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Lay the groundwork for COP16: A crucial juncture for the “Biodiversity Plan”

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As we approach COP16 in October 2024 in Cali, Colombia, the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) is at a critical juncture. Since its adoption at COP15 nearly two years ago, there have been several positive signs indicating progress and obvious effects of the global framework, at least in terms of preliminary dynamics and initiated discussions. However, the journey is fraught with increasing tensions between the transformational approach required to meet GBF goals and targets and the structural parameters that resist change, such as economic or institutional structures of food systems. Implementing these targets as a package requires shared efforts among and within countries but at the same time a more focused and contrasted approach to address the most pressing (and respective) challenges. With less than six years to go, how to make COP16 and other significant 2024 milestones matter to achieve the 2030 targets and to put the world on track to attain 2050 goals?

Setting the stage for collective, targeted, and aligned ambition

The success of COP16 will heavily depend on the collective ambition demonstrated by countries. The effects of the GBF are already more pronounced compared to the post-Aichi period. During that time (2010-2020), most countries submitted their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) as late as 2016, leading to asynchronism and misalignment with the 2020 Aichi targets. Encouragingly, most countries are now actively working on their NBSAPs, following the guidelines from COP15 for whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches. This momentum needs to be supported to ensure the majority of NBSAPs are submitted by COP16 or, at the latest, by 2025.

Developing a well-aligned and ambitious NBSAP using participatory and inclusive methods takes time—as of June 2024, [only nine NBSAPs have been submitted](#). To keep political momentum and make COP16 impactful, it is then essential to recognize three levels of ambition that could contribute to its success:

1. the number of countries that have submitted national targets (no national target has been reported on the [online reporting tool to date](#)), which serves as a minimum measure of collective ambition, especially if NBSAPs are still in progress;¹
2. the number of countries that have completed or are in the process of finalizing their NBSAPs;
3. the quality and methods used: were the NBSAPs or national targets created with significant input from key stakeholders and the civil society? Are different sectors, ministries and agencies involved with clear responsibilities defined? Was there a dialogue on how to implement these plans, especially via a biodiversity finance plan? Essentially, do the submissions reflect the GBF balance of principles and pillars, such as addressing direct drivers, maintaining nature's contributions to people, and outlining the necessary means and tools to achieve these objectives?

Implementing and monitoring concrete measures and actions should happen in parallel, given the short window of time. Enacting biodiversity regulations and laws, and other instruments to integrate biodiversity concerns in national policies today is essential to avoid delays and inconsistencies. It will be of crucial importance to focus on the announcement and follow-through of specific actions to support these national goals, learning from the gaps in the implementation of the Aichi targets.² COP16 will also have to adopt the procedures for the global review process,³ set to begin as early as 2025 to culminate at COP17 in 2026; this process aims to address gaps in implementation and ambition. Civil society and the scientific community should be mobilized immediately to act as watchdogs at both national and international levels.

We must indeed acknowledge the severe and recent tensions surrounding actions, even before the submission of NBSAPs and national targets. For instance, the EU grapples with agricultural and restoration policies, and biodiversity represents one of the main losers of the undermined Green Deal. The Netherlands is struggling with the nitrogen crisis.⁴ Emerging countries with biodiversity hotspots like Brazil deal with the drivers and effects of deforestation,⁵ on their population, regional climate, and biodiversity, and thus resilience. And least developed countries and small island developing countries with increasing vulnerabilities.⁶ Each country decides how it will contribute to global targets, reflecting different biodiversity challenges and impacts across regions. Therefore, it is essential to analyze the national targets and NBSAPs based on the most significant pressures present in specific territories, while considering the development or maintenance of their socio-economic activities and needs to ensure a just and supported transition.⁷

At the international level, COP16 provides an opportunity to collectively address those key issues of appreciating the level of "ambition". What would "nature-positive" long-term development pathways look like, integrating biodiversity as a pillar within societal frameworks? What does this mean for key sectoral transitions, especially in the agrifood and forestry sectors? How can these pathways be implemented in line with critical elements of the framework, such as the growing recognition of necessary equity and inclusivity at the CBD and elsewhere? In this sense, ongoing reflections could support this approach, for example, around the issue of [bioeconomy](#), ensuring the place and value of biodiversity are adequately considered. Similarly, synergies and tradeoffs⁸ with the second round of climate Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) should not be overlooked.

Finance as the preeminent challenge

Mobilizing resources for biodiversity and the implementation of the GBF remains critical and will also be a strong component of the dynamic regarding the ambition needed for COP16. Since COP15, several developments and reports⁹ have highlighted a growing awareness of the need for an integrated and holistic approach to resource mobilization, to align all financial flows (international, national, public, private) with biodiversity targets. This is crucial, especially for developing countries balancing limited resources between debt service payments, climate adaptation, biodiversity protection, and other socio-economic needs like infrastructures, health, and education. COP16 will represent a milestone on the road to the first deadline of the GBF, in 2025, and the 20 billion target that the international community agreed upon two years ago. During the intersessions last month, an [NGO campaign](#) was launched to underscore this target, and developing countries will be particularly attentive to whether developed countries meet this goal as a group of developing countries formed a [Ministerial Alliance for Nature Finance](#) last December. Consequently, negotiations will be challenging, as for many the signals during the first two years of implementation will determine if progress is encouraging.

Another key issue is the channel of disbursement for North-South financial flows. The new GBF Fund, the compromise adopted at COP15 and quickly established by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), has seen positive updates, including accelerated and simplified procedures.¹⁰ However, the tension between fragmentation and specialization of funds is anticipated to be a key topic at COP16, as extensive discussions on this issue took place in Nairobi last month. Based on the [work of an Advisory Committee](#), the [current negotiation document](#) includes three options: creating a completely new fund at COP16, launching negotiations to consider this for COP17, or maintaining the COP15 compromise. In any case, the efficiency, accessibility, allocation of these funds, among other challenges, remain crucial and should be thoroughly discussed. For instance, mobilizing private finance through those funds remains ambiguous and only a small portion of funds are directed toward Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs).¹¹

Two other major events will occur during the fall of 2024: the annual meetings in Washington, at the same time as COP16, where the reform of international financial institutions will be crucial for biodiversity finance, and the Finance in Common Summit, where public development banks could and should discuss how they plan to further align with the GBF to mobilize more resources. Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), which adopted common principles last December, will present their initial results on operationalizing those principles at COP16 to better track "nature-positive" finance. Tracking biodiversity finance is becoming increasingly important for both public and private actors and the definition of what constitutes biodiversity finance is becoming more significant. This topic is thus subject to negotiations.

The emphasis of COP16 may be on North-South financial flows, but there is still a lot of work and follow-up to be done on resource mobilization as a whole, and the strategy will also be updated at COP16. For this, we can refer to

the ["10 Key Points for Financing Nature"](#) endorsed by around 40 countries, including developing nations. This vision addresses international flows as well as the role of international financial institutions (IMF, MDBs), the mobilization of the private sector, domestic resources, harmful subsidies, and other elements. Another important deadline is the identification of harmful subsidies by 2025 by all countries to the CBD, and discussions will need to be held on this subject, also to avoid raising inequalities while reforming or eliminating those subsidies.

Champions should amplify biodiversity's influence to bolster COP16's outcomes

With only a few months before COP16 and a hectic agenda, several key political opportunities exist to boost the GBF. Developed countries should lead by example, not only by providing financial resources to developing countries but also by setting ambitious national targets. Finance ministers should send clear signals during the annual meetings, demonstrating their commitment to resource mobilization. Contributions to the GBF Fund, discussions around the GEF reform, and signals from MDBs are also crucial. Taking stock of the "10 Key Points for Financing Nature", led by Ecuador, Gabon, Maldives and the United Kingdom, at COP16 will be essential. Continuing mobilization, especially developing national biodiversity finance plans, can provide insights into the resources allocated for GBF implementation and identify gaps.

Emerging countries, particularly China, should continue their leadership. China, as the COP15 President, has already communicated its NBSAP but can play a significant role in mobilizing other developing countries to present ambitious plans (that could more quickly mobilize resources, with deals such as Positive Conservation Partnerships and other targeted multilateral deals).¹²

We should also look for the leadership of country pairs like Germany and Colombia, and France and Costa Rica, who have launched their respective accelerators ([NBSAP Accelerator Partnership](#) and the [High Ambition Coalition for Nature & People](#)). Brazil, leveraging its G20 Presidency, and Colombia need to collaborate and launch initiatives, especially on deforestation and agri-food issues, linking climate and biodiversity, working through COP16 to COP30 (and potentially COP17 if a host candidate emerges). This period will underscore the intrinsic links between climate and biodiversity, highlighting the connection, even more at the national level, between NBSAPs and NDCs.

Colombia's presidency could spearhead these different dialogues before and during COP16, mobilizing its vision of "making peace with nature" and promoting initiatives for ownership such as country platforms¹³ for finance, which could be replicated globally with a strong focus on biodiversity.

The GBF has created an undeniable effect and now is not the time to let momentum wane amid multiple crises. Ambitious countries need to show alignment with the GBF, but success will depend on the method. The challenge is ensuring biodiversity is seen as an enabler of development, not a competitor.

¹ Decision 15/6 "Requests Parties not in a position to submit their revised national biodiversity strategies and action plans by the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to communicate national targets..."

² <https://www.nature.com/articles/s44185-024-00039-5>

³ Policy Brief Mai 2024 – Global review

⁴ <https://www.iddri.org/en/publications-and-events/blog-post/no-deal-farming-lessons-netherlands>

⁵ <https://research.wri.org/gfr/latest-analysis-deforestation-trends>

[6 https://www.nature.com/articles/s44185-023-00023-5](https://www.nature.com/articles/s44185-023-00023-5)

[7 https://www.globalgovernanceproject.org/actions-on-nature-require-actions-on-economy-and-society/david-obura/](https://www.globalgovernanceproject.org/actions-on-nature-require-actions-on-economy-and-society/david-obura/)

[8 https://www.science.org/doi/abs/10.1126/science.adj6171](https://www.science.org/doi/abs/10.1126/science.adj6171)

[9 UNEP \(2023\). State of Nature Finance.](#)

[10 https://www.iddri.org/en/publications-and-events/blog-post/international-funding-biodiversity-where-do-we-stand-dedicated](https://www.iddri.org/en/publications-and-events/blog-post/international-funding-biodiversity-where-do-we-stand-dedicated)

[11 https://social.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/n2402291EN.pdf](https://social.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/n2402291EN.pdf)

[12 https://www.iddri.org/en/publications-and-events/blog-post/what-have-jetps-delivered-so-far-lessons-ongoing-processes](https://www.iddri.org/en/publications-and-events/blog-post/what-have-jetps-delivered-so-far-lessons-ongoing-processes)

[13 https://www.e3g.org/news/destination-unknown-navigating-the-future-of-development-and-climate-action-with-country-platforms/](https://www.e3g.org/news/destination-unknown-navigating-the-future-of-development-and-climate-action-with-country-platforms/)

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