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Global Biodiversity Review: Justice or Just Rhetoric?

Turning the KMGBF into real action on biodiversity loss requires confronting power, not just counting targets

Theiva Lingam, Friends of the Earth Malaysia & Lim Li Lin, Third World Network

The Global Review of the KMGBF has laid bare a simple truth: we are dangerously off track to meet the 2030 goals, and the current approach to review and implementation is nowhere near what justice demands. The support flowing from developed to developing countries remains far below what is needed, while the structural drivers of biodiversity destruction are largely left untouched. Without confronting these realities, "transformative change" becomes little more than a slogan.

Biodiversity loss is an outcome of the current dominant economic and development model that puts corporate profit above people and planet. The manifestation of this system include corporate capture, crushing sovereign debt, austerity measures, and tax injustices. These are not peripheral—they are at the heart of why implementation stalls. Developing countries hold most of the world's biodiversity and carry the heaviest burden of action, yet developed countries bear overwhelming historical and ongoing responsibility for ecological breakdown. Any credible Global Review must start from this imbalance in responsibility, capacity, and power.

To avoid repeating the failure of the Aichi Targets, the Global Review must move from informal, ad hoc processes to a formal mechanism with clear timelines, modalities, and monitoring. It must be genuinely participatory, with full and effective involvement of Parties, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women and girls, children and youth, and persons with disabilities. Regular, regionally balanced dialogues should be spaces to expose systemic barriers and challenge structural drivers, not just polite consultations. Their outcomes must directly reshape NBSAPs and national targets and trigger a real scaling-up of means of implementation.

Equitable implementation of the KMGBF means developed countries must finally meet their obligations: delivering adequate, and accessible finance, technology, and capacity-building to developing countries. It is neither fair nor realistic to demand ambitious biodiversity outcomes from countries squeezed by debt and austerity while corporate interests remain protected. If governments are genuinely committed to halting and reversing biodiversity loss, they must confront the political and economic structures that make implementation unattainable for many. Without addressing these structural and systemic barriers, the KMGBF risks becoming a mechanism for documenting failure rather than driving real change.

Close the equity gap!

Lim Li Ching, Third World Network

At the heart of the resource mobilization discussions is the question of equity. Developing countries hold most of the world's biodiversity, and bear the greatest burden of implementation. Article 20 is clear: there are common but differentiated responsibilities, with obligations on developed countries to provide financial resources to developing countries.

Additionally, as developed countries bear historical and continuing responsibility for global ecological breakdown, there is actually an ecological debt owed to developing countries and the Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and youth who steward biodiversity.

The criteria for the institutional structure to operate the financial mechanism, which must be under the authority of the COP, must be rooted in equity. Any consideration of the contributor base must not negate the obligations of developed country Parties. There must also be a distinction of the provision of financial resources from developed countries, from resources mobilized from all other sources.

Those who protect biodiversity - Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and youth – and their representative institutions, should be able to receive funding directly. Many on the frontlines unfairly bear the brunt of biodiversity destruction.

Equity also requires that the inequities perpetuated by the international economic and financial system be reversed. Firstly, funds disbursed from the institutional structure operating the financial mechanism should be grants and non-debt creating, so as not to increase the debt burden of developing countries.

Secondly, efforts to address impediments to the effectiveness of global biodiversity finance must include sovereign debt relief in developing countries so that resources can be channeled to biodiversity and development needs, rather than servicing debt, while ensuring that debt servicing doesn't result in increased biodiversity extractivism. Developing countries face inequitable higher borrowing costs.

Efforts to protect biodiversity would be aided by equitable tax policies to reclaim lost revenues. Current global tax rules, set by the rich countries, are deeply unjust. Developing countries cannot adequately tax profits generated in their economies due to an unfair allocation of taxing rights and rampant tax abuses. Ongoing negotiations at the UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation could help address these issues, and we urge cooperation and collaboration with this important process.

It is clear that there is an equity or justice gap in the resource mobilization agenda. This must be closed.

☑ *Side event*

How can the Global Biodiversity Framework drive effective and equitable action on the biodiversity crisis?
Civil society perspectives
on the global review process

- Organised by CBD Alliance
- Thursday, 6 August, 13:15
- CR-10, Grulac room, 2nd floor

☑ *Side event*

The Debt–Biodiversity Nexus and Resource Mobilisation in the Global South

- Organised by FOE | TWN | SAM | CENSAT | ECONEXUS
- Friday, 7 August, 18:15
- CR-9, African states room, 2nd floor

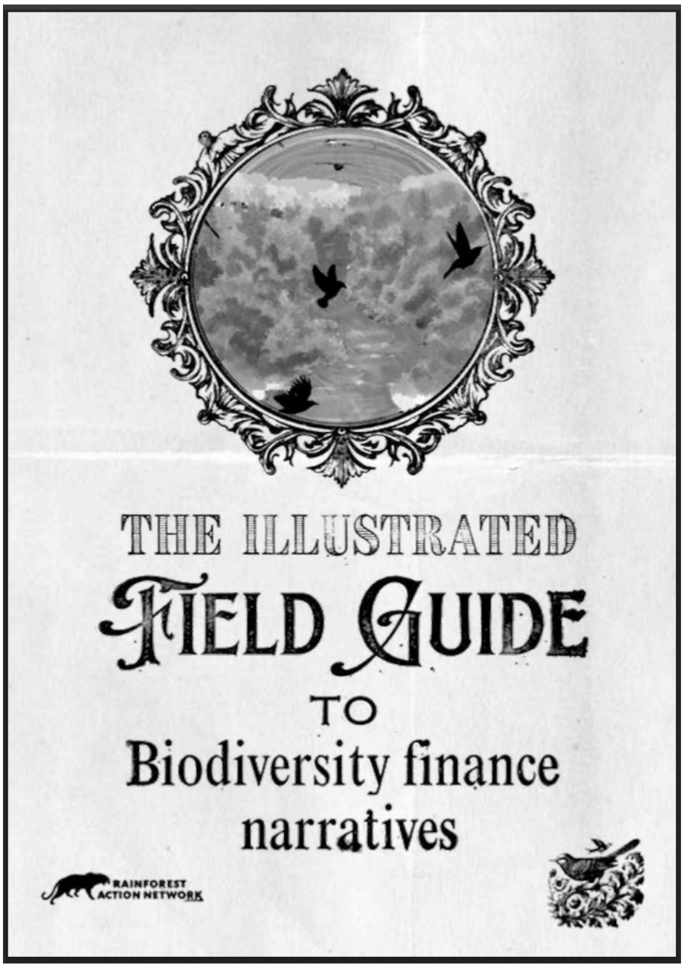
Which Questions Shape Biodiversity Finance?

Tom Picken, Rainforest Action Network

Certain narratives have become so familiar in CBD negotiations that they almost fade into the background. *"We need to mobilise more private finance." "Better disclosure will change markets." "Blended finance, biodiversity credits and debt swaps offer the way forward."*

Some of these ideas may have a role to play. Others remain deeply contested. What they have in common is that they have become familiar ways of framing biodiversity finance debates. Like birdsong, once you learn to recognise them, you start hearing them everywhere.

That's the idea behind Rainforest Action Network's new Illustrated Field Guide to Biodiversity Finance Narratives. Rather than arguing that any particular approach is simply right or wrong, it asks a different question: what questions does each narrative surface, and what questions might be obscured?



For many years, biodiversity finance discussions have centred on familiar questions. How do we close the finance gap? How do we mobilise more private investment? How do we create investable opportunities? How do we leverage public money to attract private capital? These are understandable questions, but they are not the only ones, nor necessarily the most important for achieving the KMGBF.

Reading across the documents before SBI-7, another set of questions come into focus. How do we reform harmful incentives? Are financial flows aligned with biodiversity outcomes? Is biodiversity integrated into economic, fiscal and financial decision-making? How do debt burdens, fiscal constraints and tax injustice affect implementation? Who receives finance directly? Are developed countries meeting their public finance commitments, and are those commitments clearly distinguished from finance mobilised from other sources?

The answers remain politically contested. But the prominence of these questions across the Global Review, Resource Mobilization and Mainstreaming Biodiversity agendas suggests something important: the biodiversity finance conversation is widening beyond finance mobilisation itself.

As private finance is increasingly presented as part of the solution to biodiversity loss, greater scrutiny of private finance inevitably follows. The more biodiversity finance becomes a conversation about private finance, the more it also becomes a conversation about how private finance is governed.

It is no longer enough simply to ask how much private finance can be mobilised. We also need to ask what private finance is already funding, whether it is aligned with biodiversity outcomes, and what rules, incentives and institutions shape those decisions. More fundamentally, the conversation shifts from asking how biodiversity affects financial markets towards asking how finance should better serve biodiversity and the people who protect it.

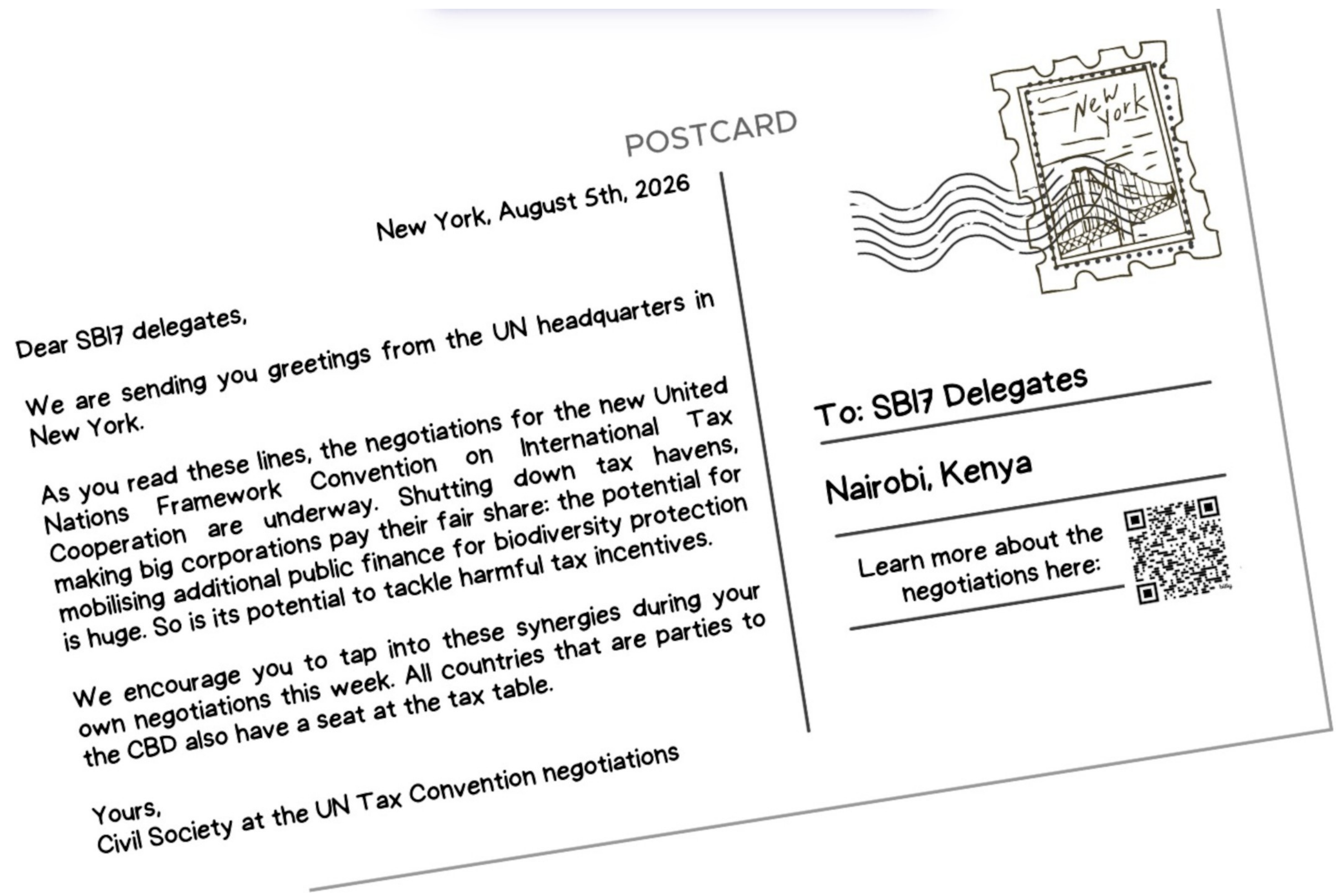
If implementation barriers are increasingly understood to be systemic, responses focused solely on mobilising additional finance, improving reporting or encouraging greater private-sector participation will not be sufficient. Policy coherence, reform of harmful incentives, financial regulation, debt relief, equitable tax systems, stronger public institutions, direct access for Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and fulfilment of developed-country public finance commitments all belong in the same implementation conversation.

The point is not that familiar biodiversity finance narratives should be discarded. Many contain part of the story. The risk is that, repeated often enough, they define the boundaries of the conversation, obscuring necessary critique of the wider financial and economic systems that continue to enable and drive biodiversity loss.

Perhaps that is the real value of a field guide. It does not tell you what to think. It simply helps you recognise familiar narratives, notice what has been left unsaid, and widen the conversation.

Because the future of biodiversity finance will be shaped not only by the text Parties negotiate this week and through to COP17, but by the questions they choose to ask.

Read the report at
https://ran.org/biodiversity-finance-field-guide/



https://globaltaxjustice.org/campaigns/un-tax-convention-now/summary