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TNFD is NOT aligned with the GBF

Shona Hawkes, Rainforest Action Network

The Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) is heavily promoted at COP16. The taskforce is made up solely of 40 corporations. It has no scientists, government officials, Indigenous peoples, CSOs or academics. TNFD's reporting framework is not 'aligned' with the GBF.

GBF Target 15(a) calls for businesses to 'transparently disclose', including their 'impacts'. The TNFD's recommended baseline is to report how biodiversity impacts a business. It is not that a business should report its impacts on nature.

TNFD is not '*transparent disclosure*'. Company TNFD reports won't disclose their supply chain or investment chain, so that impacted people seeing abuses in their area typically don't even know of the company or bank's involvement. Nor does TNFD recommend disclosing any serious complaints a company is facing. Real transparency is also necessary for consumers to make sustainable choices under Target 15b.

Target 15 also states that an objective of a) and b) is for companies to 'reduce negative impacts', yet there's no evidence TNFD reports will change corporate practices. Many of the world's biggest fossil fuel companies publish similar reports under the TCFD on climate. The TNFD does not challenge the ability of corporations to profit from environmental or human rights harms.

What do TNFD reports tell us?

Warnings about TNFD's greenwashing risks are sadly proving true. Mining company Vale's TNFD report is full of glossy graphics but doesn't mention that it had

to pay \$55 million over misleading disclosures, it faces protests from Indigenous Peoples or has been struck off by investors in 9 countries. The *Banking on Biodiversity Collapse* report recently concluded that a basic google search was more informative than agribusiness trader Bunge's TNFD report.

An initiative for corporate reporting on biodiversity impacts already exists

The *Global Reporting Initiative* (GRI) already has a biodiversity standard, long pre-dating the TNFD. GRI is adopted by thousands of companies, incorporated into many policies and evolved from a more robust decision-making structure than the TNFD. While far from perfect – including on issues raised above - the GRI is a better option.

Strike TNFD (and ISSB!) from the Resource Mobilisation text

Currently TNFD is bracketed in the Resource Mobilisation, Annex 1. This could encourage the adoption of TNFD reporting into national laws to show that parties are meeting their Target 15 obligations. This is a back-door way for corporations to write their own regulations! Text referencing the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) should also be dropped because it doesn't even have a biodiversity standard.

Biodiversity and energy transition: running counter to the GBF

Maria Laura Castillo, High Andean Wetlands Program at FARN

The narratives of the Global North's energy transition model promote lithium mining as a solution to the climate change crisis, based on the use of this mineral in batteries for renewable energy storage. However, the greatest demand for lithium comes from the car industry, to power individual electric vehicle batteries.

Today, the geopolitical race for control of the supply chain of minerals for such transition increases the pressure on the countries that possess them, and is jeopardizing the integrity of the ecosystems in which they are found, their associated biodiversity, and favoring dynamics of human rights violations.

The *International Energy Agency* projects that the demand for lithium for battery production will increase up to 42 times by 2040 compared to 2020, while the Inter-American Development Bank forecasts that it will be 1036% higher than 2020 levels. These estimates, however, are not clear, and focus mainly on individual mobility, leaving aside public transportation.

In this regard, the transition model does not question the hyper-consumption paradigm that has generated the current multiple crises. High-income countries consume about twice the world average of energy and minerals per capita, yet no urgency in reducing demand for environmental goods is raised.

Neither does this model adequately address the impacts it generates on the environment and human rights. Projections show that meeting the extraordinary demand for lithium will require a massive acceleration of its production and processing in a short period of time, which exacerbates environmental pressures on ecosystems and communities.

A key fact: more than half of the minerals considered “critical” are on or near indigenous lands.

Andean wetlands in Argentina, Chile and Bolivia - which together account for around 53% of the world's

lithium brine reserves - are home to indigenous communities that have inhabited them since ancestral times based on “Buen Vivir” (good living) and play a key role as guardians of biodiversity.

These fragile ecosystems are located in arid zones with a negative natural annual water balance, where water is the element that defines life. Due to their function as water regulators, they are key to adaptation to climate change. Likewise, through vegetation and microorganisms adapted to their extreme conditions, they sequester and store CO₂, which is central to climate change mitigation.

Paradoxically, in the name of an alleged fight against climate change, lithium mining - classified as water mining - directly undermines these contributions, and may even release greenhouse gasses stored in wetlands.

The GBF sets clear targets to address biodiversity loss, which must be acted upon in a participatory manner and in consultation with indigenous communities. However, lithium mining is advancing in several cases against these precepts, without information, without participation, without adequate environmental impact assessment processes, and without the consent of indigenous communities.

The global climate, biodiversity and pollution crises demand a comprehensive approach that modifies the unsustainable patterns that perpetuate environmental degradation and the subjugation of human rights.

States should establish clear commitments and move forward with concrete actions to advance towards comprehensive socioecological transitions built participatively, based on the pillars of human rights and in full respect of planetary boundaries.

Debt for nature swaps: proceed with caution (and low expectations)

Patrick Bigger, Climate and Community Institute

Debt for nature swaps are poised to be a key topic regarding resource mobilization for biodiversity action during COP 16.

The concept of a debt for nature swap is straightforward. Countries carrying heavy debt burdens generally have little public fiscal space to invest in critical priorities, from education, to healthcare, to environmental protection. Worse, the need to make debt payments denominated in global reserve currencies like US Dollars puts pressure on these governments to accelerate destructive economic practices like export-oriented agriculture, mining, or gas development. **Debt swaps aim to alleviate these pressures by offering some level of debt relief in return for commitments to devote freed up financial resources toward achieving environmental objectives.**

Modern debt swaps are often complicated feats of financial engineering, involving a range of investors and creditors bound by dense legal arrangements. The devil is truly in the details. Given the urgency of action, a major limitation is that debt swaps have been extraordinarily slow to deploy for limited funding and impact. For example, the much-vaunted 2015 debt for marine conservation swap between the Seychelles, private creditors, and the Nature Conservancy took four years to assemble, resulted in only US\$21.6 million in restructured debt at only a 6.5% reduction in nominal value, and ultimately did little to reduce the Seychelles overarching debt burden - with unclear environmental impacts.

The IMF itself states that swaps are much (much!) too small to restore fiscal solvency for countries, and that “it’s more effective to address debt and climate or nature separately.” Most concerning, there is evidence

that debt for nature swaps contributing to funding protected areas played a significant role in facilitating Indigenous and small holder dispossession. This is linked to questions about conditionality, or the policy demands that Northern Governments or NGOs make of Southern governments in return for debt restructuring or cancellation; done poorly, the imposition of conditions for debt relief are replay neocolonial structural adjustment policies, impinging on Southern sovereignty and limiting effectiveness as communities are left out of planning and implementing conservation plans. And there are serious concerns that Northern governments could use debt swaps to get around their obligations under Article 21 of the CBD, and under the Rio Principles of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities, not to mention their vast ecological debts.

It is clear that securing human rights and planetary health requires structural reform to the international financial architecture causing so much debt distress and attendant biodiversity loss. But in the absence of this, debt swaps could be a stopgap measure, if structured democratically. The Latin American Network for Economic and Social Justice and Center for Economic and Social Rights have proposed a draft of “High-Integrity Principles for Debt Swaps” that foreground 4 key points: transparency and accountability, inclusive governance, environmental and social safeguards, and global collaboration.



Article with links



Report

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The need to recognise Afro-descendant communities in the CBD

Friends of the Earth Colombia, Brasil and International

In Latin America, Afro-descendant communities play an important role in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. Thanks to these communities, forests and territories, cultures and knowledge have been conserved.

This recognition can be seen as an evolution that also entails the recognition, reparation, respect, implementation and defence of their rights. At first and thanks to their struggles, Indigenous Peoples have obtained a status at the international level. Peasant communities managed to obtain a declaration recognising their rights after years of intense work at the United Nations (which should also be reflected in the CBD). Afro-descendant communities have made similar achievements in some countries and their emancipatory struggles in the face of the dehumanisation of colonialism and the enslavement of the peoples of the African continent are historic in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Today in countries such as Costa Rica a day is dedicated to the celebration of their culture, in Honduras the role they play in the protection of biodiversity and in science and technology is undeniable, and Colombia and Brazil have presented a proposal to recognise them as subjects of rights within the framework of the CBD. However, beyond this legal recognition, social movements and organisations in the region, such as the Proceso de Comunidades Negras in Colombia, have historically demanded 'the recognition of environmental damages and losses as a legacy of colonialism and enslavement'.

Such a step is sorely needed because acknowledgements at the national level are not enough. Their role, although more visible at the national level, is fundamental for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity at the global level. This recognition is fundamental for the recognition and respect of their lands and territories, their culture, their forms of organisation, their collective rights, their ways of being and existing, their memory and spirituality. This recognition is also important to safeguard them against the criminalisation they have been suffering when defending their rights and their lands, including religious racism.

Is necessary to take a further step that will benefit us as a global society. The recognition of communities that, thanks to their culture, identity and daily activities, show us once again that without them, today's biological diversity would be less. This is about justice, reparation and strengthening ancestral practices that have nurtured life.

Afro-descendant communities deserve this recognition, which will help to make the human and peoples' rights approach more and more a reality.

