

Preface

Over the past decade, the International Commission on Continental Erosion (ICCE) of IAHS has organized and co-sponsored a number of successful international symposia dealing with a variety of topics in the field of erosion and sediment yield. Many of these symposia have focussed on themes which had attracted attention at that time, but one topic has provided the basis for what has become an almost regular series of gatherings. This is the theme of steepland erosion, and more particularly the problems of steepland environments within the Pacific Rim. The International Symposium on Erosion, Debris Flows and Environment in Mountain Regions, which is to be held in Chengdu, China, in July 1992 is the sixth meeting in this informal series which was initiated with the 1981 Symposium on Erosion and Sediment Transport in Pacific Rim Steeplands (IAHS Publication no. 132), held in Christchurch, New Zealand. The meeting in New Zealand was followed by the Symposium on the Effects of Forest Land Use on Erosion and Slope Stability held in Honolulu, Hawaii, in 1984; the Symposium on Erosion, Debris Flow and Disaster Prevention, which took place in Tsukuba, Japan, 1985; the Symposium on Erosion and Sedimentation in the Pacific Rim (IAHS Publication no. 165), held in Corvallis, Oregon, USA, in 1987; and the Symposium on Research Needs and Applications to Reduce Erosion and Sedimentation in Tropical Steeplands (IAHS Publication no. 192), which took place in Suva, Fiji, in 1990.

The Chengdu Symposium, to which this proceedings volume is devoted, again focusses on steepland and mountain environments, but particular emphasis is given to debris flows and to the general problem of environmental degradation in mountain areas, which is now attracting increasing concern. These themes are particularly appropriate for a meeting in Chengdu, in view of the outstanding reputation for research on debris flows and mountain hazards established by the Chengdu Institute of Mountain Disasters and Environment of Academia Sinica, which generously offered to host the Symposium. Although most of the papers deal with studies undertaken within steepland areas bordering the Pacific, there are also contributions reporting the results of investigations in many other mountain areas of the world, including, Greenland, Germany, Poland, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Spain, Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia, several states of the former USSR, and Brazil. The 55 papers provide information from 25 different countries. More familiar

topics such as the measurement and prediction of soil erosion, the dynamics of debris flows and related phenomena, and slope protection measures, are joined by papers that deal with the wider field of environmental degradation and include discussions of vegetation succession, soil degradation and land restoration.

The broad perspective on erosion problems in mountain areas provided by the papers in this volume must be seen as a valuable feature. It reflects the multidisciplinary background of the contributors, which is in turn a response to the involvement of several organizations and agencies in organizing and sponsoring the Symposium. The International Commission on Continental Erosion (ICCE) and the International Association of Hydrological Sciences (IAHS) have been joined by UNESCO, the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations, Academia Sinica and the National Foundation of Natural Sciences of China, in staging what should prove an extremely interesting and important symposium that continues the valuable tradition first established by the meeting in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 1981.

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