphasis.

Climbing and mountaineering can generate positive impacts, supporting peace building, health and well-being, promoting cross-cultural awareness and understanding, fostering pride in cultural traditions and supporting heritage building. It can also help avoid depopulation and urban relocation by creating local jobs and livelihood opportunities, and increase visitor awareness and appreciation of natural, cultural, and historical values and assets in mountains.

It is hoped that this Declaration will contribute to the foundation that binds mountaineers together across the world.



ETHICS AND STYLE

CHAPTER 1

We report the style by which we climb with honesty.

“Style” in mountaineering is shorthand for “the rules of the game”. All climbing is circumscribed by the rules we willingly accept. If this were not the case, there would be nothing to prevent us from taking helicopters directly to the summit. There would be nothing to prevent fixing Via Ferratas across the hardest rock climbs. Climbing as a discipline would cease to exist. The rules define the style, and they have evolved in step with mountaineering. Whether we choose to follow one set of rules or other concerns only us and our conscience. Climbers should be free to choose whichever style of ascent to follow and it matters little what style we choose to follow, provided we do not harm the natural environment or the experience of others.

We can choose our rules, but there remain overriding principles that apply to all styles of mountaineering; that is that we should be clear about the style in which we climb. We must be honest when describing the rules we have adhered to. Failure to be rigorously honest leads, sadly, to not infrequent accusations of cheating. There are two more incontrovertible rules of climbing; they are that we should not harm the natural environment and that we should take care not to negatively affect the experience of others in the process. These are the three overriding principles by which we climb, and they indicate the limits of our freedom in relation to others and the natural environment.

- We recognise that all climbers (adventure or sport) have a right to climb in any style that accords with their wishes and abilities.
- Climbers should share and report their activities truthfully. An accurate account enhances not only the credibility of the climber, but also the public reputation of the sport. In mountain sports honesty is essential to evaluate accomplishments. Digitally enhanced photography changes the reality of what was seen and experienced and should be discouraged. Mountaineering should not be reduced to a summit photo or video for the ‘bragging rights’ – every aspect of the experience, from planning to the camaraderie, has intrinsic value and should be shared in our reporting.
- Adventure routes should be left as natural as possible, relying on removable protection whenever it is available and use bolts only when necessary and always subject to local convention.
- Dare to fail. There is no such thing as a guaranteed outcome in mountaineering. It is only by accepting the high chances of failure in the mountains that the richest experiences are earned.
- We use social media responsibly so as not to devalue climbing and mountaineering or spoil mountain environments.





ETHICS AND STYLE

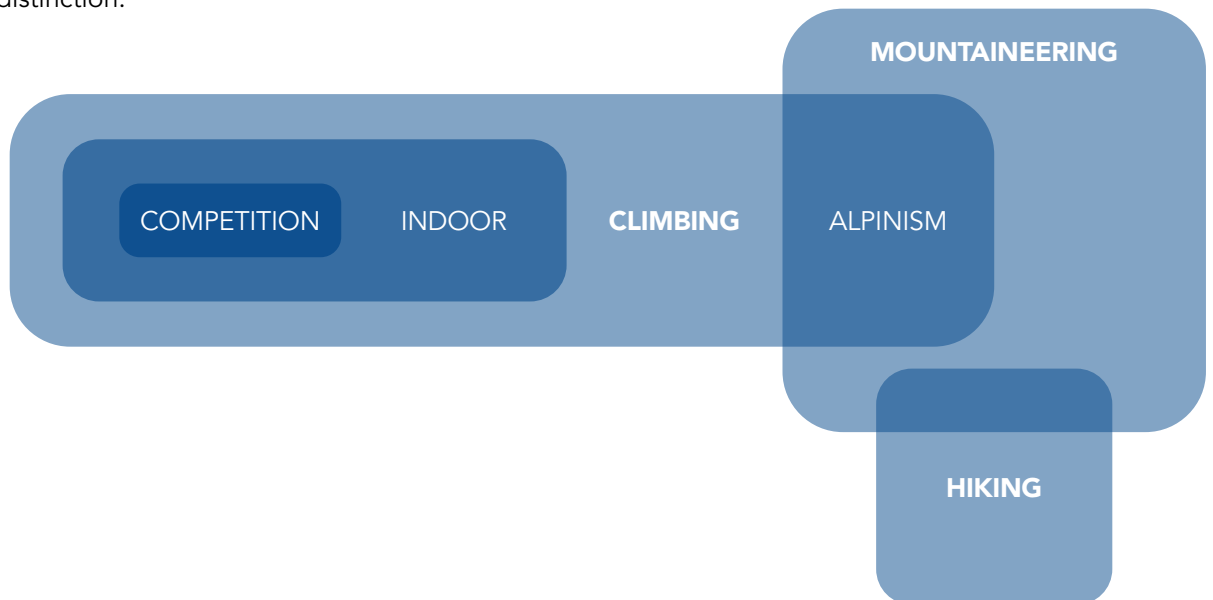
CHAPTER 2

We accept other people's styles when different from our own.

Modern climbing encompasses a broad spectrum of activities ranging from hiking and bouldering to crag climbing and mountaineering. Mountaineering includes what is generally known as "alpine" climbing and includes extreme forms of high-altitude alpinism and expedition climbing in the greater ranges such as the Andes or Himalayas.

Controversies around style reflect the fact that on the 8000m peaks at least, we are in an overtly commercial era of mountaineering. Consequently, there exists a tension between recognising each climber's right to climb in any style they wish, and recognition that there may be better ways to do things. Although all climbers have equal rights, not all styles are equal in the respect they command in our mountain community. This is in part at least, a cultural distinction.

- We recognize that lightweight climbing reduces our impact on the human and natural environment.
- We appreciate that all forms of mountaineering, including trekking and other forms of mountain tourism, also benefit from this approach.
- We aspire to lightweight alpine-style climbing, but we recognise with respect those who prefer the fully guided ascents popular on the 8000 metre peaks.





ETHICS AND STYLE

CHAPTER 3

We will not harm the experience of others.

That we should not negatively affect the experience of others is a fundamental and self-evident human ethic. In the mountains and while climbing that implies respect for the local style of climbing. Concrete examples of harm to the local community would be to create sport routes in zones where “trad” methods are the norm, to use nuts or pegs where only soft protection is the custom, or the building of infrastructure in wilderness areas that have been traditionally kept wild.

Less concrete but as important, is the direct human experience. For example, popular routes, which can often be crowded, will benefit from simple good manners such as allowing faster parties to pass in the mountains, keeping quiet areas quiet on cliffs and removing equipment from climbs in a timely manner allowing as many others as possible to share the activity. In short, as mountaineers and climbers, we recognize the boundaries of our freedom with respect to others.

- We treat others’ climbs with respect and avoid commenting negatively.
- We do not hinder or disturb others more than necessary.
- We let faster parties pass.
- Climbers ascending should have right of way over parties descending provided it is safe to do so.
- Local climbing communities should have precedence over the way they treat climbs. We will not deface the rock by chopping or adding holds.
- We are considerate when proposing a name for a route, a peak, or other parts of a mountain: we consult with the local communities and respect local customs and existing rules to ensure that the proposed name is not offensive.





BALANCING RISK, SUCCESS AND FAILURE

CHAPTER 4

We consider the effect on others before taking risks.

Risk is an inherent part of any outdoor activity, and we recognize the need to reflect upon this. We need to do this, not only for ourselves but for others affected by our actions in the hills and mountains.

We need to be prepared for foreseeable risks and assess their likelihood before we venture out. It would not be practical to expect a formal risk assessment according to national or international guidelines to be made every time we go into the mountains. However, we can apply the principles of risk assessment in an informal way. We need to identify hazards; hazardous effects; who might be affected; risk probabilities and consequences; safety or control measures; and finally, the result to lessen risk factors. We need to be aware of our actions and the effects on others in a broad context, whether they are partners, others in the vicinity, rescue services, and not least our family members and friends.

- We understand that there is risk when climbing and visiting the mountains, with the possibility of injury or death in certain conditions.
- We assess both subjective and objective hazards before a climb or in the mountains.
- We do everything we can to not endanger others and we warn others of potential dangers.





BALANCING RISK, SUCCESS AND FAILURE

CHAPTER 5

We help others in need, even at the expense of our own goals.

In an ideal world, climbers help anyone in distress or injured in the mountains or other climbing environments provided it is safe to do so.

It is also necessary to consider the various scenarios in which we encounter people in trouble on the mountain. The priority is to render all assistance possible. Our own goals are less important than delivering assistance.

We need to be prepared for all eventualities:

- We always try to help others when they are in distress.
- In any mountain incident, we ensure our own safety first and then help the affected parties. We ensure that injured parties are safe from objective dangers.
- If necessary, we alert rescue services as soon as possible.
- It is important we do not sensationalise these events but treat them with respect according to cultural norms. Finding a body is likely to be disturbing. We must be mindful to respond with sensitivity and common sense.
- We give all possible assistance to local inhabitants in need. An expedition doctor is often in a position to make a decisive intervention in the life of an acutely ill person.





RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

CHAPTER 6

We respect the natural and human mountain environment.

High elevation habitats are not only home to endemic plant, fungi and animal species, but also play a pivotal role as refuges to species in lower elevations that are threatened by climate change and human-induced pressures. Mountains and rock climbing areas are also hosts to what is increasingly being recognised as “geo-diversity”, which entails the rich variety and diversity of rocks, minerals, fossils, landforms, sediments, and soils, together with the natural processes that lead to their formation.

Climbing and mountaineering can have profound effects on bio and geo-diversity such as the natural vegetation cover, richness and range of animal species, the loss of soil and vegetation through erosion, and rock quality and overall landscape appeal. Consequently, the attraction and intangible value of mountainous landscapes could not only diminish, but also the fundamental functioning of mountain ecosystems could be compromised.

Examples of impacts on nature (bio and geo-diversity) from climbing and mountaineering activities, include excessive over-use of sensitive areas, altering, defacing, or scarring the surface of cliffs and rock walls through bolting, anchors, chalk use, or the installation of infrastructure to facilitate access and climbing, such as Via Ferratas or ladders, (human) waste and pollution, the latter in particular in expedition climbing and mountaineering – especially in remote and high-elevation regions.

Travel and Camping

- Whilst trekking or camping, we endeavour to keep the landscape, tracks and sites pristine
- We avoid burning wood for cooking and heating and provide fuel for porters on expeditions. Preparing food for as many people as possible supports reducing carbon emissions.
- We avoid camping near animal burrows and stay at least 30 meters away from water sources. When camping for longer times, we change our spot every couple of days, where practical.
- We try to be as quiet as possible and avoid playing music or shouting as noise interferes with wildlife.

Waste Management

- We reduce any form of waste and bring our (human) waste back to where it can be disposed of in a cleaner way, where practical and appropriate.
- We minimise waste by avoiding unnecessary packaging.
- We take all waste away including organic matter which can spoil the landscape and harm local wildlife.

Water Sources

- We avoid contamination of water sources in any way and don't wash directly or swim in vulnerable lakes, ponds or rivers.
- We clean up any litter found near water sources, especially hazardous waste like batteries.





RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

CHAPTER 6

Flora, Fungi and Fauna

- We are mindful of wildlife and their habitats, avoiding direct contact. We do not feed or handle wildlife as it can alter their natural behaviour and diet.
- We only harvest fruits and seeds if it does not disrupt the local food chain or ecosystem.
- We remember that pets are not considered as wildlife and that they can carry diseases into wildlife populations and threaten wild animals with their behaviour.
- When we visit a rock-climbing crag, we ask the local communities before starting to clean a route (including lichen, moss, plants, bushes), as they would probably be aware of any endemic/rare species. We only remove as much vegetation as it is necessary to do the route.
- We consider using as little chalk as possible when climbing. Excess chalk and chalk spills can alter the pH and nutrient conditions of the rocks, affecting fauna and flora.

Local Environmental Regulations

- Environmental monitoring in remote areas is challenging. We support local environmental projects, especially when travelling in regions with vulnerable natural environments and we help prevent degradation by reporting environmental issues to authorities.





RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

CHAPTER 7

We recognise climate change and seek to reduce our impact.

Rising temperatures are key drivers of accelerated climate-related changes. This results in rising freezing levels in mountains, inducing melting glaciers, thawing permafrost, reducing snow-cover and altering seasonal duration. Consequently, climbing routes are also changing due to rising temperatures and rapidly changing conditions.

Impacts include increased exposure to landslides, avalanches, and changing weather patterns. Equally important, they lead to profound changes to ecosystems, ways of life, cultural identities, values and heritage.

Contributing factors to climate change from climbing and mountaineering are mainly through the emissions of greenhouse gases associated with mobility (e.g. travel to mountain destinations). There are also indirect links to fossil fuel-based energy use that is associated with the manufacturing and transport of equipment used in climbing and mountaineering – including technical clothing.

- We always choose the lowest carbon intensive options when travelling to the mountains or climbing areas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by using public transport, car sharing or driving an electric vehicle and avoiding travelling by air if possible. Alternatively, we compensate for greenhouse gas emissions using acknowledged compensation schemes
- We recycle equipment and garments where possible and buy sustainably produced goods.
- We avoid taking single use plastics and packaging and use a water filter or purifier instead
- We consider contributing to local initiatives that address greenhouse gas emissions.
- We support local projects aimed at protecting flora and fauna and reforestation.
- We as mountaineers, can support scientific research, assisting with information regarding climate related issues as well as its impact on our own practice when climbing or trekking.
- We consider publicising these issues to raise awareness and encourage prompt action.
- We stay informed and support initiatives focused on the regeneration and restoration of mountain ecosystems, whether on a personal level, as a club, or through our federations.





RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

CHAPTER 8

We adhere to local regulations and respect local communities and cultures.

It is of utmost importance that we comply with the laws and regulations of the country or region we visit, be it written laws or customary rules. Any transgression might not only negatively affect our visit, but also those of future climbers and the relationship with our home country or organization. As guests in foreign cultures, we should always conduct ourselves politely and with restraint towards our hosts.

- We adhere to climbing regulations implemented by the host country or region, and to local rules even if they appear unreasonable to us.
- We respect holy mountains and other sacred or sensitive places, and we avoid offending the cultural and religious feelings of our hosts.
- We seek to benefit and assist the local economy and people. We buy regional products, if feasible and utilize local services.
- We support fair treatment and conditions for any local workforce whose livelihoods may depend on climbing and mountaineering.
- We treat the people in the host country with kindness and respect. Equally, we will treat visitors to our country or region in the same manner.
- We respect local customs, cultural and legal rights of landowners. We also respect other visitors who have interests other than climbing and mountaineering.
- We respect the traditional local uses of the mountains, including livestock farming, agriculture, economic, cultural, and religious practices.





RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

CHAPTER 9

We support the right of access to the wilderness with responsibility.

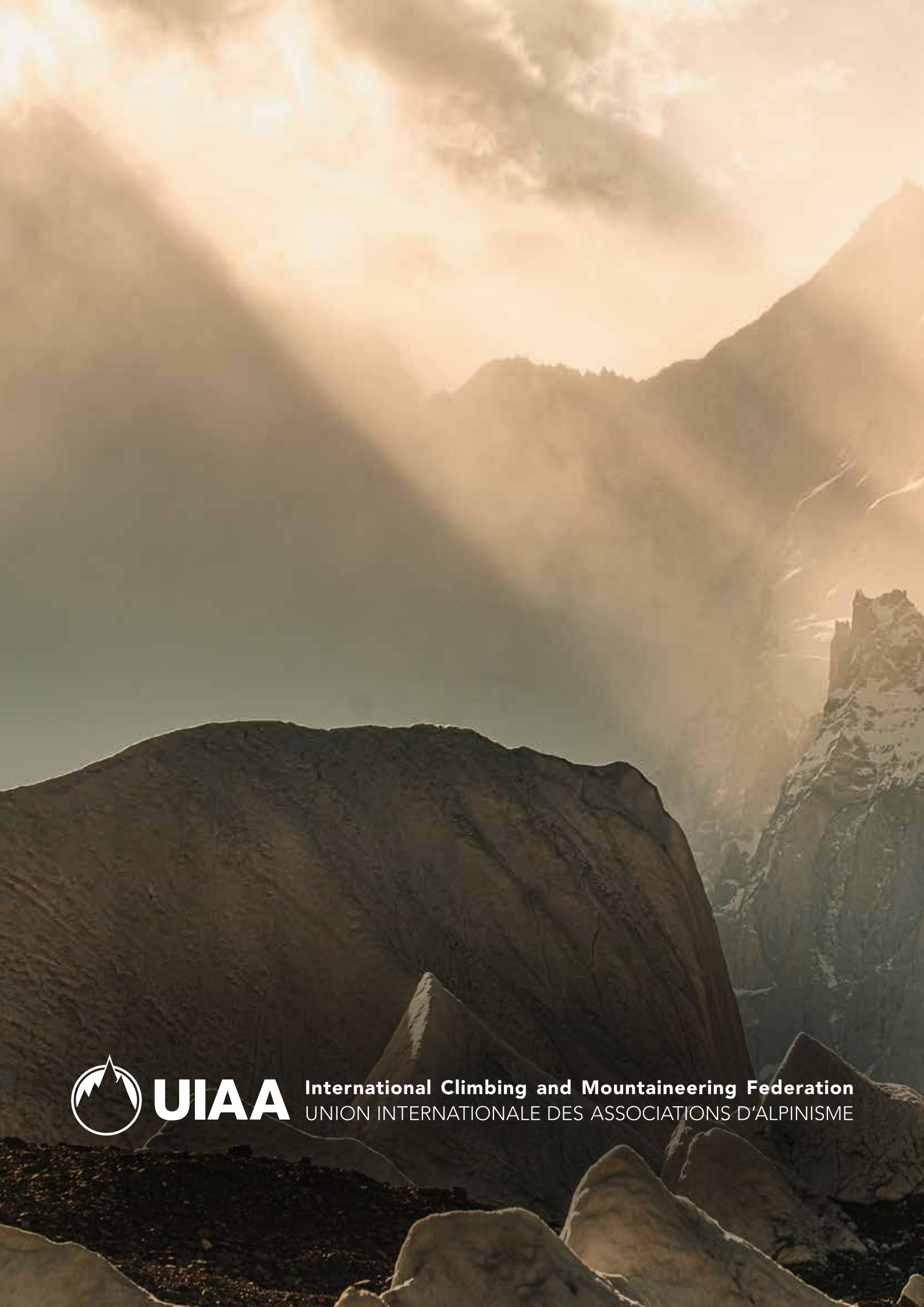
The UIAA commits itself to encouraging national associations to support the rights of climbers and mountaineers to maintain and improve the accessibility to mountain and wilderness areas.

Climbing and the enjoyment of the natural environment are essential for the nurturing of the human spirit. There can be few greater joys than accessing wild mountain regions. Most barriers to access are physical and geographical while the obstacles can be political.

Some countries have a 'right to roam' enshrined in law and climbers enjoy free access to mountain areas. However, even where there is an established tradition of mountaineering, climbers' interests often clash with those of landowners, conservation bodies, national parks, industry and sometimes governments. Some of our favourite venues require permits and permissions.

- We believe that freedom of access to mountains and cliffs in a responsible and sustainable way is a fundamental right.
- We respect access restrictions and regulations agreed with nature conservation organisations and other authorities. Flexibility, dialogue and co-operation is essential. We should negotiate to find solutions satisfactory to all parties.
- We consider carefully the broader implications of popularising areas as increased numbers may cause access problems and environmental degradation.
- We support the implementation of regulations by sharing and publicising them.





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