

UN Biodiversity Conference Highlights: Tuesday, 29 October 2024

The High-level Segment gathered Heads of State, Ministers, and high-level officials, while text-based negotiations continued in contact groups throughout the day and into the night.

High-level Segment

Opening Plenary: Denouncing historical priority given to corporate interests and greed before the fundamental needs of humanity, President of Colombia Gustavo Petro stressed that solutions to the crises of biodiversity loss and climate change are inherently political and require global, collective realignment to democratic decision-making. He further called for the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 16) to be a turning point in the path away from domination toward global democracy.

“Biodiversity is humanity’s ally,” and making peace with nature is the defining task of the 21st century, stressed UN Secretary-General António Guterres. He underlined that, to turn the bold commitments of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) into action, the conference must deliver: clear, ambitious, and effective national plans; monitoring and transparency; accelerated financial support to developing countries; fair and equitable benefit-sharing, including through the multilateral benefit-sharing mechanism from digital sequence information (DSI); and a subsidiary body under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Article 8(j) (traditional knowledge).

Luis Gilberto Murillo Urrutia, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Colombia, launched the “World Coalition for Peace with Nature: A Call for Life,” an invitation to rethink the economic model and people’s social and political relations and behaviors. He invited “peace with nature ambassadors,” including children, youth, and representatives of Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs), to deliver their messages: support for an Article 8(j) subsidiary body; direct access to financial resources by IPLCs, intergenerational equity, and knowledge transmission; and multiethnic diversity and biocultural relations.

Vahagn Khachatryan, President of Armenia, drew attention to their expression of interest to host COP 17. Daniel Noboa, President of Ecuador, underlined that when people’s basic needs are met, “they will have more time and greater desire to preserve the environment.” Úmaro Sissoco Embaló, President of Guinea Bissau, called for an expanded and accessible global finance mechanism, payment for ecosystem services, and strong partnerships to build a future in harmony with nature.

Leslie Voltaire, President of the Transitional Presidential Council of Haiti, stressed the importance of capacity building and the need to mobilize additional financial resources. Chan Santokhi, President of Suriname, noted that Suriname has woven IPLCs’ knowledges and practices into national conservation plans.

Denouncing that “Eurocentrism, capitalism, and modernity continue to impose their development model, putting the planet at risk and exacerbating poverty,” David Choquehuanca Céspedes, Vice-President of Bolivia, called for committing to the path of “Buen Vivir” in harmony with Mother Earth. Yván Eduardo Gil Pinto, Minister of Popular Power for Foreign Affairs of Venezuela, stressed that action on biodiversity must be based on science, reduce the gap between rich and poor countries, and ensure people’s livelihoods.

COP 16 President Susana Muhamad underscored that the GBF has given momentum to the whole-of-government and -society approaches necessary for the protection of biodiversity, and declared the High-level segment open.

Afternoon Plenary: Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, Chairperson, UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, emphasized that IPLCs are “already living in peace with nature,” and urged their direct access to funding. Astrid Puentes Riaño, Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, pointed to the wealth of human rights expertise that can support the implementation of the GBF. Speaking for the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions, Martha Rojas Urrego, Executive Secretary, International Whaling Commission, highlighted instances of strengthened GBF implementation through cooperation across conventions. Emphasizing that peace with nature is rooted in action and a deep sense of responsibility, Shaw La Mun, Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN), urged delegates to ensure the key role of equity and human rights.

Many noted efforts to update their national biodiversity strategies and action plans. Romina Pourmokhtari, Minister for Climate and the Environment, Sweden, emphasized the need for: a comprehensive monitoring framework; mobilization of resources from all sources; and strengthening synergies among the Rio Conventions. Iziaq Adekunle Salako, Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare, Nigeria, lamented significant delays in mobilizing and allocating financial resources.

Steffi Lemke, Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety, and Consumer Protection, Germany, highlighted the need for a GBF monitoring framework, the role of IPLCs in protecting nature, and the need to mobilize appropriate funding from all sources. Maisa Rojas, Minister of Environment,

Chile, highlighted the pledge toward the recognition of fungi as an independent kingdom of life in order to advance their conservation and mainstream their benefits to ecosystems and people.

Mamadou Samake, Minister of the Environment, Sanitation, and Sustainable Development, Mali, noted that living in harmony with nature is a fundamental part of the path toward reconciliation, pointing to efforts for climate security and GBF implementation.

Adrian Forde, Minister of Environment and National Beautification, Green and Blue Economy, Barbados, highlighted that the COP 16 theme is embedded in the “cultural and social consciousness” of the Caribbean region. Steve Reed, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, UK, said that the focus of the global mission to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 has now “rightly shifted to action.” He noted that systemic change “starts at home,” calling for an economy that works with nature, not against it.

Juan Carlos Castro, Minister of Environment, Peru, stressed the need for a coordinated approach to deal with biodiversity loss, climate change, desertification, and pollution crises, fostering sustainable production and consumption patterns, and strengthening technical assistance, capacity building, and cooperation. Daouda Ngom, Minister of the Environment and Ecological Transition, Senegal, and Ophelia Mensah Hayford, Minister for Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, Ghana, called for the establishment of a biodiversity-dedicated fund under the CBD and a strong multilateral benefit-sharing mechanism for DSI.

Mukhtar Babayev, Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources, Azerbaijan, noted his country’s bid to host COP 17. Trevor Manemahaga, Minister of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology, Solomon Islands, noted the stewardship of small island developing states (SIDS) over unique biodiversity, and urged empowering IPLCs to take action against biodiversity loss and ensuring their direct access to financial resources.

Alicia Bárcena Ibarra, Secretary of the Environment and Natural Resources, Mexico, emphasized that conservation efforts and development models must ensure environmental justice, and align with the Escazú Agreement. Bahodur SHERALIZODA, Chairman, Committee for Environmental Protection, Tajikistan, noted efforts to expand protected areas, recover species, and establish wildlife corridors. Ain Bahadur Shahi Thakuri, Minister of Forests and Environment, Nepal, stressed capacity and technological needs, simplified funding mechanisms, and further work on mountain biodiversity. Ana Paula Chantre Luna de Carvalho Pereira, Minister of the Environment, Angola, pointed to transboundary initiatives to create wildlife corridors.

Decrying the ongoing conflict in Palestine, Abdullah Ali Al Amri, Chairman of Environment Authority, Oman, lamented the unprecedented rate and scale of biodiversity loss, noting the importance of mobilizing resources and finance to halt and reverse it. Sithembiso G. G. Nyoni, Minister of Environment, Climate and Wildlife, Zimbabwe, stressed the importance of biodiversity for IPLCs, including for food security, culture, and income.

Konan Jacques Assahore, Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development and Ecological Transition, Côte d’Ivoire, emphasized that mobilizing finance from all sources presents an opportunity for achieving GBF goals. Sophalleth Eang, Minister for Environment, Cambodia, reported on a nationwide campaign

to expand forest cover, achieve carbon neutrality, and promote greening of public and community lands.

Riad al-Malki, Presidential Advisor for International Affairs, State of Palestine, lamented loss of lives and livelihoods due to Israel’s occupation of their territories, highlighting loss of agricultural land, increase in disease, and destruction of water and sewage infrastructure. Robert Bouvier Torterolo, Minister of Environment, Uruguay, referred to their Sovereign Sustainability-Linked Bond to finance climate and nature targets. Amna Al Dahak Al Shamsi, Minister of Climate Change and Environment, United Arab Emirates, noted that the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change COP 28 Joint Statement on Climate, Nature, and People places nature at the center of climate action.

Petr Hladík, Minister for the Environment, Czechia, reported cross-sectoral plans and actions in agriculture, forestry, and urban planning, and development for nature conservation. Aziz Abdukhakimov, Minister of Ecology, Environmental Protection and Climate Change, Uzbekistan, drew attention to the Convention on Migratory Species COP 14 held in Uzbekistan and its Global Partnership on Ecological Connectivity, and invited participants to COP 20 of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. Thierry Kamach, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, Central African Republic, called for support for new financing models that allow effective implementation and achievement of biodiversity objectives.

Kirti Vardhan Singh, Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, India, called for adopting environmentally friendly lifestyles and for easily accessible means of implementation. Max Andonirina Fontaine, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, Madagascar, stressed that biodiversity conservation should not conflict with local community development, and prioritized fair and equitable benefit-sharing.

Yasmine Fouad, Minister of Environment, Egypt, focused on restoring ecosystems, including reclamation of deserts, sustainable farming, and expanding protected areas. Nik Nazmi bin Nik Ahmad, Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability, Malaysia, stressed the need for adequate and easily accessible financial resources, and capacity and technology transfer in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Tore O. Sandvik, Minister of Climate and Environment, Norway, emphasized their pledge of an additional NOK 150 million to the GBF Fund and extension of the International Climate and Forest Initiative until 2035; and urged adopting new modalities for ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs) and establishing a permanent body for Article 8(j). Marina Silva, Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, Brazil, noted commitments to end deforestation by 2030, and urged reform of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as well as access rights for IPLCs to the DSI mechanism. Orlando Habet, Minister of Sustainable Development and Climate Change, Belize, called on the international community to meet its obligations, including by closing the biodiversity finance gap, and establishing fair and equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms.

Ana Patricia Orantes Thomas, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Guatemala, emphasized the need for cooperation, political will, and redoubling financial efforts. Cozier

Frederick, Minister of the Environment, Rural Modernization, Kalinago Upliftment, and Constituency Empowerment, Dominica, emphasized his country's efforts to build economic, social, and environmental resilience for current and future generations. Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Subaie, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Qatar, highlighted national efforts to protect marine and coastal biodiversity and areas.

Thoriq Ibrahim, Minister of Climate Change, Environment and Energy, Maldives, reported significant strides through a biodiversity nature fund, and the recently concluded national capital account of marine ecosystems. Ivete Joaquim Maibaze, Minister of Lands and Environment, Mozambique, expressed commitment to the Maputo Declaration, supporting sustainable management and governance of resources of Miombo Forest.

Céline Caron-Dagioni, Minister of Public Works, Environment and Urban Development, Monaco, reported on ratification of the Agreement on marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction. Malcolm Noonan, Minister of State with Responsibility for Nature, Heritage and Electoral Reform, Ireland, cited the Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss, aimed at increased public engagement in biodiversity restoration.

Flavien Joubert, Minister of Agriculture, Climate Change, and Environment, Seychelles, called for more work on marine and coastal biodiversity in the CBD and underscored the financial responsibilities of developed countries. Armando Paino Henríquez, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Dominican Republic, stressed that environmental destruction deepens inequalities and highlighted the value of environmental education. Nasiha Pozder, Minister of the Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Bosnia and Herzegovina, expressed concern regarding access to funding, particularly the challenges faced by countries with economies in transition.

Pierre Hele, Minister of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development, Cameroon, called for a new global economic structure and supported establishment of a dedicated fund. Agnès Pannier-Runacher, Minister for Ecological Transition, Energy, Climate and Risk Prevention, France, drew attention to the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People. Ruslan Edelgeriev, Special Envoy of the President of the Russian Federation, noted restoration of endangered species and international cooperation, including among BRICS countries.

Lucky Halach Medina Estrada, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Honduras, emphasized addressing ecological devastation and social impacts, including dispossession, resulting from greed and the capitalist system. Gilberto Correia Carvalho Silva, Minister of Agriculture and the Natural Environment, Cabo Verde, noted disproportionate challenges faced by SIDS due to biodiversity loss and climate change, and emphasized synergies between the Rio Conventions and provision of means of implementation as essential for GBF implementation.

Jiwoh Emmanuel Abdulai, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Sierra Leone, highlighted mainstreaming of inclusive green growth in national development processes to reduce vulnerabilities. Eve Bazaiba Masudi, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, Democratic Republic of the Congo, decried ongoing conflicts that threaten biodiversity alongside human lives, and called for COP 16 to take "brave decisions" for GBF implementation, including on resource mobilization and synergies.

Inger Andersen, Executive Director, UN Environment Programme, emphasized the GBF calls for a step up in public and private funding, and a "dramatic dialing down" of harmful incentives and subsidies. She further stressed that it is "long past time" for IPLCs' leadership and knowledge to be at the center of GBF implementation and for operationalizing the DSI benefit-sharing mechanism, so that "those who profit from biodiversity give back to nature and its stewards."

Emphasizing that people of African descent can no longer be overlooked, June Soomer, Chairperson, UN Permanent Forum on People of African Descent, queried "what is the GBF without the commitment and enforcement needed to protect nature and the people who protect nature?" Ilze Brands, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, underlined that the risks faced by environmental defenders cannot be tolerated, and urged the CBD to develop a human rights-based, and gender-responsive approach to biodiversity conservation.

Sergio Diaz-Granados, Executive Director, Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF), underscored the role of Global South development banks in redistributing global income to finance development. Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary, UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), pointed to the UNCCD COP 16 in December, which is set to adopt landmark decisions on drought and land restoration.

José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs, Executive Secretary, UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, highlighted the Development Traps in Latin America and the Caribbean report, which proposes transformative sustainability models aligned with nature conservation.

Statements continued into the evening.

Contact Groups

Specialized International Access and Benefit-sharing (ABS)

Instruments: Co-chaired by Patience Gandiwa (Zimbabwe) and Mery Ciacci (EU), the contact group addressed a draft decision based on Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI) [Recommendation 3/16](#). Discussion focused on bracketed paragraphs regarding a possible process for recognition of specialized international ABS instruments. Developing countries and observers drew attention to the text of Nagoya Protocol (NP) Article 4.4 on the matter, stressing that, to be recognized as such, specialized instruments need to be consistent with, and not run counter to, the NP's objectives. They argued that the NP Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties (COP/MOP) is the sole authority to recognize such instruments, on the basis of agreed criteria, adding that the principle of mutual supportiveness refers to implementation, not adoption. Developed countries opposed establishing a process for recognition, arguing that there should be no hierarchy between the NP and other ABS instruments, and that such a process would pose barriers to benefit-sharing flows. They proposed that work on the matter could continue under items on cooperation or assessment and review. Delegates acknowledged continued divergence and decided to call for submissions by parties and others on the process for recognition by the COP/MOP in relation to the hierarchy between international instruments, for further consideration by SBI 6 and COP/MOP 6. A conference room paper will be prepared.

Resource Mobilization: Delegates focused on a [non-paper](#) containing clusters of elements to be addressed depending on the final decision on an intersessional process toward establishing a dedicated global instrument for biodiversity finance. Some delegates emphasized they favor none of the proposed options for an intersessional process to develop modalities, including: establishing an intergovernmental process; establishing an expert advisory committee; mandating one of the CBD's subsidiary bodies; or drawing input from an independent expert.

Discussions focused on: closing the biodiversity finance gap by tapping all sources and instruments, which could be addressed in an intergovernmental intersessional process; assessing the financial mechanism and benchmarking against those of other relevant multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs); and criteria for the design of a dedicated global instrument for biodiversity finance. Deliberations addressed, among other issues: the need for reforming the international financial architecture; the relationship between biodiversity and climate finance; innovative financial mechanisms/instruments; the role of the private sector; sovereign debt, fiscal space, and special drawing rights; and Mother Earth-centric actions. Delegates further discussed a future in-depth review of the effectiveness of the entity operating the financial mechanism and monitoring the GBF Fund's progress.

Scientific and Technical Needs: Debates focused on the draft decisions regarding regional and subregional technical and scientific cooperation support centers. Delegates agreed to replace reference to the global knowledge support service for biodiversity with "other relevant initiatives." Several delegates supported advancing the following areas of work: biodiversity-inclusive spatial planning; pollution and biodiversity; and sustainable biodiversity-based activities, products, and services that enhance biodiversity. Delegates diverged on a request for work on "equity, gender equality, and human rights-based approaches relating to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity." The areas of work remained bracketed.

On the work programme of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the IPBES Secretariat informed parties that a call for inputs and suggestions would be made following IPBES 11 in December 2024, for consideration at IPBES 12. Delegates agreed to invite IPBES to consider the following potential additional assessments: pollution and biodiversity; cities and biodiversity; biodiversity and poverty; and biodiversity and climate change. Divergence ensued on whether to include a topic on rights-based approaches. Many argued this is a cross-cutting issue and suggested inviting IPBES members to reflect on ways to include matters related to a human rights-based approach to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the scoping of future assessments, including the second global assessment. This topic remained in brackets.

DSI: Delegates addressed a [non-paper](#) produced by the Co-Chairs, focusing on modalities for operationalizing the multilateral benefit-sharing mechanism. Deliberations focused on non-monetary benefit-sharing provisions on: who should share non-monetary benefits and when; the purpose and form of non-monetary benefits; and how it can be further intensified. Delegates debated the essential elements for non-monetary benefit-sharing, as well as whether a specific clearing-house mechanism would need to be established, in order to, among others, match

providers with recipients. Most delegates underscored that existing instruments can be utilized. Discussions further focused on, among other things, distinguishing between monetary and non-monetary benefits and responsibilities, with some parties stressing that non-monetary benefit-sharing needs to be valued and recognized.

The contact group then turned to provisions on implementation and contributions, with delegates debating the key components that must be reflected in the draft decision, including, among other things: issues of compliance with the requirements under the multilateral mechanism; and interlinkages between parties' administrative, policy, or legislative measures and contributions to the global fund.

The contact group continued its deliberations in the evening, with delegates addressing key issues around: IPLCs and traditional knowledge; the interaction between the multilateral mechanism and national ABS measures and systems; and the interaction between the multilateral mechanism and other international or multilateral ABS regimes. Discussions continued into the night with delegates focusing on the review of the multilateral mechanism (enclosure D) and the draft decision.

Planning, Monitoring, Reporting, and Review (PMRR): The group resumed its consideration of the decision on mechanisms for PMRR on the basis of a [non-paper](#), focusing on options for governance of the global review, including: with support from the Advisory Committee; it being a party-led process; with engagement of all parties through SBI and the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, informed by party submissions and a peer review process; or with support from the COP Bureau. Delegates worked toward streamlining these options, and agreed to delete a proposed option on appointing envoys to improve communication and political will on stimulating action for addressing the challenges identified in the global review. Deliberations continued on decision text, including on the governance of the global report and requests to the Secretariat. The group later considered the [proposed revisions](#) to the guidance on using the indicators on the GBF monitoring framework, and took stock of progress on both mechanisms for PMRR and the monitoring framework.

In The Corridors

On the first of two days devoted to a High-level Segment, Heads of State and Ministers shared concerns, challenges, policy priorities, and success stories, with many stressing the urgency of addressing the environmental crisis and focusing on implementation of the GBF goals and targets. "Passing from rhetoric to action is the first step," one participant noted, "and action starts at the negotiating table." With a stocktaking plenary scheduled for Wednesday evening, and negotiations continuing at a slow pace in contact and informal groups, some were hopeful that the presence of high-level representatives will provide the necessary impetus and momentum for agreement on at least some of the main outstanding items, such as DSI, finance and resource mobilization, and Article 8(j). Others, meanwhile, were concerned that the time spent on high-level statements is encroaching upon limited negotiating time. "Hopefully there is a plan B," one observer commented, on their way out of a "useful, yet too abstract" discussion on resource mobilization.