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From COP27 on climate to COP15 on biodiversity: decisive political framings

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The 15th COP on biodiversity will follow, in a few weeks, the 27th COP on climate, the major annual moment of global environmental governance. COP15 is an event with less media attention in general, but it is nevertheless an extremely critical moment when an agreement must be reached on the framework for action for the next decade that will finally be able to halt the loss of biodiversity. In the current context of geopolitical rivalry and mistrust between countries of the South and the North, one might expect the effects of COP27 to be felt at COP15: what political impetus? Rebuilding trust or strengthening mistrust? How were the synergies or antagonisms between climate action and biodiversity action addressed? These effects will frame several issues that will be fiercely negotiated at COP15

No formal political impetus, but signals for a favorable context for cooperation

One year after the Glasgow Pact of COP26, which [for the first time in the history of the Climate Convention](#) strongly emphasized the importance of "ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems", biodiversity was the subject of numerous side events and informal discussions in Sharm el-Sheikh, and found a place in the [decision of COP27](#), notably through the explicit mention of nature-based solutions and forests. However, there was no formal political impetus from the Parties for an ambitious agreement at COP 15, which is not surprising, as many countries regularly express a principle of non-interference between the mandates of different international conventions. However, several personalities who were architects of the Paris Climate Agreement (Laurence Tubiana, Laurent Fabius, Manuel Pulgar Vidal, Christiana Figueres) took advantage of COP27 to [call](#) for COP15 on biodiversity to become an equivalent of the Paris Agreement.

The most decisive political signals were those that renewed the threads of cooperation, as was the case between the U.S. and Chinese climate envoys at COP27 (and their presidents at the G20), and a set of key announcements showing the commitment of Northern countries to financial solidarity with Southern countries. Indeed, one of the most critical parts of COP15 negotiations concerns the mobilization of resources, particularly financial resources, for biodiversity action in the South. In a manner quite similar to the discussion on climate change, the proposals for financial transfer commitments from the countries of the North to the countries of the South are answered in the negotiations on biodiversity in the same three ways.

- How can we ensure that the promises of financing will be kept to a greater extent than previously, with reference to the minimum of 100 billion dollars per year in financial transfers from the North to the South for the climate, promised in 2009 to be effective from 2020, whereas these flows have reached just over 80 billion for the last three years?
- How can we ensure that these funds are easily accessible and respond quickly to the needs of Southern countries? It is around this argument that the Chinese and especially the Brazilian proposals for the creation of an ad hoc fund for biodiversity are anchored, in addition to the Global Environment Facility, for which this is already one of the key missions.
- In any case, the investment needs for biodiversity are in fact of an order of magnitude greater than these proposed financial commitments: while the countries of the North are promising about 10 billion dollars per year, the countries of the South are talking about figures in the hundreds of billions of dollars per year.

On these different issues, COP27 has partly allowed the credibility of financial solidarity commitments to be rebuilt, even if forms of mistrust persist. The countries of the North have given credibility to the achievement of the 100 billion dollars per year by 2024, as well as the doubling of funding for adaptation. The announcements of Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs) also consolidate the credibility of the promises and in particular the accountability of the financing countries: The JETP with South Africa is one of the only initiatives resulting from COP26 in Glasgow that is so precise in terms of accountability on the implementation of the amounts promised, and the JETP with Indonesia announced at COP27 also indicates substantial amounts on the scale of a country (\$10 billion in public funding and \$10 billion in private funding) in relation to an energy transition plan.

Reform of international financial institutions in the background

More broadly, the countries of the South are also making it clear that their investment needs are enormous in order to bounce back from the series of crises that are affecting them (the socio-economic consequences of the Covid pandemic, the Russian war in Ukraine, but also the climatic disasters that are increasing in frequency and intensity), jeopardizing their trajectory of economic emergence, at the very moment when they are caught in the throes of debt and when the growth of their active population would require major investments for an industrialization pathway: the [report by Nicholas Stern, Vera Songwe and Amar Bhattacharya on this subject](#) indicates an investment need of \$2 trillion per year, at least half of which will have to come from international financing. Given the importance of ecosystem and biodiversity-based sectors, including agriculture and agribusiness, to the economic emergence trajectory of many of the poorest and most vulnerable countries, it is not surprising that these countries express needs in the hundreds of billions of dollars per year.

It is in the face of these legitimate needs that the reform dynamic of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund makes sense, in order to be able to make available amounts of such magnitude. Supported by the United States during the biannual meetings of these institutions in October 2022, fueled by the Bridgetown Agenda proposed by the Prime Minister of Barbados to address the issue of the most vulnerable, this dynamic received the formal support of the French President at the beginning of COP27, giving a date of the end of the first half of 2023 to have made rapid progress on this issue, as well as that of the G20 in Bali during the second week of the COP27.

The countries of the North and the world's largest economies have thus demonstrated their commitment to meeting these massive investment needs, which should make it possible to engage in discussions on the financing of biodiversity in a more serene manner.

Aligning global finance with biodiversity and climate and responding to the needs of Southern countries

This should also make it possible, for biodiversity as well as for climate, to put on the agenda in a more central way the question of aligning all global finance, both private and public, with climate and biodiversity objectives: as the countries of the North emphasize, the question of public transfers from the North to the South will not alone make it possible to achieve the objectives of transforming the global economy so that it is positive for nature and the climate; it is the entirety of financial flows that must be reoriented. But without the reform momentum of the World Bank and IMF, this insistence on reorienting all finance could have looked like a delaying tactic: not only must the trillions of dollars of global finance be reoriented towards a decarbonized and nature-positive economy, but they must also be successfully directed towards the poorest and most vulnerable countries, where they are too rarely invested.

Finally, the countries of the planet's large forest basins also made themselves heard strongly at COP27, with the creation of an alliance nicknamed the ["OPEC of the forest"](#): the question of financing the conservation of these forests, whose value for biodiversity and climate is inestimable and irreplaceable, was also raised, in particular by the French president who announced a ["Positive Conservation Partnership"](#). This type of partnership aims to meet the specific investment needs of local communities and indigenous populations who exercise a form of stewardship of these large ecosystems, and to prevent them from turning to extractive forms or being swept away by them. These countries, and in particular Gabon which wishes to continue the conversation on forests beyond COP15 with a One Forest Summit in Libreville in the first half of 2023, can play a pivotal role in the agreement at COP15 at the crossroads between the ambition to protect biodiversity and the mobilization of resources for the countries of the South.

The decision to create an *ad hoc* fund for climate-related losses and damages, between trust and mistrust

The most striking fact of COP27 was the European Union reaching out to the countries of the South, by accepting the creation of an *ad hoc* fund on loss and damage, while indicating that other options seemed more relevant and effective. By accepting this request from the G77, the European Union made it possible to unblock an agreement, followed by the United States. This symbolic act of a willingness to restore trust between the South and the North is also one of the key signals of cooperation, very positive for the negotiating atmosphere at COP15. However, despite this very strong gesture, the last days of COP27 were also marked by significant signs of mistrust: will this fund really be replenished? Is Europe trying to divide the G77 and China by talking about new distributions of countries that are supposed to contribute and countries that are supposed to benefit from this fund?

Finally, the shadow cast by this decision will also affect the detail of the negotiations on resource mobilization at COP15, where one of the key arguments against the creation of an *ad hoc* fund for biodiversity is that the time frame for its creation and establishment is too long in the face of the urgency of the needs: COP27 ended up promising a fast-track process for the creation of a new fund, capable of intervening very quickly. Discussions at COP15 will inevitably be affected by this precedent, although it remains important that they focus on the issues of efficiency, access and justice, for which the option of reforming existing funds deserves to be considered as much as that of creating a new fund ([Iddri, 2022](#)).

Increasing use of carbon offsets: what risks for biodiversity?

One of the most risky points for biodiversity in the climate discussion comes from the fact that many actors (companies, local authorities) who have made commitments to carbon neutrality are increasingly calling on voluntary carbon credits to compensate for the difficulties they see in a deep decarbonization of their economic activity. The land sector and ecosystems are thus seen as carbon sinks that could be used: this could be beneficial to biodiversity protection or pro-nature transition projects in agricultural and forestry areas. However, this dynamic carries risks, if the agricultural and forestry sectors are pulled by this opportunity towards models that store carbon but have deleterious effects on biodiversity ([Iddri, 2019](#); [Iddri, 2021](#)).

On this subject, the [report of the UN Secretary General's Panel on Zero Net Emission Commitments by Non-State Actors](#) makes it clear that these carbon credits will have to be accounted for specifically and will not compensate for insufficient decarbonization efforts: they will come as additional efforts, as a positive action on the part of these non-state actors to help other territories move towards neutrality. Above all, this report indicates that these carbon credits will not only have to have a high level of integrity in terms of carbon (prohibiting double counting, ensuring credibility, additionality and avoiding the risk of non-permanence), but they will also have to ensure that they do not have negative effects on biodiversity and local communities, and as much as possible to have positive effects, in a logic of multiple benefits (biodiversity, social) of which carbon is only one component. The discussions on Article 6 of the Paris Agreement on this subject, but also those on the work program of the scientific and technical bodies and the implementation of the Climate Convention on agriculture (known as [Koronivia](#) and henceforth Sharm el-Sheikh), do not seem to be as decisive, but they must also be watched closely so that they define safeguards to ensure that the transformations of the agricultural and forestry sectors towards resilience and decarbonization are also positive for biodiversity.

Furthermore, it is extremely important that national biodiversity and climate strategies, responding to both the UNFCCC and CBD frameworks, be subject to synchronized reporting schedules ([Iddri, 2022](#)), to increase the

chances that national biodiversity plans and strategies will carry more political weight in national policymaking, and that the issues of synergies and antagonisms between climate action and biodiversity action will be well addressed together at that level.

Balance between justice and efficiency in the processes and in the expected results

In the end, COP27 was essential in that it strongly emphasized a feeling of imbalance in the political attention that was given since the Paris Agreement and at COP 26 on the issue of mitigation ambition, and too little on the other essential dimensions for the countries of the South: adaptation and North/South solidarity must be understood as being part of the same degree of priority of the ambition of the Paris Agreement. It is essential that the atmosphere and the framing of COP15 negotiations be balanced in terms of defining an ambition that covers not only the preservation of biodiversity but also the issues of sustainable use (Iddri, 2022) and access and benefit sharing from the use of genetic resources. The way in which negotiations are conducted, listening to the needs of countries in the South, support to help them express or simply define their needs (in particular their financing needs for biodiversity), the attention given to the inclusiveness of the different visions (for example, the African vision of biodiversity protection expressed by David Obura and his co-authors¹, or that of indigenous peoples and local communities) are usual leitmotifs at the CBD, but they will be absolutely essential ingredients in a geopolitical context where trust between South and North is only partially restored by the signals given at COP27, and where COP15 is a new opportunity to strengthen mutual trust.

¹ <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.abh2234>

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