



Open letter

The CBD Alliance, through its members that are signatories to this letter, express our deep concern on the recently released job vacancy announcement for Director of Partnership and Business Engagement, Nature Action Agenda from the World Economic Forum (WEF).¹

We are extremely troubled that, while this position will be recruited by the World Economic Forum, the successful candidate will be seconded to and report directly to the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD). This undemocratically decided direct line of communication with the Executive Secretary, and the Secretariat, unfairly privileges the business sector, and would be unbalanced in comparison with major groups of rights and stakeholders involved in the CBD process including indigenous peoples and local communities, youth, women and non governmental organizations.

We are worried that this action can be understood as an attempt to circumvent existing UN restrictions on accepting direct financial contributions from the private sector.

The proposed arrangement also risks triggering conflicts of interests between the corporate membership of the WEF and the CBD Secretariat. The CBD Parties themselves have taken important measures such as the adoption of decision 14/33 on conflict of interest, and we hope to see this process move forward so the credibility of the Convention is not jeopardized.

Since the WEF describes itself as 'the International Organization for Public-Private Cooperation', this arrangement will probably also facilitate the establishment of additional Public Private Partnerships to address the demand for major projects that will affect biodiversity. Such partnerships tend to create financial dependencies of public institutions on private sector interests that often represent an obstacle to subsidy reform and strict regulations favouring business interests rather than public interests. The arrangement would indeed help to 'engage' business at COP15 but is not at all likely to further the interests of indigenous peoples and local communities and the public interest in general.

In addition, the position we make reference to, has a mandate of promoting growing business membership at the highest level possible, which will further increase the influence of large corporations in the UN system and risks undermining efforts to ensure enhanced transparency and accountability, including through the current negotiations of

¹ <https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/view/1343772863/>

an international legally-binding instrument to regulate the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises.

It is also worrying that the role description includes “representing the interest of the Executive Secretariat and convention parties with business leaders to raise ambition for the post-2020 framework”. We do not recall the Parties to the CBD providing such a mandate to the private sector or an entity such as the World Economic Forum. No entity outside the CBD structure should assume such representation, especially without the consent of the Parties.

Based on the concerns and arguments previously raised:

This recruitment process should be immediately halted until the major changes that it implies are fully put into consideration of all parties to the CBD.

We demand the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to clarify that it is a multilateral organization of States Parties and thus organizations which represent transnational business like WEF cannot be involved in employing staff “representing the interest of the Executive Secretariat and the Parties of the CBD”.

We urge the CBD Secretariat once again to ensure that there is a more balanced participation of different rights holder and stakeholder groups in all CBD processes, including in particular the processes that facilitate the development of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

Signatories:

Third World Network
Global Forest Coalition
ICCA Consortium
Econexus
Ecoropa
New Wind Association
Fundación Ambiente y Recursos Naturales - FARN
ETC Group
Friends of the Earth International
Centre for Indigenous Farming Systems / Richharia Campaign - India
Seeds Action Network - SAN - Germany
REDES-AT - Uruguay
Ethological Society of India
FIAN International
Abibiman Foundation - Ghana
Fundación CAUCE Cultura Ambiental-Causa Ecologista
Fundación Patagonia Natural
Corporate Europe Observatory
We Women Lanka
The Development Institute
MIRA Pensadoras Urbanas México
Reacción Climática
CENSAT Agua Viva Colombia

