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Climate: Nepal is a victim

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Sherpa says Nepal is not to blame for climate change; the west must help.

Himalayan mountaineers were at sea-level in Copenhagen on Friday to bring the dire effects of climate change in Nepal to the world's attention at the U.N. climate summit.

Nepali ministers, who earlier this month held a Cabinet in the shadow of Everest at 5,252m, joined the Sherpas including Apa Sherpa who has climbed the world's highest mountain a record-breaking 19 times, and the WWF climate ambassador Dawa Steven Sherpa.

The march through the streets of Copenhagen was organised to coincide with International Mountain Day and a side event at the Bella Centre conference hall looking at the potential problems and solutions to glacial melt in the Himalayas, including changing crop patterns and innovative pest control. Some 1.3 billion people in Asia depend on water from glaciers in the Himalayas and as temperatures rise the supply of water could be seriously threatened.

In an interview with the *Guardian* en route to Copenhagen, Dawa Steven Sherpa said that he had seen great changes in Nepal.

"Nepal is one of the earliest victims of climate change and whatever is going to happen in the rest of the world is already happening in Nepal, for example forest fires, droughts, floods. They are all happening in Nepal already and this because of Nepal's extreme geographical circumstances. The average temperature rise in Nepal is twice that of the global average so we're already seeing everything that is going to happen in the world. But Nepal has a carbon emission contribution of 0.02% which is practically nothing. We are not to blame, yet we are the first victims," he said.

Glaciers have started to melt more rapidly in recent years, he said, which has made climbing more dangerous and threatened his own village, Khumjung, with the icy waters gathering at the base of the rapidly melting Imja glacier.

"The Imja lake is one of the most talked about at the moment. It is the fastest receding glaciers in the Himalayas. Some studies show it is receding by up to 74 metres a year and it is directly upstream from the homeland of the Sherpas, the Khumbu, if that glacial lake bursts and comes down, it's going to wash out everything in its path. It's said to be about 1.6km in length, and 92 metres at its deepest point. So that's a lot of water. And when it comes down it's going to wash away everything."

He said was travelling to Copenhagen to call on world leaders to commit to a strong deal. "The west should come in and help us with our problems. Not because it's charity or aid, but because it's justice," he said.

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