ECO

Volume 75, Issue 1-10

19-30 October 2026

cbd-alliance.org

Compendium

ECO 75(1)

- Elephants in the Room
- 30x30, but for whom? COP17 must put rights before hectares
- The Cali Fund: A bargain at developing countries' expense?

ECO 75(2)

- Upholding the spirit, substance, and terminology of the KMGBF
- Synthetic Biology: Capacity Building or Corporate Capture?
- Marginalizing the Science of Indigenous Sustainability
- Where is the Accountability? Parties are violating the decision on GE Trees

ECO 75(3)

- Opening statement (extended version)
- DSI statement
- LMO risk assessment
- Target 14: A promise unkept?

ECO 75(4)

- Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and the future of Article 8(j)
- Feeding the Future While Protecting Ocean Biodiversity
- Beyond Population Numbers: Rethinking Sustainable Use
- A Justice Gap for Indigenous Forest Defenders at the UN Biodiversity COP
- Cali Fund Certificates: An unbalanced and ineffective incentive

ECO 75(5)

- From Biodiversity Loss to Pandemic Risk: Addressing the Root Causes
- A Field Guide to COP17's Financial Wildlife
- Offsets Cannot Redeem the Irreplaceable
- Ancestral Knowledge Is Not a Footnote to Conservation

ECO 75(6)

- Delegates at biodiversity COP17 should follow the lead of Global South women
- Armenian CSO Statement on Amulsar Mining Project
- Financing Biodiversity Destruction Remains Legal, Profitable and Weakly Governed
- In memoriam: Christine von Weizsäcker
- old knowledge like the buried roots of trees (poem)

ECO 75(7)

- No rights, No biodiversity: Why Indigenous Peoples are Central to Conservation
- Biodiversity Finance: Deliver your promises
- "Trust will be the TFFF's most valuable asset." So where are its investment safeguards?
- How the IPBES assessments can speed up the KMGBF
- How many lobbyists are there at COP 17?

ECO 75(8)

- How meeting the GBF goals is made impossible through global legal systems
- Protecting bees must not become a licence to engineer them
- Wild Animal Offsets Will Drive Extinctions, Indigenous Peoples Warn the UN
- Don't ignore the youth - make our biodiversity actions be recognized!

ECO 75(9)

- Market-oriented instruments for biodiversity finance facilitate biodiversity destruction
- Assess pollution as biodiversity experiences it
- Beyond the Negotiating Table: Whose Voices Are Being Heard at COP17?
- Artificial Intelligence & datacenters: another threat to nature

ECO 75(10)

- Forest fires: The missing discussion at the Global Review
- Effective participation: Two Empty Seats at COP17
- From Recovery to Redesign: Synthetic Biology and the Future of Conservation
- When Financial Stability Depends on Biodiversity Destruction

ECO 75(10)

- CBD Alliance's Closing statement

The opinions, commentaries, and articles printed in ECO are the sole opinion of the individual authors or organisations, unless otherwise expressed.

We thank the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung for their financial support.
***Submissions** are welcome from all civil society groups.*
***Email:** lorch@ifrik.org or eco@cbd-alliance.org*

ECO

www.cbd-alliance.org

Volume 75, Issue 1
COP17
Monday, 19th October 2026

Follow the daily online ECO here:

Elephants in the Room

Third World Network

The world is facing a polycrisis rooted in an inequitable model: Biodiversity loss, climate breakdown and pollution are interlocking symptoms of a system that rewards short-term extraction and profit for a few, placing economic growth above social and environmental wellbeing for all.

The 'elephants in the room' – the structural root causes of biodiversity destruction – remain unaddressed. A new report, We Need to Talk About the Elephants in the Room (And Why Ignoring Them Perpetuates Biodiversity Destruction), focus on four distinct 'elephants in the room' that are unaddressed, or at any rate not squarely addressed. The global review is not designed to contend with these issues, and its focus on gaps in implementation and finance is insufficient. Addressing symptoms without tackling these deeper structural root causes will not halt biodiversity loss and harm to peoples.

The first elephant is the rules of the global economic and financial system, which actively drive extraction at the expense of social and environmental priorities. States caught inside this system find themselves on a perpetual treadmill. Many are structurally pushed to maintain and expand extractive industries to sustain their financial stability and investability, servicing debt and balancing external accounts within a system whose rules they neither wrote nor can easily change.

The second elephant is the harmful financial flows, both private and public, that continue to pour into the sectors driving biodiversity loss. Resource mobilisation for biodiversity cannot be reduced to a search for new funding; it must equally confront the vastly larger flows of harmful finance already at work. This is finance that enables, cheapens, insures or lends legitimacy to biodiversity-destructive activities – and no amount of new 'green' funding can outweigh it while it remains unaddressed.



How many "elephants" can the web of life sustain?

The third elephant is the corporate capture of the institutions and laws meant to govern this system. Powerful corporations and business interests shape global and national institutions, laws and policy to serve their own vested interests: pressing regulators to bend standards to fit existing production models, threatening relocation when standards tighten, and using instruments such as Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) to sue governments that attempt to raise environmental protections. This effectively results in corporate rights being privileged over environmental regulations.

The fourth elephant is the transformation of the crisis itself into a financial opportunity for the profit of a few, enabled by a market logic that is flawed when applied to nature. A growing industry of market-based 'solutions' – biodiversity offsets and credits, green bonds, and private and blended finance mechanisms – is being touted as generating biodiversity finance. In practice, however, these schemes fail to generate the necessary finance and often deepen social and ecological harm. These false solutions serve an additional function: they allow Global North countries to appear to be acting, while they are in fact sidestepping their financial obligations to the Global South.

These four elephants all work together to protect the interests that profit from biodiversity destruction. No strategy to address the biodiversity crisis can succeed while these actors, drivers and the structures that empower them remain unnamed and unchallenged.

To effect real systemic and transformative change, action is needed to transform economic and financial conditions and challenge powerful lobbying blocs and industries. The crisis also has colonial roots, and those who contributed least bear the heaviest burdens. The 'elephants in the room' rest on inequitable systems of exploitation and control, and create a 'justice gap' that must be recognised and addressed.

Download the report ***We Need to Talk About the Elephants in the Room (And Why Ignoring Them Perpetuates Biodiversity Destruction)*** *here:*

30x30, but for whom?

COP17 must put rights before hectares

Emily Mutota (socio-ecologist and researcher) & Mariam Mayet (African Centre for Biodiversity)

The CBD's first global review should be the COP17's reckoning moment. It must ask not whether governments have updated plans, announced finance, or placed more hectares on a map, but whether implementation restores biodiversity while strengthening the rights and authority of those sustaining living landscapes. Otherwise, the review **risks becoming an exercise in global greenwashing.**

This is the central warning of the A*frican Centre for Biodiversity*'s new study "Biodiversity, land, and power: 30x30, communal livestock systems, and food sovereignty in South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana." It finds that biodiversity governance is moving into communal and productive landscapes, while policy alignment is advancing faster than community decision-making power and accountability. For COP17, the critical test is therefore not whether communities are recognised or consulted, but whether they can **shape, refuse, or renegotiate decisions affecting their land, resources, and livelihoods.**

This makes 30x30 a struggle over land and power, not simply an area target. Protected areas, prospective other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs), stewardship sites, and community-managed landscapes are not interchangeable hectares. Recognition does not secure tenure, protect grazing and water access, or confer binding community authority. People may remain on their land yet lose control over the resources sustaining them: **displacement by function if not by fence.**

The global review must reject the fiction that designation equals delivery. Parties should report ecological effectiveness, connectivity, and

representativeness separately from governance quality. They must identify rights-holders; customary and seasonal uses; decision-makers; and effects on grazing, cultivation, fishing, harvesting, water, and cultural places. **30x30 must not turn communal lands into conservation assets while landholders remain powerless.** No hectare should count where rights-holders cannot say yes, say no, renegotiate, control benefits, and seek remedy.

Implementation activity is not proof of success. An independently evaluated Namibian rangeland programme reached 58 communities yet delivered no significant gains in cattle productivity, household income, or nutrition, while four of 10 ecological indicators worsened. COP17's global review must therefore measure verified outcomes, not participation or spending alone.

Biodiversity finance is a new frontier of control over land, nature, and livelihoods. Blended finance, offsets, and biodiversity credits can empower investors through contracts, data, and long-term land-use restrictions without changing ownership. **Offsets license destruction here against uncertain gains elsewhere.** COP17 must prevent market finance from displacing binding public finance or opening communal lands to accumulation. The report's forward-looking warning is that finance and conservation obligations are expanding faster than the safeguards needed to govern them.

COP17 should therefore require Parties to show who holds decision-making authority, who can renegotiate or exit harmful arrangements, how benefits and risks reach households, and what remedy is available when ecological or livelihood outcomes deteriorate - before implementation is scaled up. This would turn the global review into an **early-warning and course-correction mechanism** rather than a retrospective record of promises.

COP17 must change the measure of progress: targets versus implementation; hectares versus verified biodiversity gains; pledged finance versus funds received; participation versus decision-making authority; and grievances versus remedies. Every commitment should be traceable through a respon-sible institution, disbursed budget, site-level action, affected rights-holders, independently verified ecological and social outcomes, and remedy.

The choice is stark. The global review can secure tenure, protect productive access, and strengthen community authority. Or it can legitimise new conservation and financial obligations while power remains concentrated in states, agencies, donors, and investors. 30x30 will command legiti-macy only if it protects biodiversity with justice - not at the expense of those already caring for the land.

Download the "**Biodiversity, land, and power" report** here:

(… continuation article Cali Fund on page 4)

Taken together, COP17 risks shifting the burden of making the multilateral mechanism work onto developing countries and communities, from whose resources DSI is extracted and used anonymously, and not on those who extract or facilitate extraction.

Developed countries' failures – to provide sufficient financing for biodiversity in developing countries, prevent their databases from facilitating digital biopiracy, and to incentivize DSI users in their jurisdictions – create triple jeopardy for developing countries and communities: pressure to waive national ABS laws to mobilize Cali Fund financing; continued inequitable DSI extraction and use without permission or participation; and reduced autonomy over funds they are entitled to receive. Will COP17 correct these inequities or entrench them further?

The Cali Fund: A bargain at developing countries' expense?

Nithin Ramakrishnan, Third World Network

As CBD COP17 opens, the Cali Fund is celebrated as a breakthrough in biodiversity finance, despite limited contributions from DSI users. Behind the celebrations lies a question of justice: who is paying for what, and who is being asked to make concessions? The Cali Fund is the financial arm of the CBD's multilateral mechanism, established to address inequities in benefit-sharing from DSI. Its success must be measured not only by the revenue it raises for biodiversity, but by whether it prevents digital biopiracy and ensures that provider countries and communities can participate in and benefit from scientific progress.

Decision 16/2 requires Parties with DSI users in their jurisdictions, mostly developed countries, to incentivize them to contribute to the Cali Fund. Yet the COP17 draft decision proposes recognition of Cali Fund certificates by DSI provider countries as the main incentive, without mentioning incentives user countries could offer. While calling the Fund a "major innovation in global biodiversity finance", developed countries are in effect shifting responsibility for incentivizing private-sector contributions to developing countries. Meanwhile, developed countries are falling short of their obligations to provide financial resources to developing countries, with target 19(a) of the KMGBF not met.

Decision 16/2 also calls on Parties sponsoring or hosting sequence databases to ensure databases implement the decision. Database accountability and transparency to all Parties are essential for legal certainty, including whether DSI was lawfully published and used. Monetary contributions cannot legitimize unlawfully published DSI or exempt users from non-monetary obligations or requirements for prior informed consent from Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Yet, rather than ensuring database accountability, developed countries hosting most databases are pressing provider countries to recognize certificates, while their stakeholders seek to make certificates conclusive proof of lawful use and benefit-sharing. The COP17 draft decision risks advancing this agenda, indirectly, if not directly.

COP17 is supposed to consider additional modalities, including making public access to DSI accountable and transparent to all Parties; thresholds and contribution rates, using national and international standards, for small, medium and large entities; and benefit-sharing that accounts for products and services developed using DSI. However, the draft decision does not address these issues effectively. It leaves database accountability to database-managers' discretion; proposes exempting entities classified nationally as small or medium-sized; and calls for work on alternative payment pathways based on DSI's value rather than the total revenue-based calculations set out in decision 16/2. These proposals risk narrowing contributions while pressuring provider countries to waive ABS laws and communities' rights over genetic resources, including DSI.

This imbalance extends to the Fund's governance. Institutional documents such as the Memorandum of Understanding of the Cali Fund risks allowing monetary contributors to evaluate fund utilization, influence priorities and impose conditions, undermining recipient countries' and communities' autonomy. Although developing countries have called for review, pressure is mounting to approve the documents without amendment, with opponents arguing that changes could damage the Fund's reputation.

(Continue reading on page 3…)

ECO

cbd-alliance.org · linktr.ee/cbd_alliance

Volume 75, Issue 2

Tuesday, 20 Oct 2026

In this issue

- **AONGs**
- **Synthetic Biology**
- **Indigenous Sustainability**
- **GM Trees**

Upholding the spirit, substance, and terminology of the KMGBF

Discontinue inappropriate use of "Actors Other than National Governments" (AONG)

Joint views from the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB), the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN), the CBD Women's Caucus, and the CBD Alliance.

> **The term "Actors Other than National Governments" should not be used across CBD agenda items, outside of the context of the communication of commitments.**

The terminology "Actors other than national governments" (AONG) was originally used in the context of the communication of commitments. We oppose the use of this term beyond this context because it is vague, obscures differentiated roles, rights, needs and responsibilities, and leads to unclear guidance for Parties, the Secretariat, and the diverse actors involved. Furthermore, it promotes binary thinking between national governments and everyone else, which is too simplistic for a Convention and Framework that relies on action and ownership from diverse and distinct actors and sectors from the whole-of-society to achieve its objectives.

> **In most cases where the term "actors other than national governments" is used, we propose the use of the language "major groups and other stakeholders."**

The whole-of-society is integral and vital for KMGBF implementation, but diverse social actors have specific roles and special contributions according to their relationships with nature, competence, knowledge systems, priorities, and needs. The language **"major groups and other stakeholders"** acknowledges the distinctiveness of these groups, their common recognition as actors more than simply "not-a-government", while still allowing for simpler language that could facilitate negotiations.

This terminology is already widely used and universally understood in different UN spaces, in particular by the UN General Assembly in the SDG context (See: Agenda 21 and General Assembly Resolutions 66/288, 67/290, 70/1, 70/299 and 72/305), as well as by UNEP. This list of major groups refers to Indigenous Peoples, Farmers, Women, Children and Youth, Workers and Trade Unions, Non-governmental organizations, Local Authorities, Scientific and technological community, Business and Industry, while other stakeholders are mentioned here.

> **It remains critical to name key actors, including indigenous peoples and local communities, women, youth and/or persons with disabilities, as appropriate.**

Decisions under the CBD must continue to be nuanced and carefully considered based on the context. Negotiations must consider appropriate language for specific cases. For instance, in light of Targets 1, 3, 21, and 22, Indigenous Peoples and local communities have specific rights and roles in relation to lands, territories, resources, and traditional knowledge. When referring to participation in decision-making, this must be considered in light of KMGBF Target 22, which considers the full, equitable, inclusive, gender-responsive and effective representation and participation of indigenous peoples and local communities, women, youth and persons with disabilities. Additionally, Target 23, recognizes women's and girls' equal rights and access to land and natural resources. References to means of implementation must also acknowledge the roles and needs of indigenous peoples and local communities, women, and youth, as referred to in CBD studies and decision 16/34.

For further information and detailed text proposals email gybn.policy@gmail.com

Capacity Building or Corporate Capture?

The Fight Over Synthetic Biology at COP17

Dana Perls (Friends of the Earth US)

Developing countries have long called for predictable finance, equitable access to appropriate technologies, scientific cooperation and stronger regulatory capacity to conserve biodiversity and secure fair benefits from genetic resources. At COP17, the question is what kind of capacity will be built - and for whose benefit. The *Thematic Action Plan on Synthetic Biology* (TAP) could strengthen countries' ability to assess, regulate and, where necessary, reject synthetic biology applications. Yet it currently leans towards technology development. Where organisms maypersist and spread, precaution must come first.

Synthetic biology redesigns genetic material, organisms and biological systems. Applications include gene drives, engineered microorganisms and genetically engineered pesticides. Combined with artificial intelligence, automated DNA synthesis and proprietary biofoundries, it aims to make living systems programmable and commercially scalable - raising serious concerns when genetic resources, traditional knowledge and biological functions become patentable digital assets.

COP17 will help determine whether biodiversity policy prio-ritises technological interventions or tackles the structural causes of biodiversity loss. Evidence for many claimed benefits remains limited, while methods for assessing irreversible impacts and addressing liability, redress and benefit-sharing remain inadequate. Technological responses must not displace action on industrial agriculture, extractivism, pollution, dispossession and corporate concentration.

The TAP could shape policy and finance

Although non-binding, the TAP could shape national policy, research priorities, partnerships and finance, including through the Global Environment Facility and the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund. Adoption by the Conference of the Parties would give it greater authority, but even a decision merely taking note of it could influence investment and technology transfer. The bracketed draft decision text therefore matters: it reflects a deeper choice between faci-litating the development and use of synthetic biology and prioritising the precautionary approach, independent risk assessment, regulatory oversight and the sovereign decision-making of Parties.

Organisms developed through synthetic biology may persist, cross borders and cause irreversible harm. The technology may also enable access to genetic resources, traditional knowledge and data without meaningful consent or equitable benefit-sharing. Patents, proprietary platforms and public-private partnerships may further concentrate control in corporations and Northern research networks. Biodiversity-rich countries must remain sovereign decision-makers - not sources of biological material, testing grounds or recipients of externally defined technologies.

COP17 can address these concerns through clear safeguards. The CBD should not present synthetic biology as inevitable while its benefits and consequences remain uncertain. Precaution must apply before research and finance create technological lock-in—not only at environmental release. Field trials or deployment should not proceed where biodiversity, livelihoods or rights may be threatened. Proponents should bear the burden of demonstrating safety and public benefit.

What COP17 must do

The TAP should centre precaution, public-interest governance and sovereign decision-making. Capacity-building and public finance should support independent horizon scanning, assessment, monitoring, biosafety regulation, liability and redress. Donor-supported pilots, commercial partnerships and biofoundries must not foster dependency or narrow national policy space. Parties and affected communities must retain the authority to withhold approval and reject deployment.

COP17 should affirm national sovereignty over genetic resources, the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilisation, prior informed consent, and the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. It should also ensure that the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources does not circumvent access and benefit-sharing obligations. Public resources should support agroecology, farmer-

managed seed systems, community-ledconservation and locally determined innovation. Negotiators should resolve the bracketed draft decision text in favour of the precautionary approach, public accountability and regulatory autonomy - not technology promotion. Sound governance rests on ecological integrity, democratic accountability and the sovereign right to say no.

More info at
https://acbio.org.za/gm-biosafety/synthetic-biology-at-cbd-cop17



Marginalizing the Science of Indigenous Sustainability: Intention or Ignorance

Dipayan Dey & Mrinmoyee Naskar (ICARSIS)

Indigenous science infused in *Traditional Ecological Knowledge* (TEK) provide high-impact, cost-effective solutions for climate change mitigation, biodiversity protection, and ecosystem resilience. However, it has been deliberately ignored and intentionally marginalised in sustainable climate practices owing to vested interests of the stewards of consumer economies and corporate lobbies.

Indigenous Peoples and local communities manage nearly 42% of the Earth's land surface and protect over 36% to 80% of the world's remaining intact forests and vital carbon sinks. Though they do not have the leverages of the carbon economy or biodiversity financing mechanisms as yet. Ecosystems managed by Indigenous communities consistently exhibit higher biodiversity and better ecological health than surrounding non-indigenous lands. Time-tested methods include cultural burning to prevent catastrophic wildfires, agroforestry, drought-resistant crop cultivation, intercropping, and sustainable water management. Multigenerational observations of weather patterns, animal behaviours, and seasonal shifts act as localized early warning systems for environmental changes.

Even then, it has been ignored or marginalized, because of the colonial paradigms, wherein western scientific and policy frameworks have historically treated Indigenous knowledge as anecdotal or secondary, rather than as rigorous science in its own right. Despite managing critical carbon-dense regions, Indigenous Peoples are frequently left out of formal international climate negotiations, conservation planning, and direct climate financing. More so, academics and corporations have sometimes extracted Indigenous data or traditional knowledge without securing free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) or respecting collective land rights.

Corporate interests often conflict with the rights and safeties of IPLCs and ignores nature conservation because market-driven frameworks prioritize financial risk management and profit protection over direct ecological restoration. Market tools like biodiversity offsets, credits, and green bonds treat nature as a tradable asset, which accelerates deterioration of natures goods and services instead of preventing it, thereby impacting the life and livelihood of indigenous communities. More recently, militarization in transborder habitats or within Terre Nuila, the '*no-man's lands'* between countries has adversely impacting the rangelands and transhumance. Explicit cases are being heard in Indo-Sino borders, Indo-Myanmar borders, Armenia and Azerbaijan and as well in latin American landscapes.

Voluntary frameworks like the T*askforce on Nature-Related Financial Disclosures* (TNFD) frame biodiversity loss as a financial threat to company profits rather than addressing how corporate operations actively destroy ecosystems. UN reports show companies fail to adequately analyze supply chain impacts on biodiversity despite recognizing nature as a top global risk. Heavy reliance on corporate self-reporting and industry-led initiatives allows for superficial compliance while marginalizing Indigenous communities and independent scientific experts.

However, there has been no significant change in global fund allocations in Biodiversity, Land degradation, and for IPLCs. Except for the fact that 20% aspirational target across the GEF Family of Funds has been planned for actions by Indigenous Peoples and local communities, though this is inadvertently missing as a fiscal portfolio. The question that still remains is, how would the IPLCs be mainstreamed to access this resource, will it again be in the hands of corporate mediators or 'agencies' who are still far from the socio-ecological production landscapes inhabited by the IPLCs, strategizing resource management in urban context?

Where is the Accountability?
Parties Are Violating the Decision on GE Trees

Anne Petermann (Campaign to STOP GE Trees)

In 2008, at COP9 in Bonn, the Convention on Biological Diversity agreed to take a precautionary approach to *genetically engineered (GE) trees* (decision IX/5). They recognized serious uncertainties about the long-term and transboundary impacts of GE trees on forest biodiversity and the livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. That decision has served as a *de facto* global moratorium. As Parties gather in Yerevan for the first global review of the *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework,* it is being openly ignored.

Brazil, a Party to the Convention, is the starkest case. Since 2015, its National Technical Biosafety Commission (CTNBio) has issued eleven approvals for GE eucalyptus developed by FuturaGene, biotech subsidiary of pulp giant Suzano. The trees are engineered for faster growth, tolerance to herbicides such as glyphosate, and insect resistance; one is the world's first tree stacking all three traits. In February 2026, CTNBio approved a CRISPR gene-edited eucalyptus.

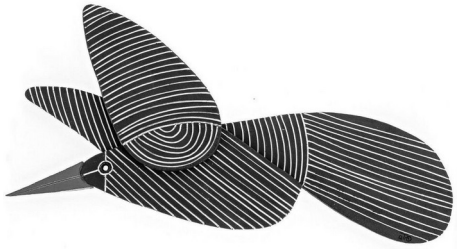
These trees would intensify one of Brazil's most destructive land uses. Indigenous, Quilombola and peasant communities call Suzano's eucalyptus monocultures "green deserts": plantations that dry up springs, are sprayed with pesticides from planes and drones, and have pushed communities off their territories. Faster-growing trees demand more water. Herbicide-tolerant trees mean more herbicide. Unlike annual crops, trees live for decades and spread pollen over long distances. Once GE trees escape, there is no recall. Increasingly, these plantations are also being marketed as "carbon removal," dressing up land grabs as climate action.

The United States, which has never ratified the CBD, is moving in the same direction. On 27 August 2026, the US Department of Agriculture deregulated the *"Darling 54"* GE American chestnut, engineered with a wheat gene to tolerate blight, after abandoning a full Environmental Impact Statement. Only an Environmental Protection Agency review now stands before wide distribution. Unlike plantation eucalyptus, this tree is meant to be planted into native forests and to spread there on its own. Its review was itself troubled: years of research turned out to have been conducted on a different line than the one originally submitted for approval. A decision of this kind by a major biotech power sets a precedent that Parties will be pressured to follow.

Indigenous Peoples, whose territories hold much of the world's remaining biodiversity, are sounding the alarm. In 2024, at the *UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues*, Indigenous leaders launched a global campaign against GE trees, and the then-*UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous* Peoples warned that GMO forests must not be allowed.

Precaution means nothing if Parties can disregard it without consequence. We call on all Parties to immediately cancel any testing of, licenses for, or commercial approval of GE trees, including gene-edited trees, and to implement the precautionary principle in good faith.

COP17 should reaffirm decision IX/5, ask the Secretariat to report on Parties' compliance with it, and ensure no GE tree is released without the free, prior and informed consent of affected Indigenous Peoples and local communities.



The opinions, commentaries, and articles printed in ECO are the sole opinion of the individual authors or organisations, unless otherwise expressed.

We thank the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung for their financial support.
***Submissions** are welcome from all civil society groups.*
***Email:** lorch@ifrik.org or eco@cbd-alliance.org*

ECO

cbd-alliance.org · linktr.ee/cbd_alliance

Volume 75, Issue 3

Wednesday, 21 Oct 2026

In this issue

- **Opening statement**
- **Digital biopiracy**
- **LMO risk assessment**
- **Target 14**

CBD Alliance opening statement

As we speak today, biodiversity loss continues to accelerate, driven by extractive economic models, industrial agriculture, unsustainable production and consumption, pollution, infrastructure expansion, harmful subsidies and growing corporate control over land, territories and waters.

COP17 must deliver the **transformative change** envisioned in the *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework* (KMGBF). This requires more than better implementation of existing targets. Parties must assess whether the Framework and related measures are effectively addressing the root causes of biodiversity loss and the inequities that sustain them.

The **Global Review** must be robust, participatory and accountable. It should identify implementation gaps, inadequate means of implementation, harmful incentives and the structural barriers that prevent transformative change. A key challenge is the persistent gap between biodiversity commitments and government decisions that continue to authorise or subsidise biodiversity-destructive activities. To close this gap, the Global Review should explicitly examine these policy and economic drivers and assess how they undermine implementation.

We welcome the important contributions of **IPBES** through its recent assessments and support the proposal to endorse the transformative change and Nexus assessments.

Addressing biodiversity loss requires **strong regulation of destructive industries and corporate actors.** Mainstreaming biodiversity cannot rely solely on voluntary commitments and reporting. Governments must adopt and enforce effective regulatory frameworks, ensure environmental accountability, strengthen impact assessment processes, guarantee public participation and access to justice, and support the full and effective engagement of affected communities.

The **industrial agribusiness model** continues to harm biodiversity, ecosystems, livelihoods and human health. We need a transition to sustainable, equitable and humane food systems based on agroecology and the knowledge of small-scale food producers.

Biodiversity must not be commodified, privatised or financialised. We reject **biodiversity offsets**, carbon offsets, nature markets and other approaches that enable continued environmental destruction elsewhere.

Developed countries must first fulfil their **Article 20** obligations by providing public finance that is new, additional, predictable, adequate, accessible and non-debt-creating. Broadening the contributor base must not dilute those obligations or circumvent the Convention. A permanent financial mechanism must remain under COP authority and ensure direct access for developing countries, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women and youth.

Biodiversity finance must be **equitable, rights-based and transformative**. It should directly reach Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women-led organisations and civil society through simplified and fair access mechanisms, meaningful participation in financial decision-making, strong environmental and social safeguards, gender-responsive approaches, transparent accountability and eSective grievance mechanisms. It must support Target 23 and the *Gender Plan of Action,* while addressing harmful subsidies, unsustainable debt, unjust fiscal systems and financial flows that incentivise environmental destruction, without exacerbating debt burdens or inequalities.

../.

Biological and genetic resources, including digital sequence information (DSI), must be protected from biopiracy and digital biopiracy. Greater transparency, accountability and equitable benefit-sharing are needed, together with safeguards against conflicts of interest in DSI-related processes.

Finally, a p**recautionary approach** must guide consideration of emerging technologies. **Synthetic biology** poses significant environmental, health and socio-economic risks. Horizon scanning, monitoring, impact assessment and capacity-building are therefore essential to enable informed and sovereign decision-making. We call upon all Parties to immediately cancel any testing of, licenses for, or commercial approval of genetically modified trees and to implement the precautionary principle in good faith.

The people of the world can live in harmony with nature only if Parties address the real drivers and sectors of biodiversity loss. We also stress that the environmental and human consequences of wars and conflicts require urgent international attention. COP17 must reject false solutions, regulate and phase out destructive industries, uphold human rights, secure adequate public finance and deliver the just and transformative change that biodiversity and peoples urgently need.

~~~~~~~~~~~~

Cali Fund should not inadvertently facilitate digital biopiracy

DSI statement by CBD Alliance

COP17 must stop the bleeding before treating the wound. The multilateral mechanism and Cali Fund must get DSI sharing right before asking provider countries to recognise the certificates issued by them. Two years after COP16, we have yet to see meaningful measures by Parties hosting DSI users and databases, as called for under paragraphs 13 and 11 of the modalities adopted by Decision 16/2.

Despite efforts by some databases to raise awareness of the Cali Fund, fundamental gaps remain in maintaining accountability and transparency with respect to DSI sharing and access. Users need clarity on whether DSI was lawfully made available. Provider countries and communities need to know the origins of DSI and whether its use falls under the multilateral mechanism or other ABS arrangements. This is the first step to ensure legal certainty.

The COP17 draft decision prioritizes recognition of Cali Fund certificates by provider countries, while remaining silent on incentives for user countries and measures expected of database-hosting countries. Meanwhile, intersessional processes have focused on asking provider countries to grant exemptions from national laws and communities to accord donor privileges to businesses making financial contributions.

We reject this reversal of obligations and the attempt to financialize ABS. Responsibility for making the Cali Fund work must lie with countries hosting DSI users and those facilitating inequitable extraction under the banner of open access - not with developing countries and communities from whose DSI is extracted and used, anonymously.

We call on database-hosting countries and operators to end anonymous access to DSI, thereby taking the first steps to prevent digital biopiracy. Researchers, R&D funders and international agencies must obtain necessary prior informed consent before making DSI public; databases must not make DSI public if no such consent is provided.

We urge provider countries and communities to strengthen oversight over DSI generation and use. Benefit-sharing must deliver more than monetary benefits, it must also ensure meaningful participation, scientific collaboration, safe technology transfer and the capacity to shape resulting innovations.

COP17 must discipline DSI sharing before demanding further concessions from provider countries. The Cali Fund should not inadvertently facilitate digital biopiracy. Weakening national laws and people's rights in exchange for access to its funds would defeat the very purpose of equitable benefit-sharing.
~~~~~~~~~~~~

The continued ned for precautionary, holistic risk assessment guidance materials to ensure against new threats and mitigate old harms

Eva Sirinathsinghji (Third World Network)

Emerging LMO applications pose potentially irreversible risks, while fundamentally challenging risk assessment experiences and protocols. Meanwhile, first generation LMOs are exposing their forewarned threats to traditional agriculture, and raise long-term/cumulative risks that urgently warrant increased protections

The *Living Modified organism* (LMO) industry continues to evolve in its efforts to broaden potential species range, trait type, and technology being targeted. Stalling first generation LM crop trait innovations, advances in genome editing techniques, and an apparent increase in interest towards high-risk applications such as self-spreading applications, or the release of genome editors to engineer organisms post-release.

The conclusions of the recent AHTEG to forward multiple recommendations for additional guidance reflects these novel developments, including for LM microorganisms, LM algae, LM fish and LM organisms expressing genome editing machinery for pest or pathogen control.

These topics present numerous cross-cutting biosafety considerations that challenge existing risk assessment frameworks and should be supported by Parties such as risks of high spread, persistence, reproductive and evolutionary capacities, lack of controllability and reversibility, and fundamental knowledge gaps regarding underlying biology, ecology, evolutionary capacity, receiving environments and ecosystem interactions. This also challenges risk assessment experiences to date, which have focussed on limited numbers of LM crop traits and species.

The lack of control over their spread and persistence also raises key concerns regarding the ability to ensure against transboundary movement and to gaining full, prior and informed consent from potentially affected communities.

Meanwhile, first generation GM products are still overwhelmingly dominated by two traits of herbicide tolerance and insect resistance despite well-established harms to biodiversity, human health, socio-economic status and sovereignty of impacted communities. Evidence of adverse impacts to crops at the centre of origin are accumulating, posing a direct threat to food sovereignty, crop genetic diversity, traditional and indigenous agricultural practices and to wider biodiversity as a whole. Long-term and cumulative impacts also become increasingly prescient as more stacked traits and combinations of LM foods enter the food supply.

As such, the recommendation to develop technical notes to support specific risk assessment considerations on (1) Long-term and cumulative effects of genetic constructs and LMOs; and (2) Use of LMOs in centres of origin and in traditional agricultural systems. These are long overdue and should be supported as a matter of priority.

However, the devil is in the detail. Industry attempts to narrow and weaken assessments must be resisted.

As concluded by the AHTEG, any new guidance must be anchored in a precautionary approach, with a foundational basis in Annex III of the Protocol, to ensure that all potential unintended effects are indeed assessed in a precautionary manner. Anti-precautionary approaches needed to be rejected.

The Cartagena Protocol must never be degraded into a rubber-stamping exercise!

The opinions, commentaries, and articles printed in ECO are the sole opinion of the individual authors or organisations, unless otherwise expressed.

We thank the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung for their financial support.
***Submissions** are welcome from all civil society groups.*
***Email:** lorch@ifrik.org or eco@cbd-alliance.org*

Target 14: A promise unkept?

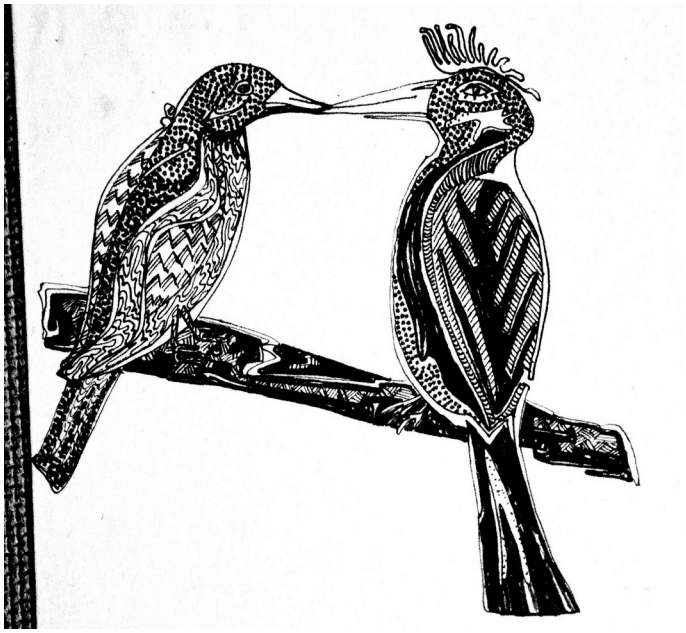
Tom Picken (Rainforest Action Network)

Four years ago, governments gathered to adopt the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and committed, under Target 14, to progressively align public and private financial flows with its goals and targets. The Global Report poses an inconvenient question for Parties: **where, exactly, are the rules to make that happen?**

A new assessment, to be released today by the F*orests & Finance Coalition*, finds that, across 11 of the world's most strategically important financial jurisdictions, the answer is, largely, nowhere. (Please join us for a press conference panel on this at the CBD Press Conference Room at 1:30pm).

The report *Regulating Finance for Biodiversity: An Assessment for the Global Biodiversity Framework 2026,* reviewed financial regulation in Brazil, Canada, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, China, the European Union, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The analysis looks more deeply into why Target 14 is off-track, testing whether financial sector regulations have elements capable of delivering key GBF targets. Of 33 detailed assessments across the 11 jurisdictions, 30 landed in the red or dark red categories, with just three scoring a yellow partial score. Not one jurisdiction prohibits banks and investors from financing companies involved in deforestation or the conversion of natural ecosystems.



While there has been some observed progress on disclosure and taxonomies, there are no requirements on financial institutions to address their disclosed impacts nor are there mandates to ensure portfolio alignment with emerging taxonomy classifications.

This is particularly worrying given the increasing amounts of finance going into forest-risk sectors. *Forests & Finance* has conservatively identified USD $894 billion in forest-risk-adjusted loans and underwriting to just 500 assessed companies involved in forest-risk commodities and metal and mineral mining between January 2016 and September 2026, including USD $595 billion since 2020. That is a lot of biodiversity-impacting finance left untouched.

If Target 14 is to mean anything, governments need to rapidly scale up efforts to address harmful subsidies and to regulate financial flows driving biodiversity loss.

That means measuring and understanding the scale of these differentiated flows, mandatory due diligence for finance linked to deforestation and ecosystem conversion, biodiversity criteria in prudential regulation and central-bank operations, and time-bound targets for aligning portfolios with the Global Biodiversity Framework.

And because there is no just transition without justice, subsidy reforms and financial sector regulations must be designed to support and protect Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women, workers and other stakeholders, with meaningful sanctions and remedy obligations when financial institutions fail to comply.

There is still time to start making Target 14 real. But if governments continue to leave the financial system largely free to fund the destruction that the CBD is trying to stop, they should not be surprised when the numbers refuse to add up. Conservation finance will never be able to mop up the damage while the bulk of forest finance keeps driving harm.

Please join us for a press conference panel at the CBD Press Conference Room at 1:30pm

ECO

cbd-alliance.org · linktr.ee/cbd_alliance

Volume 75, Issue 4

Thursday, 22 Oct 2026

In this issue

- **The Future of Article 8j**
- **Ocean Biodiversity**
- **Sustainable Use**
- **Indigenous Forest Defenders**
- **Cali Fund Certificates**

Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and the future of Article 8(j)

June Rubis, Lucy Mulenkei, Jennifer Tauli-Corpuz, Jannie Lasimbang & Edmund Bon

The establishment of a permanent *Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j)* under the CBD marks an important development in the institutional participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. It also presents an opportunity to reflect on how Party leadership and constituency responsibility for representative selection can work together.

Decision 16/5 recognizes the Party-led character of the Subsidiary Body while emphasizing the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. These are not necessarily competing principles. The important question is how institutional arrangements can respect both.

The Convention has a substantial history to draw upon. As early as Decision IV/9, Parties encouraged Indigenous and local communities to identify processes for selecting their participants in the former *Working Group on Article 8(j)*. Over subsequent decades, constituency organizing, regional coordination, and representative practices developed through the *International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity* (IIFB) have become important features of participation.

This experience offers an important distinction: the responsibility for governing an intergovernmental body is not the same as the responsibility for identifying who legitimately represents a constituency.

Parties and the Bureau have established responsibilities for institutional governance, transparency, and accountability. Indigenous Peoples and local communities, in turn, have their own governance structures, representative institutions, and processes through which they identify those who speak on their behalf. Recognizing these respective responsibilities can strengthen rather than diminish institutional legitimacy.

How participation procedures are designed also matters. Requirements that appear administratively neutral may have different consequences across regions. In Southeast Asia, for example, national categories of recognition do not always correspond to international understandings of Indigenous Peoples. Procedures that rely heavily on official recognition or registration may inadvertently limit participation or displace established constituency processes.

This is why the distinction between constituency selection and formal institutional procedures deserves careful attention. The act of identifying a representative, the process through which that representative assumes an institutional role, and the accountability arrangements that follow need not rest with the same actors.

The permanent Subsidiary Body offers an opportunity to build on the Convention's accumulated experience rather than starting anew. Party leadership and constituency choice need not be mutually exclusive. Institutional arrangements that clarify their respective roles can support representative legitimacy, accountability, and full and effective participation.

For a fuller examination of these institutional questions, see: **Holding Difference: Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, and the Future of Article 8(j)]** by June Rubis, Lucy Mulenkei, Jennifer Tauli-Corpuz, Jannie Lasimbang, and Edmund Bon, published in the ICCA Consortium's On Governance series. https://doi.org/10.70841/JLE76A

Feeding the Future While Protecting Ocean Biodiversity

Cristina Rodrigo (Compassion in World Farming)

The implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework will depend not only on progress on land, but also in the oceans. However, marine and coastal ecosystems continue to receive less attention than terrestrial ecosystems in the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework, a concern explicitly recognised in the draft decision under agenda item 18(c) on marine and coastal biodiversity and island biodiversity.

At CBD COP 17, many issues under discussion share a common goal: protecting ecological relationships that sustain healthy marine ecosystems. To achieve the objectives of the Global Biodiversity Framework, it is not enough to protect important marine areas; it also requires understanding how human activities affect marine ecosystems and the species they depend on. This includes how marine resources are used in food production, particularly in relation to Target 9 on the sustainable use of wild species and Target 10 on the sustainable management of fisheries and aquaculture.

Compassion in World Farming's reports (*Atlantic Bluefin Tuna: Caught, Caged and Under Threat*, *The Growing Threat of Carnivorous Aquaculture* and *Octopus Farming, a recipe for disaster)* show that farming high-trophic species depends heavily on wild-caught fish for feed, placing additional pressure on marine ecosystems. The removal of these forage fish, which play a vital role in marine food webs, can reduce food availability for marine predators, threaten biodiversity, and undermine food security in regions where they are an important source of nutrition and livelihoods, particularly for vulnerable coastal communities.

As implementation of the Framework continues, greater consideration should be given to how aquatic food systems can meet biodiversity objectives without contributing to overfishing, ecosystem degradation or forage fish depletion, while safeguarding marine food webs, coastal livelihoods and food security.

Although small pelagic fish and aquatic food systems remain underrepresented in CBD discussions, they are relevant to issues already addressed by the Convention, including ecosystem-based approaches, marine food webs, sustainable use of wild species and nature-friendly production systems – as well as other crucial questions regarding food security, nutrition, and livelihoods.

Greater attention to these questions would help ensure that species essential to marine ecosystems, and the communities that depend on them, should not be overlooked in future discussions on marine biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.

Compassion in World Farming is discussing this further at the side event ***Feeding the Future While Protecting Ocean Biodiversity: Rethinking Carnivorous Aquaculture on 22 October, 13:15-14:45, at the FPWC Pavilion.***

Find all reports at https://www.ciwf.org

Beyond Population Numbers: Rethinking Sustainable Use

Vince Cinches & Shuang An (World Animal Protection)

Biodiversity policies often treat animals primarily as resources to manage, with too little attention to their welfare and the wider impacts of their use. At CBD COP17, governments can change this by making animal welfare and One Health part of biodiversity protection.

The KMGBF cannot deliver its goals without addressing the drivers of biodiversity loss. Habitat destruction, land-use change, industrial animal agriculture and harmful commercial wildlife exploitation put pressure on ani-mals, ecosystems and communities. These problems are connected, and tackling them separately will not deliver lasting solutions.

This raises an important question: **Can wildlife use genuinely be called sustainable if it causes animal suffering, damages ecosystems or creates risks to animal and human health?**

Sustainable use is often interpreted too narrowly, focusing on species populations and whether activities are legally permitted. But legality does not automatically make wildlife use humane, safe or sustainable.

We need a broader approach that considers animal welfare, ecosystem health, public health and impacts on communities. This must also recognise the rights, knowledge and customary sustainable use of Indige-nous Peoples and local

communities, while challenging harmful commercial exploitation.

The GBF provides opportunities to advance this approach. Targets 4,5 and 9 address wildlife conservation and sustainable use, with Target 5 explicitly addressing pathogen spillover risk. Targets 8, 10, and 16 link biodiversity to climate change, agriculture, and consumption, while Target 18 offers opportunities to reform harmful subsidies and incentives.

One Health is central to this discussion, but it must go beyond disease surveillance and outbreak response.

If we're serious about prevention, we need to address the conditions creating these risks. That means protecting habitats, improving animal welfare and changing harmful practices in wildlife exploitation and industrial animal agriculture.

One Health must be grounded in **equity and social justice**. Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and small-scale producers often bear the heaviest consequences of biodiversity loss and environmental damage, despite having limited influence over decisions that affect their livelihoods.

These considerations should shape biodiversity financing. Public and private funding must support prevention, habitat protection and restoration rather than reinforce practices that harm animals and ecosystems. Financing should reach communities, strengthen their role in conservation and support just transitions toward sustainable alternatives.

At COP17, governments should integrate animal welfare and a preventive One Health approach into biodiversity policies, apply precaution to potentially harmful wildlife use, reform incentives driving biodiversity loss and ensure communities have the resources and decision-making power to shape solutions.

Protecting biodiversity is not simply about maintaining wildlife populations for future use. It means preventing harm, protecting rights and changing the systems driving biodiversity loss.

A Justice Gap for Indigenous Forest Defenders at the UN Biodiversity COP

Leon Dulce (Friends of the Earth Philippines)

For Indigenous Peoples and other Forest Defenders in the frontlines of the Philippines, the journey of the CBD COP has so far demonstrated a **justice gap** that fails to safeguard our human rights, and consequently undermines our ability to enact real solutions.

The Global Review's findings are telling: Only 18% of Parties submitted targets for the full protection of Environmental Human Rights Defenders, and only 29% made targets for access to justice to Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities.

We suffer this reality on the ground. Friends of the Earth International's recently launched report, *"Permission to Destroy: how biodiversity commitments fail on the ground"* looked into the case of the Kirinteken-Ilentungen Menuvu tribe in Southern Philippines. A 195-hectare banana plantation owned by Kennemer Foods International is being developed as a potential carbon forest and biodiversity offset project linked to a global value chain across the Netherlands, France, and various other countries in the Global North.

The plantation, however, **grows on disputed lands** belonging to the Kirinteken-Ilentungen Menuvu tribe, annexed through the Philippines' colonial land titling regime. Their continuing struggle to reclaim land comes with great cost–since 2020, two of their Datu or tribal chieftains have been killed, at least three harassment charges have been filed against their members, and multiple incidents of threats and intimidation, including an attempt to fence them out of their land last May 2026, have been recorded.

Parties to the CBD must urgently close this justice gap.

We must remind world leaders that neither development nor life can sustain if the praxis and culture of Indigenous and other environmental defenders, regarded by the IPBES to be among the most transformative factors in protecting Nature, is not given its due commitment, ambition, protection, and action. We must unconditionally support the rights-based solutions of Indigenous Peoples and forest defenders.

Cali Fund Certificates

An unbalanced and ineffective incentive

Nithin Ramakrishnan (Third World Network)

The Cali Fund is the financial arm of the CBD's *multilateral mechanism* (MLM), established to address inequities in benefit-sharing from DSI. As per Decision 16/2, users contributing to the Cali Fund in accordance with the MLM modalities are deemed to have fairly and equitably shared monetary benefits from DSI used within the MLM's scope for that year, and will receive a certificate exempting them from any expectation of further monetary benefit-sharing for that year within that scope.

Paragraph 13 of the Annex to the Decision 16/2 also invites Parties with DSI users in their jurisdiction to take measures to incentivize them to contribute to the Cali Fund. According to the COP16 President who developed the President's text, which formed the basis of the decision, Parties may take incentives in the form of mandatory benefit sharing provisions prescribing DSI users to make contributions to Cali Fund as well.

However, the current COP17 draft decision promtoes the idea that a major incentive for DSI users to contribute to the Cali Fund would be the recognition that the certificate exempts contributors from further national monetary obligations.

In simple terms, the proposition is this: A company using DSI contributes money to the Cali Fund, gets a certificate, shows this certificate to a country providing DSI or genetic resource from which DSI is derived, and gets exempted from the monetary benefit sharing obligation under their national law, if any.

This proposition raises two main concerns:

Firstly, it does not distinguish between Parties with national ABS laws requiring monetary benefits from the use of DSI and Parties without such national ABS laws, resulting in an unfair imbalance for Parties with national ABS laws. Countries with national expectations of benefits (mostly developing countries) have to give up their claims for monetary benefits under their national laws to make the Cali Fund work. Meanwhile countries without such expectations (most, if not all, developed countries), give up nothing.

Secondly, it offers an interpretation of Paragraph 13 whereby Parties with DSI users (mostly developed countries, if not all), would not need to take effective measures that would incentivise DSI users from their countries to contribute money to the Cali Fund. This is because incentives are now becoming increasingly perceived as measures taken by a country from where DSI is extracted and used. Incentives by provider countries is not merely a double cost for them (as they share DSI and waive national expectations), but also an ineffective incentive.

Many expensive biotechnology products are marketed exclusively in developed countries. A DSI user from a developed country could simply reside there, access DSI anonymously from so-called public databases, and operate businesses solely in developed countries, or even operate businesses remotely from such countries, without any pressure to contribute to the Cali Fund.

Certificates should only be used to certify that the monetary contribution is made at the expected rate to the Cali Fund. Its recognition by Parties expecting national monetary benefits gives legal certainty to the users about their contribution, but it would not motivate users to contribute to the Cali Fund, unless they already have business operations in those countries.

Real and effective measures to make the Cali Fund work should therefore be undertaken by Parties with users in their jurisdiction and should not discriminate against countries providing DSI or genetic resources from which DSI is derived.

The opinions, commentaries, and articles printed in ECO are the sole opinion of the individual authors or organisations, unless otherwise expressed.

We thank the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung for their financial support.
***Submissions** are welcome from all civil society groups.*
***Email:** lorch@ifrik.org or eco@cbd-alliance.org*

ECO

cbd-alliance.org · linktr.ee/cbd_alliance

Volume 75, Issue 5

Friday, 23 Oct 2026

In this issue

- **Pandemics**
- **Finance narratives**
- **Offsets**
- **Ancestoral knowledge**

From Biodiversity Loss to Pandemic Risk: Addressing the Root Causes

Vince Cinches & Shuang An (World Animal Protection)

Preventing the next pandemic requires more than stronger healthcare systems. How we use wildlife, manage land and produce food also affects the health of people, animals and ecosystems. At COP17, governments can strengthen pandemic prevention by protecting biodiversity and improving animal welfare.

Biodiversity loss and disease emergence share several drivers, including habitat destruction, land-use change and wildlife exploitation. As habitats disappear, interactions between people, wildlife and domestic animals change.

Capturing, confining, transporting and trading wild animals can also create conditions for pathogens to emerge and spread, particularly where animal welfare is poor. Human, animal, and ecosystem health are connected, yet much attention remains on detecting and responding to disease after it emerges.This is why *One Health* matters.

If we are serious about preventing pandemics, we need to address the conditions that create these risks in the first place.

The KMGBF provides opportunities to do this. Target 5 provides an opportunity to reduce the risk of pathogen spillover by using a precautionary *One Health* approach that integrates animal welfare. Targets 4 and 9 also offer opportunities to improve wildlife management and human-wildlife interactions, with animal welfare and precaution reflected in implementation.

The *Global Action Plan on Biodiversity and Health*, adopted at COP16, provides a basis for connecting these commitments with health policies. At COP17, governments should focus on putting the plan into practice, particularly by addressing wildlife exploitation, habitat destruction, and other drivers of disease emergence.

These efforts also connect with the *WHO Pandemic Agreement*, adopted in 2025, which recognises *One Health* and the importance of addressing the drivers of disease emergence at the human–animal–environment interface.

The 2026 *UN General Assembly's Political Declaration on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response* further call for coherence and mutual support between the WHO Pandemic Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The challenge now is to turn these commitments into coordinated action, rather than treating biodiversity protection and pandemic prevention as separate agendas.

This also means recognising that *One Health* is about equity and social justice. A whole-of-society approach which includes community engagement, especially at the human-animal-environment interface (a frontline of disease outbreaks), is essential to equity and effective pandemic prevention.

Prevention efforts must respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, support their stewardship, empower them to identify high risks, and ensure they benefit from the solutions being developed.

Governments should therefore invest in habitat protection, stronger animal welfare measures and alternatives to wildlife exploitation, while supporting communities through just and equitable transitions.

Pandemics are not simply events we need to prepare for. We must also work to prevent them.

A Field Guide to COP17's Financial Wildlife

Laurel Sutherlin (Rainforest Action Network)

Attention, COP17 delegates: a new species has been spotted in the halls of the CBD. Actually, several of them. They travel in flocks, turn up reliably in policy discussions, and have developed an impressive array of songs, ranging from "mobilization" and "de-risking" to "investability" and "innovative finance". They are, of course, the familiar narratives of biodiversity finance.

For a limited time only, you may soon encounter some of them in physical form, thanks to Rainforest Action Network's *Illustrated Field Guide to Biodiversity Finance Narratives,* which is being passed around COP17 as a deliberately different kind of intervention in the biodiversity finance conversation. The 'Field Guide' is a somewhat cheeky, but fundamentally serious, invitation to rethink some of the dominant narratives weaving through current policy discourse, and to look beyond some familiar buzz words towards some of the deeper questions they may be obscuring.

The guide is based on the recognition that biodiversity finance is still too often reduced to how we can mobilize more money for nature. When conjuring up the next financial instrument, it is worth asking what the money in play is already doing, who is setting the rules governing it, and which unspoken assumptions are being allowed to determine what counts as a "solution".

The field guide, modeled in a Victorian-era naturalist aesthetic style, introduces nine familiar "species" that populate biodiversity finance debates, including the *Gap Warbler, Mobilization Magpie, Disclosure Owl* and *Debt-Swap Kingfisher.* Each artistically illustrated card examines why a particular narrative is so appealing, what it might be covering up, and what other questions policymakers should be asking before allowing the narrative to fly away with the conversation.

Take the familiar claim that there is simply "no public money" available for biodiversity. Or the increasingly common assumption that private capital is the only realistic route to closing the finance gap. Or the proposition that better disclosure will, by itself, cause markets to change. These ideas may contain elements of truth, and some financial instruments may have a useful role, but they can also narrow the policy space by making certain approaches seem inevitable while leaving other questions off the table.

For example: if public and private financial flows vastly exceed the amounts currently being mobilized for biodiversity, why is the conversation so often focused on finding new money rather than changing where existing money goes? If financial institutions are financing activities that drive deforestation and ecosystem destruction, should the policy response really stop at asking them to disclose those risks? And if nature must become "investable" before it can attract capital, what happens to the values that cannot, or should not, be reduced to an investment opportunity?

These are not just semantic questions. The language used in these negotiations helps define the policies that are considered possible. The field guide invites delegates to turn the question around: not only how can biodiversity serve finance, but how can financial s ystems be made to serve biodiversity and the people who protect it?

That means looking beyond individual instruments to the rules, incentives and institutions shaping financial flows in the first place, including financial regulation, tax and debt reform, stronger public-interest institutions, protections for Indigenous Peoples' rights and gender-responsive governance. It also means confronting the much larger financial flows driving biodiversity loss rather than assuming that additional conservation finance can somehow compensate for them.

So, as the biodiversity finance discussions continue, keep your eyes open. If you see a *Gap Warbler* fluttering through a panel discussion, a *Mobilization Magpie* collecting every shiny new financial instrument in sight, or a *Disclosure Owl* insisting that transparency is the destination rather than a means to accountability, the field guide may be useful.

The biodiversity finance debate does not suffer from a shortage of jargon, but sometimes it can suffer from a shortage of better questions.

www.ran.org/biodiversity-finance-field-guide

Offsets Cannot Redeem the Irreplaceable

Uli Arta Siagian (WALHI/Friends of the Earth Indonesia)

Biodiversity offsets and credits fail because nature is not interchangeable. Damage in one place cannot be balanced by protecting or restoring nature elsewhere. Habitats, species, and ecological functions are tied to specific places, histories, and social relationships.

Scientific reviews show ecosystems are partly irreplaceable and offsets risk weakening regulation (Moreno-Mateos et al., 2015). Friends of the Earth International (2024) argues these schemes drive ecosystem damage and violate Indigenous Peoples' rights. Just one example: the Martabe gold mine in Batang Toru shows how offsets enable destruction while others bear the cost.

In North Sumatra, the Batang Toru ecosystem holds the Tapanuli orangutan, the world's rarest great ape, with fewer than 800 individuals left. Its forest provides water, farmland, and incense resin for nearby communities. WALHI reports that the Martabe gold mine's work area overlaps the headwaters of five major river basins supplying nearly 100,000 people.

PT Agincourt Resources (PTAR), the mine's operator, claims mining and conservation can coexist through the mitigation hierarchy and a biodiversity offset, including a planned protected area of around 5,700 hectares. Yet civil society's review of the environmental impact assessment states that the planned tailings storage facility covers 583 hectares, including 195.2 hectares of green land where 185,884 trees would be lost. The document acknowledges a very high potential for habitat fragmentation.

Offsets are legitimate only for residual impacts after harm has been avoided and minimized. For a Critically Endangered species in a Key Biodiversity Area, some losses cannot be compensated: hectares elsewhere cannot replace specific habitat functions. Offset locations and metrics remain undisclosed, making the "no net loss" claim unverifiable. Gold is extracted in years, while forests need generations to recover.

Field interviews indicate that land in several South Tapanuli villages has been secured through purchases and long-term leases amid economic pressure. Some villagers reportedly were not informed that their land would serve as an offset or who funded it. Communal land often lacks legal title, leaving communities with social ownership while outsiders bring cash and legal certainty. In one customary community, a lease offer divided people defending their territory. This is not free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).

Indonesia's 2024 Conservation Law introduces "preservation areas." Under Article 9, landholders unwilling to undertake conservation activities must release their land rights with compensation. Parts of the offset area have been proposed for this status. WALHI fears forest guardians could become threats on their own land while companies claim conservation benefits. This precedent could spread among extractive companies, contradicting the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework's principles of rights, participation, and policy coherence.

Protecting biodiversity means stopping the sources of its destruction

Protection requires addressing extractive industries and development that consume space and violate human rights. As long as these continue, offsets justify new harm. Stop the damage first.

Funding must come from public budgets and the polluter-pays principle, not companies causing harm and claiming compensation. Funds must go directly to Indigenous Peoples and local communities who protect forests, alongside recognition of customary territories, community-managed areas, Indigenous knowledge, and traditional practices.

The government should halt new clearing, publish all offset data, and refrain from designating preservation areas on customary land without genuine consent. Funders should suspend financing until these conditions are met.

What cannot be replaced cannot be redeemed by an offset. A forest cannot be conserved by taking it from the people who have kept it standing.

Download
Offsets cannot redeem the Irreplaceable

Ancestral Knowledge Is Not a Footnote to Conservation

Recognizing rights is not enough if decision-making power stays in the same hands

Instituto Alana & Geledés –Instituto da Mulher Negra

At COP16 in Cali, Decision 16/6 recognized people of African descent in connection with the Article 8(j), alongside Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Its meaning now depends on what follows: territorial protection, direct funding and real influence over decisions affecting their ways of life and the intergenerational knowledge that keeps nature standing.[1]

This agenda requires environmental justice that addresses the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, territory and age. Children, especially girls and Indigenous, Afro-descendant, Quilombola and peripheral children, are among the most exposed to environmental risks and unequal access to nature yet are rarely recognized as rights-holders in biodiversity decisions.[2]

At COP17, recognition must become access, resources and rights. Implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework requires meaningful intergenerational participation, confronting environmental racism and bringing to the table those whose solutions sustain biodiversity today and those who will inherit the future we shape. Decision 16/6 must be defended within Article 8(j), embracing, in all their diversity, the more than 200 million people of African descent worldwide.

Conserving biodiversity with justice means protecting territories, valuing those who care for them, investing in ancestral knowledge and nature-based education, and guaranteeing the right to live and learn with nature.

[1] Sushma Shrestha Sangat et al., "Afro-descendant lands in South America contribute to biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation", Communications Earth & Environment 6, 458 (2025)

[2] INSTITUTO ALANA. COP for Children. [s.d.]. Disponível em: https://linktr.ee/copforchildren



Root risk assessment in Annex III of the Cartagena Protocol!
Drop industry aligned 'pathways to harm' under a problem formulation approach, contained within **Biosafety Technical** series 7 on gene drives!

The opinions, commentaries, and articles printed in ECO are the sole opinion of the individual authors or organisations, unless otherwise expressed.

We thank the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung for their financial support.
***Submissions** are welcome from all civil society groups.*
***Email:** lorch@ifrik.org or eco@cbd-alliance.org*

ECO

cbd-alliance.org · linktr.ee/cbd_alliance

Volume 75, Issue 6

Monday, 26 Oct 2026

In this issue

- **Global South women**
- **Amulsar Mining Project**
- **Financing destruction**
- **In memoriam**

Delegates at biodiversity COP17 should follow the lead of Global South women

Valentina Figuera Martínez (Global Forest Coalition, GFC)

As global leaders continue COP17 negotiations, it is difficult to ignore how women's oppression is deeply intertwined with the exploitation of ecosystems. After almost two decades of pledges, biodiversity action remains underfunded, forest loss continues to be a growing threat, socio-ecological transitions are a low priority, and ecosystems are spiraling toward collapse.

But we should also ask a more basic question: **What can we learn from the people who are already protecting biodiversity in their territories?**

After hearing over the last several months from communities from the Global South about human rights violations and ecosystem destruction they confront, it is important to remind everyone of an incontrovertible fact: As long as parties fail to address the systemic drivers of biodiversity destruction - especially in the Global South - and continue using domestic policies to expand extractivist sectors while broadening status quo dependency, these failures will persist.

One of the most contentious topics is biodiversity finance. Biodiversity offsets and credits, debt-for-nature swaps, and nature-based solutions are just some of the flawed market-based instruments presented to mobilize finance toward Global South countries, mainly through private finance. Despite all the widely known controversies, poor performance and human rights abuses, they are increasingly dominating attention while urgent priorities - including allocation of direct resources for community-led conservation actions and giving communities full decision-making power in finance institutional structures - remain unaddressed.

Market-based schemes should be ruled out. They instrumentalize greenwashing and allow brokers, developers, intermediaries and large NGOs to extract funding that should be benefiting communities.

Women and youth are making a difference

Real solutions to the biodiversity and climate crises may be an ancestral farming system rooted in traditional knowledge, or a community defending its territory from extractivist industries. They may be women organizing to protect forests, strengthen food sovereignty, or build more equitable forms of community autonomy.

All these community-led initiatives remind us that the value of ancestral knowledge, community autonomy, and access to decision-making power cannot be replaced by money or "innovative schemes." Real community-led solutions cannot be separated from the political dimensions of life and stay only on the technocratic side, focusing on reformist approaches to delay urgent systemic changes. They cannot be "scaled up" like the top-down generic schemes presented in negotiations.

Real women-led solutions are unique, as every complex ecosystem is, and demand putting power in the hands of environmental defenders. The *Gender-Just Real Solutions Map for Territories and Communities*, an interactive collaborative mapping tool co-designed with global grassroots organizations and NGOs, is a learning path to find answers to a complex crisis. One thing is clear: We must support localized actions which are genuinely community-led solutions that uphold rights, autonomy, socio-ecological transitions and create conditions to fight social inequalities.

The question for COP17 is not whether these solutions exist. They do.

The question is whether parties are prepared to recognize them, resource them, and most importantly, listen to the people who are already putting them into practice.

Armenian CSO Statement on Amulsar Mining Project

Statement by "Ecolur" Informational NGO on behalf of additional signatories

Just one week before COP17, the Armenian government took part in the ceremonial launching of the Amulsar gold mining project that directly violates the CBD and the Bern Convention, and is a setback to achieving most of the KMGBF targets.

The Amulsar project is characterized by the scale of its impact and poses far-reaching environmental and social risks. The gold content in the ore is only 0.78 grams per tonne, necessitating the use of a cyanide-based extraction process. The volume of overburden - waste rock containing a complex mixture of heavy metals - is estimated to be between 250 and 300 million tonnes.

The entire project infrastructure is situated in the heart of Armenia's water sources system, in an area characterized by rich biodiversity. According to WWF Armenia publication, the area provides habitat for more than 25 animal species and at least two plant species listed in the *Red Data Book of Armenia* and protected under both national and international law. The project boundaries lie between 5 and 13 kilometers from the world-renowned balneological resort of Jermuk.

Operating an open-pit mine at Amulsar sets Armenia back from achieving most of the targets of the KMGBF.

Targets 1 and 4 are not being met. Amulsar is characterized by rich biodiversity that requires protection. The project's activities - including blasting, the operation of heavy machinery, and the dumping of tonnes of waste rock and tailings - pose a serious threat to local bio-diversity and risk the loss of animal and plant species.

Armenia is failing to meet Target 3, as the boundaries of the planned Jermuk National Park have been revised to exclude areas allocated to the Amulsar mining project. Furthermore, the Jermuk and Gorayk sites, previously proposed as candidate sites for the Emerald Network, are planned to be removed, despite meeting the criteria for designation under the *Bern Convention.* These changes exclude areas affected by or allocated to the Amulsar project, undermining efforts to protect biodiversity and comply with the Convention.

Target 7 is not being met, given the environmental risks posed by the project, including acid mine drainage, poisoning water and land with heavy metals.

Targets 8, 14, and 18(b) are likewise at risk of being undermined by the threats outlined above.

The EIAs for the Amulsar mining project and respective conclusions are seriously deficient, and the demands to conduct a new EIA have been rejected by the government of Armenia.

Target 19 calls for mobilizing funding from all sources for biodiversity conservation. In the case of the Amulsar mining project, the biodiversity offset scheme financed by the lending banks, simply enabled the legitimization of an illegal project.

The Armenian government has also violated Target 22 establishes public participation in decision-making, while many people opposing the project have faced SLAPPS, and target 23, which aims to ensure gender equality.

Yerevan Biodiversity Challenge

Become a citizen scientist and take action for nature

We work together to take pictures of the biodiversity of Yerevan. All you need is a smartphone or a camera and an iNaturalist account, and your curiosity. People of all ages and skill levels can contribute. Every picture you take and upload till 1 November becomes a species occurrence record. Collectively, those records add to our knowledge of the biodiversity of Yerevan and the world.

We will be hosting a workshop in the Green Zone on 26 October from 17:30-19:00, to learn more and explore the surrounding area.

This initiative is supported by the CITIZEN SCIENCE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP.

Full details can be found at https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/yerevan-cop17-biodiversity-challenge

Elephants are notoriously difficult to overlook. Yet some of the biggest problems standing in the way of biodiversity action have proved remarkably easy to avoid.
This week, ECO is introducing a small herd from the new report **We Need to Talk About the Elephants in the Room**, exploring uncomfortable questions around finance, power, equity, rights and false solutions that Parties cannot afford to leave unanswered.
Keep an eye out for a different elephant in each ECO issue this week.

Elephant in the spotlight:

Financing Biodiversity Destruction Remains Legal, Profitable and Weakly Governed

Tom Picken (RAN)

Some of the most important decisions about biodiversity finance at COP17 may not be about biodiversity finance at all. Much of the money driving biodiversity destruction flows through perfectly legal, often highly profitable activities, frequently supported by harmful incentives. These flows remain largely unchecked by the rules governing banks, investors and other businesses.

Consider the scale of the problem. Globally, private financial flows harmful to biodiversity outweigh positive private finance by an astonishing 213 to one. For every dollar of private finance supporting biodiversity, more than 200 dollars are helping to destroy it, according to a breakdown of UNEP figures.

The first Global Review of the KMGBF makes for uncomfortable reading. Targets 14 and 18, which address the alignment of financial flows and reform of harmful incentives, are among those where implementation is most lagging. There is also little evidence that governments are systematically tracking whether financial flows are becoming less harmful to biodiversity.

In the final week of COP17, Parties have an opportunity to respond to these findings through two important decisions.

The Global Review decision should explicitly acknowledge the need to address the economic and financial systems driving biodiversity loss, including aligning financial flows with the Framework's goals. It should also retain meaningful language on identifying, eliminating, phasing out or reforming harmful subsidies and incentives.

Reforms must also be fair, reflect countries' differing responsibilities and capacities, be supported by developed countries meeting their international financing commitments, and respect the rights and needs of affected communities.

Meanwhile, negotiations on mainstreaming biodiversity offer a chance to get more practical. The draft text offers a route to integrating biodiversity into government budgets, fiscal policies, regulations and sectoral planning. These are decisions for finance ministries, regulators and other economic authorities, not just environment ministries. Financial institutions, too, need to be held accountable for their impacts on nature, rather than being left to self-police or focus solely on the financial risks biodiversity loss poses to their businesses.

Nearly four years after adopting the *Global Biodiversity Framework,* governments have devoted remarkably little attention to what aligning financial flows with its goals actually requires. The first Global Review has exposed just how little progress has been made.

Parties should leave Yerevan having made clear that tackling harmful finance is central to implementing the Framework, with an expectation that governments will begin addressing the policies, incentives and weak regulations that allow biodiversity destruction to remain legal and profitable.

The opinions, commentaries, and articles printed in ECO are the sole opinion of the individual authors or organisations, unless otherwise expressed.

We thank the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung for their financial support.
***Submissions** are welcome from all civil society groups.*
***Email:** lorch@ifrik.org or eco@cbd-alliance.org*

In memoriam

Christine von Weizsäcker

1944-2026



With deep sorrow we share with you that our dear friend and colleague, Christine von Weizsäcker, passed away on Friday last week.

For decades, since the adoption of the Convention itself, Christine has been an unwavering presence at many CBD meetings.

She would always be sitting as an observer at the back of the room - but doing so much more than just observing. She would listen carefully, and, whenever needed, she would raise her voice and intervene with constructive suggestions on a way forward, or with a sharp analysis of the issue, or with a reminder of rules or decisions already taken that newer negotiators may not have been aware of.

She was so good at connecting people and creating unlikely alliances. She worked with many colleagues from civil society organisations around the world, with Indigenous Peoples and local communities, with women and with youth. She mentored many of us. She also worked with many delegates and staff members of the Secretariat. She was not 'just another participant' - she was a fantastic colleague and a beloved friend.

She was a never ending source of advice on how to formulate something, on which text to look out for, on the meaning behind the text - a truly institutional repository of knowledge and wisdom. But she was not only concerned with text, she was especially concerned with the people that the text would affect, and with the values behind the text.

And she was also the human warmth that carried us through so many meetings, through hungry late nights and moments of despair in grey conference rooms.

She was a true friend, and through her values-based commitments and never-ending kindness and generosity, she has prepared her forever place in our hearts.

The Convention will not be the same without her. Her loss leaves a big hole in the fabric of the world. We miss her dearly.

Let us honour her memory by continuing her work, by caring for this world and all the peoples in it.

If you would like to share your thoughts and memories with the CBD community and her family: A book of condolences is available at the NGO hub (Level 1, opposite Contact Group 1).

old knowledge like the buried roots of trees

here sun beats down
on scorched earth,
too dry for plant and animal,
no tree in sight,
become a desert ...

yet deep in the parched ground
where farmers once raised beef to sell abroad
then left the land they'd ruined,
the roots of trees they felled remain,
invisible, waiting to grow again -

for, it seems, however many times
the trees themselves
are felled, their generous roots still live,
and, if allowed, will shoot again,
give shade and water, food, life and hope.

they often say old knowledge
is of the past, outdated, mere superstition
they claim their science is precies, infallible,
sole path to the future -

but what do the roots say?

we will be trees once more
they will whisper to the listening stars:
to have a future, you must hear the past;

the soil of insight
must be enriched through time -

with living roots
still deep in earth
we wait our time
to return.

Helena Paul

ECO

cbd-alliance.org · linktr.ee/cbd_alliance

Volume 75, Issue 7

Tuesday, 27 Oct 2026

In this issue

- **Indigenous rights**
- **Biodiversity Finance**
- **TTFF**
- **IPBES**
- **Lobbists**

No rights, No biodiversity

Why Indigenous Peoples are Central to Conservation

by Cultural Survival

Biodiversity thrives in forests, rivers, mountains, and seas that Indigenous Peoples have stewarded across generations. For us, caring for biodiversity is not a policy choice; it is who we are. Therefore, protecting biodiversity is inseparable from protecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Our cosmovisions, lifeways, and cultures emerge from our relationships to Mother Earth and a deep sense of responsibility to care for the ecosystems we all depend on. Yet, our ability to steward ecosystems depends on maintaining our lifeways, ceremonies, economies, and tenure systems.

The KMGBF will only succeed if it treats Indigenous Peoples as **rights holders,** not stakeholders. Its implementation must move from participation to partnership, and from consultation to recognition. Indigenous Peoples' rights to our lands, territories and resources, to self-determination, and to *Free, Prior and Informed Consent* are affirmed in the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and the KMGBF itself.

Target 3 will only be successful if it is achieved with Indigenous Peoples and never at our expense. Recognizing and supporting Indigenous Territories and traditional conservation systems are integral parts of implementation. Conservation measures must not lead to displacement, dispossession, restrictions on customary livelihoods, violations of rights, nor the creation of protected areas without full participation of Indigenous Peoples. We urge Parties to recognize and support Indigenous Peoples' territories, Indigenous conserved areas, and Indigenous-led conservation as essential contributions to Target 3, which must be achieved in connection with Targets 21 and 22.

Indigenous Peoples must have autonomy in stewarding our territories and shaping the futures of our communities. The Parties must ensure the full, equal, effective, and inclusive participation of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making processes on biodiversity issues at all levels, including representation in governing and monitoring bodies. Participation must go beyond mere consultation or exchange of information. Indigenous Peoples must retain authority over their knowledge, including determining when, how, and by whom it may be accessed or used.

Rights without remedies are only promises on paper. Parties must establish effective mechanisms for access to justice, legal remedies, and accountability when Indigenous Peoples' rights are violated. Indigenous environmental and human rights defenders must be protected from threats, violence, intimidation, criminalization, and repression. Every attack on a defender is an attack on biodiversity and must be investigated with those responsible held accountable.

Indigenous Peoples make enormous contributions to achieving the goals of the CBD and KMGBF, and the resources reaching them must reflect that. We urge the Parties to increase direct funding to Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous-led organizations for conservation, restoration, monitoring, sustainable use of natural resources, and knowledge transfer, as well as other priorities of Indigenous Peoples. Funding mechanisms must be accessible, predictable, long-term, transparent, subject to right-protecting safeguards, and developed in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples.

Upholding the rights of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination and to govern our territories is critical to achieving the *2030 Agenda* and *Sustainable Development Goals* and to building a future of mutual flourishing for us all.

Biodiversity Finance: Deliver your promises

Theiva Lingam (Sahabat Alam Malaysia – Friends of the Earth Malaysia)

At COP17, a central debate has emerged over biodiversity finance. Developing countries argue that before discussing new contributors, developed countries must fulfil their mandatory financial commitments under the Convention.

The concern is straightforward: The global biodiversity finance system is failing to provide the scale of support needed to achieve the KMGBF. Biodiversity-rich developing countries are expected to safeguard much of the world's biodiversity while facing debt burdens, climate impacts and limited fiscal space.

Under Article 20, developed country Parties are required to provide *new and additional financial resources* to enable developing countries to implement the Convention. Developing countries accepted extensive conservation and sustainable use commitments, while developed countries accepted corresponding responsibilities for finance and technology transfer

For many developing countries, the debate also reflects broader questions of equity. Historical patterns of resource extraction, unequal consumption and environmental degradation have created significant imbalances, while many countries in the Global South continue to shoulder a disproportionate share of the costs of conserving globally important biodiversity.

Against this backdrop, some developed country Parties are advocating for the biodiversity-finance sovereign contributor base to be broadened including putting in place a process that may circumvent existing provisions for additional countries to make voluntary contributions. Developing countries argue that such discussions risk shifting attention away from the more immediate challenge of fulfilling existing obligations.

The issue proved contentious at SBI7 in Nairobi, where Parties were unable to reach consensus. It has now returned to COP17 through a revised non-paper that introduces several new options alongside Options A to D. During the Nairobi discussions, *Option B*, which proposed expanding the contributor base and amending the list by using the World Bank's high-income classification as a proxy while excluding UN-recognised Small Island Developing States, was firmly rejected by developing countries.

Options E and F instead focus on strengthening and securing existing commitments. *Option E* expresses concern over declining biodiversity finance, calls for increased funding through future replenishments of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and proposes closing discussions on broadening the contributor base in light of the continued lack of consensus. It is grounded in the principle of *common but differentiated responsibilities* (CBDR). *Option F* reaffirms the existing contributor list, while seeking more equitable burden-sharing amongst contributors, greater predictability in financing, and reforms to improve the speed and effectiveness of fund disbursement.

Options G and H seek to broaden and periodically revise the contributor base based on evolving national circumstances and capabilities, a shift that many developing countries view as inconsistent the provisions of Article 20 of the Convention. *Option H* goes further by proposing a formal process through which additional Parties could voluntarily assume contributor responsibilities and potentially be added to the contributor list through future COP decisions. This goes beyond the mandate of Decision 16/34, which did not call for the creation of a mechanism to expand or revise the list of contributors.

The debate is unfolding as key biodiversity funding commitments move in the wrong direction.

According to figures cited by developing countries, Official Development Assistance declined by 23.1% between 2024 and 2025. The 9th replenishment of the GEF is reportedly 27% lower than the previous replenishment, representing its weakest outcome in 16 years. Further, financial flows continue to move from the Global South to the Global North through mechanisms such as debt repayments and payments for intellectual property royalties, despite developing countries bearing a significant share of global biodiversity conservation costs.

COP17 should prioritise increasing and improving access to biodiversity finance for developing countries, rather than reopening debates on expanding the contributor base while existing commitments remain unmet.

Voluntary contributions can complement biodiversity finance, but they cannot dilute, defer or replace the obligations of developed-country Parties. The credibility of the CBD depends on delivery of those obligations, not on whether the burden can be shifted to developing countries.

“Trust will be the TFFF's most valuable asset.” So where are its investment safeguards?

Tom Picken (Rainforest Action Network)

There was a celebratory mood at Monday's TFFF event at COP17, with references to Brazil's election result greeted by loud applause. The Netherlands added to the momentum, announcing plans to contribute up to US$500 million over ten years to the *Tropical Forest Forever Facility* (TFFF). “Trust will be the TFFF's most valuable asset,” stated Luxembourg's environment minister, Serge Wilmes. Luxembourg will host the Tropical Forest Investment Fund (TFIF), the TFFF's investment arm.

With governments committing serious money, why would a fund established to *protect* forests adopt an investment framework with substantially weaker environmental and social safeguards than even the much-criticised *International Finance Corporation* (IFC)?

Civil society has documented decades of environmental and human rights harms linked to IFC investments, particularly those channelled through commercial banks and financial intermediaries. Despite formal safeguards, weak due diligence, opacity and inadequate accountability have allowed damaging investments to continue.

The TFFF should learn from these failures, not establish a system with fewer protections. Under the proposed model, the TFIF would invest in bonds, using returns to finance forest conservation payments. Yet *Concept Note 3.1* provides little detail on how environmental and social risks associated with those investments would be assessed or addressed.

The concept note proposes a limited exclusion list, including restrictions on some deforestation-related activities. But these provisions are poorly elaborated and appear to apply only to corporate bonds, with no equivalent reference to sovereign debt. More fundamentally, there is no clearly established system of portfolio-wide environmental due diligence, independent environmental oversight or accountability for investment-related harms.

The problem goes beyond the exclusion list. The concept note calls for a *“clear, bright-line distinction”* between the investment fund and conservation facility, with investment decisions made “exclusively” to optimise risk-adjusted returns and maintain the fund's financial standing.

The TFIF's financial responsibilities are spelled out in detail. Its obligation to avoid investing in environmental destruction is not. The TFFF's environmental mission risks being kept at arm's length from decisions about where its money is invested. The comparison has limits. IFC financing and TFIF bond investments involve different obligations, and IFC's safeguards have repeatedly failed communities. But a fund established specifically to protect tropical forests should aim higher.

The TFIF needs binding environmental and social obligations across its investments, independent oversight with authority over investment decisions, transparent portfolio disclosure, and accessible grievance and remedy mechanisms. These must be embedded in its governing instruments and investment mandates, alongside financial responsibilities. If trust is to be the TFFF's most valuable asset, there must be accountability for how it makes its money, not just how it spends it.

The safeguards gap: published frameworks compared

Safeguard	IFC	TFIF
Environmental and social standards	Formal standards, often poorly enforced	No comparable comprehensive framework
Due diligence	Risk assessment requirements, with documented failures	No clear portfolio-wide environmental due diligence system
Exclusions	Established exclusion list	Limited provisions, important gaps
Accountability	Independent CAO complaints mechanism	No clear investment-related complaints mechanism
Investment Governance	Environmental responsibilities formally established	Financial duties explicit; environmental duties unclear

Spell it out:
How the IPBES assessments can speed up the KMGBF

Nathalie Rutz (Pro Natura/Friends of the Earth Switzerland)

In the past two years IPBES has approved three major assessments:

- **Transformative Change Assessment** on the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and the determinants of change;
- **Nexus Assessment** on the interlinkages between biodiversity, water, food and health;
- **Business and Biodiversity Assessment** on business impacts and dependencies on biodiversity and nature's contributions to people

They offer practical guidance on how to achieve KMGBF targets 14 (integrate biodiversity in decision-making), 15 (business assessment and disclosure), 16 (sustainable consumption) and 18 (harmful subsidies). According to the Global Review, these targets are among those with the lowest coverage in national target setting - so much remains to be done.

Under item 17(e), the COP is discussing how to take up these assessments and encourage Parties to use them nationally. Building on the draft coming from SBSTTA, the non-paper contains several paragraphs (2, 5 and 9) with corresponding suggestions. Some Parties now want to delete these paragraphs and only name the assessments. **This would reduce their visibility and understanding, slow their uptake, and therefore delay progress on targets 14-16 and 18.** The assessments were jointly commissioned and endorsed by all IPBES members, including those now asking to shorten the text. What is the point in ordering and financing assessments whose findings are later concealed?

The main question in Yerevan is how to accelerate progress on the KMGBF. Spelling out actions based on the assessments shows Parties what they can do. Therefore **paragraphs 2, 5 and 9 should remain as detailed as they are now** (non-paper on item 17(e), version 3, 26 October 2026).

How many lobbyists are there at COP 17?

Helena Paul (Econexus)

Industry lobbying at the CBD is aimed at preventing action that might threaten corporate profits. In 2024, At COP 16 there were twice as many industry lobbyists as at COP 15 and in some cases industry lobbyists outnumbered national delegates:

> "There were more lobbyists from agribusiness, fossil fuels, pharmaceuticals, food and beverage processing and that brought the total of industry delegates to 1,261.
>
> Quite a few were registered as delegates with countries [...] rather than as representatives of their industries. Food and agriculture companies such as Nestlé and Cargill nearly doubled their attendees [in 2024] to 33." *(Source: https://desmog.com)*

Much of the lobbying is aimed at avoiding real action on biodiversity loss and climate change. For example, it may promote carbon offsets rather than genuine emission reductions, and 'afforestation', often in the form of monoculture tree plantations, frequently of alien, sometimes invasive species such as fast-growing, genetically modified eucalyptus, rather than genuine protection of forests.

These activities can make industry look as if it is taking positive action - and they also yield profits. For example, eucalyptus is used for the production of paper, construction materials and biomass as well as for generating carbon credits. *(Source: https://carboncredits.com)*

So it will be interesting to see how many industry lobbyists are present at COP17, which parties host them in their delegations, and what they focus on.

The opinions, commentaries, and articles printed in ECO are the sole opinion of the individual authors or organisations, unless otherwise expressed.

We thank the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung for their financial support.
***Submissions** are welcome from all civil society groups.*
***Email:** lorch@ifrik.org or eco@cbd-alliance.org*

ECO

cbd-alliance.org · linktr.ee/cbd_alliance

Volume 75, Issue 8

Wednesday, 28 Oct 2026

In this issue

- **Global legal system**
- **Modified bees**
- **Animals as offsets**
- **Youth biodiversity actions**

Elephant in the spotlight:

How meeting the GBF goals is made impossible through global legal systems

Nele Marien (Friends of the Earth International)

One big elephant in the room, preventing the halting and reversal of biodiversity destruction is the global legal system, which puts economic law above environmental law, with severe sanctions for non-compliance, while environmental agreements such as the CBD don't have functional compliance mechanisms.

The corporate-influenced system of *Investor–State Dispute Settlement* (ISDS) is the maximum expression of this. The mechanism lets a foreign investor sue a state before an international arbitration tribunal, when it considers a country applies measures that threaten their expected return on investments. Under most International Investment Agreements, foreign investors can use ISDS courts when countries increase their environmental legislation, or when they don't issue an environmental permit. Companies can claim financial compensation from the countries in which they have invested, or intended to invest, including for the loss of anticipated future profits.

ISDS awards routinely run into the hundreds of millions of dollars, with more than 152 known cases of over USD 1 billion. For example, the Tethyan Copper Company sued Pakistan after its application for a mining lease at the Reko Diq mine was rejected. An ISDS tribunal awarded the company US$5.8 billion - more than 25 times the invested amount. After a settlement, this very destructive mine was given permission to operate.

Regulatory chill

Facing debt, austerity and dependence on hard currency from extractive development models, governments know that creating or expanding a protected area, cancelling a concession, or simply tightening a standard can trigger litigation. Ministers in several countries have acknowledged this "regulatory chill" effect. The mere possibility of a large claim functions as a deterrent, and companies use ISDS threats strategically to shape policy before any tribunal convenes.

ISDS also allows corporations to undo measures already adopted: 17% of known cases end in "settlements" rather than final awards, which in most cases implies that the increased protection of biodiversity is rewinded, in order to avoid expensive claims or the expensive legal proceeding costs.

The amount of ISDS cases is increasing sharply: from 12 environmental ISDS cases before 2000, to 126 between 2011 and 2021. The sectors driving biodiversity loss are among the most litigious: fossil fuel corporations account for 20% of total cases and mining for 11%. Global South countries are respondents in roughly 62% of cases.

Addressing the elephant

While the CBD can't change the global legal system, it can study the impact of ISDS on biodiversity policies and outcomes, and can bring the topic to other relevant fora for their consideration.

Halting and reverting biodiversity loss should not be made impossible through global legal systems. On the contrary, they should serve people and biodiversity rather than corporate interests.

Read **The legal system that privileges corporate rights over environmental regulations** in the report "We Need to Talk About the Elephants in the Room"

Wild Animal Offsets Will Drive Extinctions, Indigenous Peoples Warn the UN

Cassandra Smithies (Global Justice Ecology Project)

Alarmed that buffalo, jaguars, orangutans and even whales are being converted into offsets to greenwash oil and mining companies, Indigenous Peoples and civil society request that parties at COP17 immediately stop taking steps to monetize their sacred animals and nature as "natural capital" for carbon and biodiversity markets because it will contribute to their extinction.

The Executive Director of Cultural Survival, Aimee Robeson (Chahta/Chikashsha) explains "if we truly care about biodiversity, we should not be tempted to monetize our relatives nor ecosystem services like carbon sequestration, because they have inherent value that cannot be reduced to a dollar amount. These market-based schemes are false solutions that exacerbate the polycrises we are facing. Not only are these schemes sacrilegious, but they also lead to net loss of biodiversity, to ecocide and to degradation of the very systems that support life on Mother Earth, including all of us. There can be no sacrifice zones, no trade-offs and no offsets if we want life on Mother Earth to survive for generations to come."

> 800 critically endangered Tapanuli Orangutan, - the rarest great ape species - are being used for offsets by a Gold Mine in Sumatra

"For Indigenous Peoples, nature is not an asset class, she is our Mother," says Tom Goldtooth (Diné/Dakota), Executive Director of Indigenous Environmental Network. "Using Indigenous Peoples' territories and sacred animal relatives for biodiversity and carbon credits violates the Sacred. We reject buffalo credits. Buffalo, which the White Man's slaughter reduced from 60-70 million in 1853 to a few thousand in the 1880s, are now being hailed as 'carbon storing machines,' and turned into soil carbon credits, so polluters can continue to pollute. Our buffalo, Tanka Oyate, are part of our genesis, not 'bison bonds.' Carbon trading is an offensive scam that threatens the future of humanity. Bring back the buffalo, not colonialism!"

For Wilmer Lucitante of UDAPT and the A'i Kofán Nation of the Ecuadorian Amazon whose territory was devastated by Texaco/Chevron, "turning our sacred jaguars into carbon credits is a false solution to climate change that accelerates their extinction. Instead of monetizing wildlife, we need to stop oil drilling and mining in the Amazon."

Similarly, Andine Fahira Lubis of WALHI denounced that the 800 critically endangered Tapanuli Orangutan, the rarest great ape species, are being used for offsets by Jardine Matheson's Martabe Gold Mine in Sumatra in the Batang Toru ecosystem in Indigenous Peoples' territories. "Not only is the hypocrisy of orangutan offsets staggering, offsets cannot redeem the irreplaceable."

Putting a price on nature will not save nature, it will destroy her. Indigenous Peoples' animals, lands and oceans are not sponges for greenhouse gases, to be grabbed and pillaged by Big Oil and the extractive industries responsible for the climate emergency, which accelerates the 6th extinction. The United Nations must not be complicit with green colonialism.

The opinions, commentaries, and articles printed in ECO are the sole opinion of the individual authors or organisations, unless otherwise expressed.

We thank the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung for their financial support.
***Submissions** are welcome from all civil society groups.*
***Email:** lorch@ifrik.org or eco@cbd-alliance.org*

Protecting bees must not become a licence to engineer them

Julie Sohier (POLLINIS)

Bees connect landscapes. Every day they move between fields, gardens and protected areas, carrying pollen and microbes from flower to flower and linking plants with pollinator communities. That is precisely what makes a new generation of biotechnologies so troubling.

Researchers and companies are developing genetically engineered gut bacteria to turn honey bees into living pesticide factories. Inside the bee, these modified bacteria would continuously produce RNA-based molecules designed to kill Varroa mites, by silencing essential genes when the parasites feed on them. The bee's own genome stays the same, but its biology is changed through its microbiome.



Engineered microorganisms are alive. They can reproduce, evolve and ignore borders. Bees share flowers with thousands of wild pollinator species and flowers are hubs of microbial exchange. A strain released into one apiary is unlikely to stay there. Wild pollinators, already in decline, would be exposed without anyone asking whether they can cope.

This is exactly the kind of case the Cartagena Protocol was designed for. An engineered bacterium is a *living modified organism* (LMO). The Protocol exists to make sure that LMOs crossing borders, deliberately or not, have no adverse effects on biodiversity. But its risk assessment framework was built largely with modified crops in mind. Microorganisms that multiply, swap genes and travel inside a mobile host raise questions it was never designed to answer.

This puts a clear choice before every delegation at COP17 and MOP12. Will international governance anticipate environmental risks or will it let industrial deployment outpace the science needed to assess them?

Unintentional transboundary movement deserves particular attention. For an engineered microbe carried by bees, crossing a border is not an accident. It is the expected outcome. Article 17 of the Cartagena Protocol obligations to notify and respond assume that a release can be detected and traced. Parties should ask whether that holds for organisms that are invisible, self-replicating and spread by pollinators.

Risk assessment must also look beyond the modified organism itself. The bacterium is the LMO, but the risks show up in the bee, in the wild pollinators it meets and in the ecosystems they sustain with a persistence scientists can hardly foresee now. An assessment that stops at the microbe's genetic construct misses the point. What matters is the effect on target and non-target species, on biodiversity and on soil, water and air.

Until risk assessment can answer these questions, there should be no releases of LMOs intended to alter wild populations through their genomes, epigenomes or microbiomes. This is not hostility to innovation. It is what Target 17 of the Global Biodiversity Framework already commits Parties to: biosafety measures and the capacity to implement them, in place before releases, not after.

POLLINIS has gathered citizens to support these demands. The petition has gathered 50.000 signatures within days. We believe this shows how, when properly informed, people and communities around the world chose proper assessment and regulation over acceleration.

Bees are not suffering from a shortage of engineered bacteria. They are suffering from habitat loss and pesticides. Any claim that engineering pollinators is conservation should be weighed against measures we know work and have yet to fully implement.

Patents and business plans should not decide which ecological risks everyone else must bear.

Nature is not a laboratory.

No to modified bees! Please scan this QR code to sign or relay the petition. The petition is for individuals to sign. Signatures are anonymous. Only the total number will be displayed publicly.
https://mobilisation.pollinis.org/stop-abeillesmodifiees-en

Don’t ignore the youth - make our biodiversity actions be recognized!

Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN)

Youth is the future. The decisions of today shape the world we will live in longer than anyone else. But youth is not only the future, nor are we only beneficiaries. Youth is acting now, at the forefront of biodiversity efforts. Yet, we remain one of the most under-resourced and underrepresented groups in global biodiversity governance.

GYBN consulted youth in different countries on their actions and their consideration in the global report and national assessments. What we found is that these reports largely ignore the myriad of actions led by young people and they fail to recognize us as key contributors to safeguard biodiversity.

Seeing many national reports failing to acknowledge our contributions to biodiversity, we started mapping our actions ourselves to make them visible to everyone. Until now, hundreds of young people all around the world have told us about their projects - organizing sustainability festivals, saving pollinators, researching fungi biodiversity. There is barely an area where we do not contribute.

At COP17, we want to make it clear to all policymakers: We are partners in protecting biodiversity. We are their conscience when not moving quickly enough. We are the future generations dealing with the consequences of their decisions.

However, now we need your support.

If you are a supporter of youth biodiversity actions, we need you to make our actions visible. Share our form in your networks and organizations. Talk to decisionmakers about the importance of youth contributions to biodiversity. Make sure that our contributions will be recognized and included in the next round of national reports!

If you are a young person, fill out our form and tell the world about your action for biodiversity! It doesn’t matter how small or big your efforts are related to biodiversity, if it is in your school yard, in your town or bigger, if it is in person or online - tell us about your goals, challenges and impacts and illustrate your actions with pictures or videos!

Our form: https://tinyurl.com/youth-contribution

You want to get a preview of what youth are doing for biodiversity? Do you want to share your actions with others?
Join our side event today, 28th Oct, 5pm at the Youth Pavilion in the Action Zone, Level 1!



ECO

cbd-alliance.org · linktr.ee/cbd_alliance

Volume 75, Issue 9

Thursday, 29 Oct 2026

In this issue

- **Market-orientation**
- **Pollution**
- **Voices in the negotiations**
- **AI and data centers**

Elephant in the spotlight:

Market-oriented instruments for biodiversity finance facilitate biodiversity destruction

Mirna Fernandez (Third World Network)

Elephants in the room

At COP17 many of the discussions focused on ways to close the biodiversity finance gap, an estimated USD 700 billion annual shortfall in the resources needed to protect and restore nature. To close this finance gap, target 19 of the GBF aims to mobilise a total of USD 200 billion per year for biodiversity, and highlights the importance of 'innovative finance schemes', such as *Payment for Ecosystem Services* (PES), green bonds and biodiversity offsets and credits.

All these schemes apply different components of the market logic, which are flawed when applied to nature. The main problem is that these mechanisms all consider nature as an asset to be sold, exchanged, or invested in, and that market prices will incentivise the protection of biodiversity. The most obvious shortcoming of this logic is that the market does not care about nature, threatened species or fragile ecosystems. Markets favour projects that generate attractive financial returns, whereas many of biodiversity's benefits are public goods that cannot easily be captured as revenue. This logic is especially useful for biodiversity-destructive sectors as it allows them to continue destroying ecosystems while claiming they are doing their part, either by offsetting, purchasing credits or investing in nature protection elsewhere. Meanwhile, the urgent regulation and restriction of biodiversity-destructive activities continues to be postponed.

These schemes respond to the push for private finance to replace the public funding needed for biodiversity protection, but by doing so, they reduce political pressure for stronger regulation and public investment. They also add pressure on recipient governments that face unstable revenue streams and fluctuating conservation incentives while being expected to provide the institutional infrastructure for the mechanisms to function.

As market rules legitimise and enable further destruction, financial benefits flow mostly to intermediaries who identify, aggregate, package, certify and market biodiversity conservation and restoration activities as investable assets, capturing fees and other forms of aggregated value at several stages of the transaction. By contrast, rights-holders, such as Indigenous Peoples, small-scale farmers and local communities, only get a small fraction of the revenues, and often face the impacts of the implementation of mechanisms with poor social and environmental safeguards, including displacement, land conflicts and loss of their means of life. The environmental impacts of these mechanisms are also vastly documented, leading to lack of additionality and permanence of the conservation gains, leakage of impacts, monoculture risk and greenwashing.

While it is true that current global biodiversity finance remains insufficient, and that Global North governments have failed to live up to their financial commitments, this is not the only gap that should be addressed. There is also a justice gap, which results in an unequal distribution of benefits, exclusion and underfunding of biodiversity stewards on the ground. Therefore, the aim must not be to make nature attractive to financial markets, but to make biodiversity protection a non-negotiable public responsibility and to ensure that those who steward it have the resources and power to do so.

Assess pollution as biodiversity experiences it

Julie Sohier (POLLINIS)

Chemical assessments divide pollution into substances, uses and exposure scenarios. Living organisms encounter none of these divisions. They experience cross-contamination across landscapes and throughout their entire life cycle, alongside other pressures. Biodiversity protection can fail in the distance between these two realities.

COP17 has an opportunity to narrow that gap. The discussion on pollution and biodiversity should deliver the expertise and practical support needed to assess contamination through its consequences for species, ecological connectivity and ecosystem functions.

Pollinators show why this matters. A bumble bee moves between crops and uncultivated areas, drinks water and collects pollen and nectar. Its exposure can involve several substances, recur over time and cause harm without immediate death. More flowers do not necessarily provide a safer habitat if those flowers are contaminated.

"Recognizing that pollution is one of the main drivers of biodiversity loss" would be a great start. But assessments that overlook mixtures, chronic exposure, sublethal effects and cumulative impacts risk missing pressures that undermine populations. These pressures also interact with habitat loss, climate change and other drivers of biodiversity decline. Studying each separately cannot fully explain their combined consequences.

Target 7: Reduce Pollution to Levels That Are Not Harmful to Biodiversity

Reduce pollution risks and the negative impact of pollution from all sources, by 2030, to levels that are not harmful to biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, considering cumulative effects, including: reducing excess nutrients lost to the environment by at least half including through more efficient nutrient cycling and use; reducing the overall risk from pesticides and highly hazardous chemicals by at least half including through integrated pest management, based on science, taking into account food security and livelihoods; and also preventing, reducing, and working towards eliminating plastic pollution.

Under Target 7, Parties have committed to reduce pollution to levels that are not harmful to biodiversity by 2030, considering cumulative effects, and to reduce the overall risk from pesticides and highly hazardous chemicals by at least half. Delivering that commitment requires assessment methods that reflect the conditions organisms face in the wild.

It should examine how organisms are exposed to pollution, through sources, pathways, repeated exposure and mixtures. It should also address how that exposure harms biodiversity through sublethal and cumulative effects and interaction with other drivers. This work should lead to practical action: preventing pollution at source, monitoring contamination, reducing exposure and restoring contaminated environments. Such action needs measurable objectives, clear timelines and adequate resources.

Whether through an *Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Pollution and Biodiversity* or *the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution*, the support of other agencies and relevant conventions and organisations should strengthen this work and avoid duplication. Such cooperation must serve a clear responsibility within the Convention: identifying what biodiversity protection requires and translating that knowledge into recommendations.

Stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples and Local communities, women, youth and civil society must have an explicit opportunity to contribute relevant expertise. Recommendations should set measurable objectives, clear timelines and the resources needed for implementation.

Uncertainty about the full consequences of chemical pollution on biodiversity makes stronger and scientifi-cally grounded expertise essential. We cannot postpone measures against harms already established.

COP17 should establish the expert group and give it a mandate grounded in the reality of contaminated ecosystems. Restoring habitats while allowing contamination to persist undermines the protection those habitats are meant to provide.

Beyond the Negotiating Table

Whose Voices Are Being Heard at COP17?

Vince Cinches (World Animal Protection)

One and a half week into COP17 in Yerevan, one thing stands out: what happens outside the negotiating rooms matters just as much as what happens inside them. By the time country delegations arrive at COP, priorities have been identified, positions developed and negotiating instructions agreed.

But these negotiations are not set in stone.

Negotiations are about listening, understanding interests and finding common ground. But whose interests are being heard, and whose are missing? This is an important question for negotiators, particularly when decisions made here will shape biodiversity policies back home.

Biodiversity loss is not happening in isolation. It is connected to how we produce food, exploit wildlife, use land and distribute resources. These affect people, animals, and the planet. Yet, we often negotiate them as separate issues, addressing symptoms while leaving the root causes largely untouched.

And there is another worrying development: Big corporations have learned from the UN climate negotiations. Biodiversity negotiations are becoming another opportunity to influence policy, greenwash business practices and promote questionable solutions. Corporate funding and partnerships can create conflicts of interest, including within civil society, while frontline communities struggle to get their voices heard.

Negotiators need to ask whose interests these solutions serve, who benefits, and who bears the cost?

Listening should go beyond government counterparts, official delegations and familiar organisations. It should include those challenging dominant approaches, especially indigenous peoples, local communities, women, young people and persons with different disabilities whose lives and livelihoods are affected by biodiversity loss.

Many cannot afford to be here. But their absence from the negotiating rooms should not mean their exclusion from the decisions.

This is where organised civil society and counter-power become crucial. Not simply to secure speaking slots, but to challenge corporate influence, question false solutions and bring community perspectives into negotiations.

Civil Society also has work to do. Conservation, Animal Welfare, food systems, climate justice, health and human rights groups need to share information, connect their agendas and build common positions more. We cannot ask governments to connect the dots if we are not doing it ourselves.

I recognise how demanding these negotiations are. Delegates (and observers) work late into the evening and through the weekend, often trying to reconcile competing interests and reach agreements that serve the public good. But meaningful participation should not depend on catching a negotiator in a corridor.

Governments need to engage civil society upstream, while national positions are being developed, not only when those positions arrive at COP. And that engagement must continue throughout negotiations.

My appeal to negotiators is simple: Listen beyond the negotiating table. Questions whose interests are shaping the solutions being proposed. Make room for perspectives that challenge your positions, not just those that reinforce them. Because protecting biodiversity requires confronting the systems driving its destruction, not simply negotiating how to manage the damage.

The agreements we reach must work for people, animals, and the planet, not just those with resources to influence them.

The opinions, commentaries, and articles printed in ECO are the sole opinion of the individual authors or organisations, unless otherwise expressed.

We thank the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung for their financial support.
***Submissions** are welcome from all civil society groups.*
***Email:** lorch@ifrik.org or eco@cbd-alliance.org*

Artificial Intelligence & datacenters: another threat to nature

Ana Di Pangracio (FARN) & Antje Lorch (Ecoropa)

AI is destroying biodiversity through its datacenters: through their water, energy and land use, their greenhouse gas emissions, their increase of local temperatures; their demand for critical minerals and the electronic waste they are producing. Their extraction and processing can contribute to biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation, pollution and violations of human rights, particularly in countries of the Global South.

These impacts cannot be overlooked in a Convention committed to addressing the underlying drivers of biodiversity loss and transforming unsustainable production and consumption patterns.

The use of AI also raises serious questions about corporate concentration, technological dependency, unequal access to information, and the use of data and knowledge, including that of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

AI is offered as a tool for biodiversity evaluation, monitoring and reporting, but technological optimism must not replace precaution, independent scrutiny, democratic oversight, and accountability.

Any discussion of AI at the CBD process should consider its entire lifecycle, its implications for human rights, and its compatibility with the goals of the KMGBF. Protecting biodiversity requires more than smarter technologies. It requires confronting the economic and political systems driving ecological destruction.

For sources see:
https://cbd-alliance.org/en/2026/ai-and-data-centers

Data centers as infrastructure

Quoted from : Environmental Cost of AI's Energy Use: Carbon, Water and Land Footprints.
United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health (2026)

"***In 2025***, global data centers were estimated to consume 448 TWh of **electricity**. If data centers' electricity use were considered a country, it would have ranked 11th globally by electricity consumption.

The energy consumed by data centers in 2025 was enough to supply the annual **residential electricity needs of the entire population of Sub-Saharan Africa**, 1.3 billion people, for 2.6 years.

Data centers' electricity use in 2025 had a **carbon footprint** of 189 million tonnes of CO2e, which would require 3.2 billion tree seedlings grown over 10 years to offset, roughly the total number of trees in the entire United Kingdom.

Data centers' 2025 electricity consumption had a **water** footprint of 4.5 trillion liters of water - enough to fill 1.8 million Olympic-sized pools or meet the **annual basic domestic water needs of over 600 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa.**

The **land footprint** of 2025 data centers' electricity demand was 6,900 km2, nearly 4.5 times the size of Greater London.

AI workloads accounted for roughly 20% of total data centers' electricity use in 2025 and **are projected to grow to 40% by 2030.**

If AI's share of data center energy rises to 40%, electricity consumption could reach 378 TWh - over 9 times the electricity consumption of Nigeria (world's 6th largest nation by population, with 224 million).

Projected global data centers' electricity consumption could exceed 945 TWh by 2030, accounting for almost 3% of projected global electricity use - enough to supply residential electricity to all 1.3 billion people in Sub-Saharan Africa for about 5.5 years.

If treated as a country, 945 TWh would rank 6th globally by electricity consumption.

The associated water footprint of projected 2030 electricity consumption of data centers is 9.3 trillion liters, or enough to meet the minimum annual domestic water needs of all 1.3 billion residents of Sub-Saharan Africa for a full year.

The associated land footprint of data centers' expected electricity use in 2030 would be over 14,500 km2, roughly 10 times the size of Mexico City or about twice the Jakarta metropolitan area, home to over 32 million people.

The physical lifecycle of AI hardware presents a growing crisis. AI infrastructure could generate up to 2.5 million metric tons of **e-waste** annually by 2030, equivalent to discarding nearly 250 Eiffel Towers every year."

ECO

cbd-alliance.org · linktr.ee/cbd_alliance

Volume 75, Issue 10

Friday, 30 Oct 2026

In this issue

- **Forest fires**
- **Effective participation**
- **Synbio as conservation?**
- **Finance & destruction**

Forest fires: The missing discussion at the Global Review

Mirna Inés Fernández (Third World Network) & Yannick Tatin (M.Sc. in Tropical Biodiversity and Ecosystems)

Devastating forest fires are occurring every year with more intensity and causing major biodiversity loss. They are intensified by climate change, with major corporate interests like the agrobusiness and palm oil sectors behind the land use changes that lead to intensified fires in wildfire-prone ecosystems. Between 2025 and 2026, most of the regions experienced increasing fires.

Most central African countries feature prominently in global burned-area estimates with fires occurring in savannas, grasslands and open woodlands, alongside forest burning. In Asia; India, Nepal and Indonesia witnessed massive fires that affected air quality, with smoke and fine-particle pollution extending across South East Asia. Half of the critically endangered orangutan's population is directly impacted by fires. In South America, Brazil and Bolivia suffered severe fire impacts including exceptional emissions in the Amazonian and Pantanal–Chiquitano regions.

Developed countries are also impacted. North America experienced extensive forest fires while the EU recorded its highest burned area since 2006. Portugal and Spain have been particularly affected since 2025. Australia was not spared by fires either. Prolonged, severe heatwaves and the cessation of Indigenous fire practices over generations combined with the Super El Niño event have led to huge uncontrollable bushfires across the country.

Discussions at the CBD can, and increasingly must, address forest fires:

→ **Refining the Monitoring Framework:** As many targets still lack explicit operational metrics, there is an opportunity to include tools to track fire frequency, severity and resource allocation to fire prevention, mitigation and suppression

→ **Leveraging synergies with the FAO:** By embedding the FAO's integrated fire management approach into national reporting, promoting access to specialized technical resources to build fire-resilient ecosystems.

→ **Financing fire resilience:** Funding mechanisms, such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), can explicitly prioritize "fire-smart" landscape management rather than treating fire fighting as an emergency response isolated from conservation funding.

→ **Addressing forest fires prevention and management approaches in the biodiversity and climate discussions:** Including the update to the CBD Voluntary guidelines for the design and effective implementation of EbA & Eco-DRR.

→ **In National Biodiversity Finance Plans (NBFPs):** Nations highly vulnerable to fires can structure domestic finance frameworks to channel funds to community-based volunteer fire brigades that can cover vital supplies like protective gear, field communications, portable oxygen, and logistical support.

→ **Redirecting harmful subsidies:** To tackle target 18 and free up domestic funding, nations are tracking and repurposing harmful subsidies. Shifting financial support away from industrial monoculture plantations (which dry out landscapes) allows governments to reallocate public spending toward immediate, localized forest-defense resources.

Forest fires, once seasonal natural events, are now becoming anthropic recurrent phenomena, accelerating biodiversity loss across the globe.The CBD can, and must, address this issue by developing sharper monitoring indicators, leveraging synergies with the FAO, and including it in the biodiversity and climate discussions. Funding fire resilience, fire-smart landscapes and frontline fire brigades remains essential to both prevent and respond efficiently to this global challenge.

Two Empty Seats at COP17

Irina Kurilova (Northern Women)

COP17 is in full motion. Governments, international organizations, Indigenous Peoples, and civil society are discussing the future of global biodiversity policy. But two women who have worked to make the participation of Indigenous Peoples from Russia in international environmental processes possible are missing.

Daria Egereva and Natalia Leonhardt remain in detention in Russia since 17 December 2025. Their absence represents much more than two empty seats at the COP

Daria has helped Indigenous Peoples from Russia bring their voices to international climate and biodiversity negotiations. As a Co-Chair of the *International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change*, she contributed to coordinating Indigenous participation in the UN climate process, including at COP30, and has also been involved in processes under the CBD.

Natalia's work was often less visible, but no less important. She helped with the practical organization that enabled Indigenous rights defenders to travel, meet, coordinate, and participate in international processes.

Participation does not happen by itself. Daria and Natalia were part of the infrastructure that turned the right to participate into the actual possibility of being heard.

That is why their absence at COP17 raises an uncomfortable question: What does "full and effective participation" of Indigenous Peoples mean when people who help make such participation possible are deprived of their freedom?

Delegates should remember that shrinking civic space and the criminalization of Indigenous leaders and human rights defenders directly undermine the very participation that international environmental agreements seek to promote.

This is not only about who is *inside* the conference centre. It is also about who has been prevented from being there. Protecting nature must also mean protecting the people who defend it.

At least 1853 Environmental Defenders were killed in the last decade.

Leaders get killed,
while whole communities rise up
against extractivism,
plantations, megaprojects
and fortress conservation



From Recovery to Redesign
Synthetic Biology and the Future of Conservation

Joann Sy (Pollinis)

As Parties take up synthetic biology at COP17, a quiet shift is under way: synthetic biology is being reframed as a conservation tool. Yet the reframing itself is not on the table. The underlying question is rarely asked: is this the kind of conservation we want?

Conservation has traditionally rested on a simple idea: if we protect habitats and reduce the pressures on them, nature can recover. Its work has been to maintain the ecological and evolutionary processes that allow biodiversity to adapt and persist, and to direct effort and funding at the root causes of loss.

Synthetic biology starts from a different place. It treats the organism itself as the point of intervention. Instead of asking what is driving a population into decline, it asks how that population could be altered to survive or to stop causing harm. For Synthtic Biology, the answer lies in genomes and microbiomes rather than landscapes. Nature is no longer something to give space to recover, but something to be redesigned.

> Synthetic biology is being reframed as a conservation tool. Nature is no longer something that needs space to recover, but something to be redesigned

This shift rarely announces itself. It arrives in the language of solutions. The draft decision's Action Plan maps synthetic biology onto sixteen targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Benefits are recognised before they are assessed, and the Framework, built to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, becomes a justification for engineering it.

The latest draft no longer refers to "applications for conservation use", after Parties disagreed over whether to examine them. The decision on a new Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group has been postponed until after a stocktake of the Convention's work on synthetic biology. Elsewhere, references to synthetic biology have been taken out of the draft decision on invasive alien species.

Yet removing the words does not remove the framing. The debate was about *whether* to study conservation applications, not about what it means to treat them as conservation in the first place. Weighing *"potential positive and potential negative impacts"* assumes that redesigning nature is a legitimate conservation approach, and asks only whether it works. With the AHTEG postponed, there is now even less space to ask that question.

The implications are profound. When the aims of conservation are set by those who design the intervention, decisions about what nature should *become* move away from ecosystems and the communities that live with them, and towards laboratories and those who fund them. Organisms released into the wild cannot be recalled, so mistakes may not be correctable. The questions this raises concern uncertainty, irreversibility, cumulative effects, ethics and governance.

The precautionary approach, central to the Convention, exists for exactly this situation, yet even the words "the precautionary approach" were in bracketed. The language on assessment in the thematic action plan has also been weakened, even as horizon scanning and monitoring are mentioned. Anticipating new developments means little without the capacity to assess them. Some changes to the living world cannot be undone.

Synthetic biology's place in conservation should be an open question and debated openly, not a starting assumption written into procedure. What Parties decide in Yerevan will help determine whether conservation continues to work with the living world's capacity to renew itself, or sets out to redesign it.

The opinions, commentaries, and articles printed in ECO are the sole opinion of the individual authors or organisations, unless otherwise expressed.

We thank the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung for their financial support.
***Submissions** are welcome from all civil society groups.*
***Email:** lorch@ifrik.org or eco@cbd-alliance.org*

Elephant in the spotlight:

When Financial Stability Depends on Biodiversity Destruction

Audrey Irvine-Broque & Jessica Dempsey

We need to address the elephant in the room: biodiversity targets necessitate governments to halt destruction, while the rules and norms of global economic governance often pressure governments to allow biodiversity destruction.

These problems are structural in the sense that they reproduce themselves through routine responses and technical practices, rather than only misguided decisions or lack of political will. But this doesn't mean they are apolitical - far from it. Some people benefit greatly from these rules, and accumulate increasing wealth, while others face the most extreme ends of the consequences, in which their territories and ways of life are continually rendered disposable. This system also exposes governments to these pressures unequally, meaning that some governments, particularly in the Global South, face stricter constraints than others to challenge these norms. Understanding both the routine, technical elements of this system and the power dimensions that keep it in place is critical for challenging a financial system predicated on extractivism.

How do the current rules of global economic governance hamper the implementation of the Convention?

First, they can incentivize **export-oriented economic strategies** that generate short-term benefits for some, but long-term ecological degradation and instability for many others. Many countries rely on commodity exports to earn foreign currency, which they need for importing medicine, machinery or technology, as well as for repaying external debts. When fiscal problems worsen - including due to external shocks or natural disasters - governments often turn to international financial institutions for emergency support, where they are frequently encouraged to lean deeper into these export sectors to help buy back stability. This can lead to a vicious cycle, in which managing debt crises in the short-term via unsustainable resource extraction further exposes governments to vulnerability in the future.

Second, **high debt burdens**, along with norms and institutions that reward fiscal consolidation, limit investment in biodiversity protection, restoration, and transition away from destructive sectors. Credit ratings often count proactive actions to protect ecosystems as a cost, with more severe financial consequences for poorer governments. Meanwhile, race-to-the-bottom taxation, tax avoidance by extractive sectors and tax havens drain government budgets further.

*Third***,** both legal and market institutions can expose states to **financial penalties for implementing strong environmental policies**. If states signal moves away from harmful sectors, or institute stronger regulations, they can face financial penalization in the form of credit downgradings, capital flight, currency runs, or even lawsuits from international investors. All of this can dig governments into deeper financial holes, exacerbating the above problems. This can constrain policy pathways that would be otherwise aligned with the KMGBF and the Convention.

Recognizing that there are unequal dynamics does not let any government off the hook for environmental destruction, human rights violations or land dispossession that accompany resource decisions. Instead, it points to the collective responsibility to ensure that these international barriers are reformed. The power of domestic elites, industry lobbying, and regulatory capture can limit efforts to protect biodiversity and healthy enviroments. But these domestic factors also operate inside a wider international system that repeatedly narrows the space for ecologically-sound decision making.

The Convention can't unilaterally reform these rules. But it can more clearly name the contradiction between these norms and biodiversity conservation, and undertake an agenda of work to ensure that financial system transformation is aligned with biodiversity targets.

Read more in the report
"Elephants in the room"

ECO

Volume 75, Issue 11

Saturday, 31 Oct 2026

cbd-alliance.org · linktr.ee/cbd_alliance

Closing statement

on behalf of the CBD Alliance

We warmly welcome the decision to realise the promise of Cali to operationalise the SB8J. The rights of indigenous peoples and local communities are central to the protection of biodiversity.

At the same time, the Global Review shows that the implementation of the GBF is dangerously off track. The lack of implementation on Target 22, particularly on environmental defenders, is further putting communities, territories and ecosystems at risk.

Importantly, the review has failed to address the underlying structural drivers of biodiversity loss, the elephants in the room.

The international economic and financial system compels countries in the Global South to prioritise financial stability and debt servicing at the expense of sustainable development, resulting in increased extractivism.

Public and private capital flows into destructive extractivism remain unregulated. Corporate legal regimes allow investors and companies to sue governments for billions. simply for strengthening biodiversity regulation.

Marketisation of biodiversity through offsets, credits and other mechanisms turn living territories into tradeable assets, and create permissions to destroy. Biodiversity cannot be offset, and communities' rights cannot be traded away.

These structural drivers rest on systems of exploitation and injustice. Their roots are also colonial. Developed countries bear historical and continuing responsibility for global ecological breakdown and must pay the ecological debt owed to developing countries and their peoples. The multilateral mechanism must not become another route for extracting, digitising and commercialising genetic resources from the Global South without accountability, prior informed consent or fair and equitable benefit-sharing. Provider countries, Indigenous Peoples and local communities must have a real voice in decisions on how DSI is generated, accessed, governed and used.

Finally, climate change is accelerating biodiversity loss, through worsening fires, droughts and floods. Yet climate action itself can cause harm when it is carbon-centric, ignores biodiversity and overrides human rights. This COP could have adopted effective safeguards to ensure that mitigation action protects nature and respects human rights; unfortunately this has been postponed.

COP17 will be judged by whether it begins to confront the systems driving extinction, and whether it delivers justice to those who protect biodiversity, while bearing the greatest costs of its destruction. We call on you to close the justice gap.

The biodiversity crisis is an inequality, impunity and power crisis. Justice, equity, rights and accountability are not optional additions to implementation. They are its very foundation.