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COP16: springtime for biodiversity?

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In a few days now, Colombia will host COP16 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), under the presidency of its government, in Cali (21 October-1 November). This is a key milestone in the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF): described as a pivotal agreement for international biodiversity governance, particularly because of the ambition of its goals and targets aimed at halting and reversing the biodiversity loss, it has actually been facing numerous challenges and adverse political decisions since its adoption in December 2022. Against this backdrop, this blog post sets out the priorities identified by IDDRI for strengthening the international momentum and adopting key mechanisms needed to implement the GBF.

Planning and implementation: are the first buds promising?

Implementation of the Kunming-Montreal framework is still largely in the planning phase, with only around 20 countries having submitted their national strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) and around 60 having set national targets. These figures, which are [still insufficient](#) to get a global overview, already reveal gaps in alignment between national targets and global targets.¹ In addition, it will be crucial to examine whether national targets and NBSAPs achieve a satisfactory level of sectoral integration (mainstreaming) ([Cardona Santos et al., 2023](#)); COP16 should provide an opportunity to call for this aspect to be strengthened.

It is indeed essential to preserve the credibility of the GBF, which is based on its ability to encourage action on the right scale and nature for biodiversity, and on the concrete results of the sum of these actions in improving the state of biodiversity. Although progress in implementing these policies may seem slow, they provide a foundation on which to build a long-term vision and actions. COP16 will need to support this momentum and nurture emerging initiatives, while recognizing that efforts will need to be intensified in the years and decades ahead. It will also be important to [assess the success and failures of effective implementation](#), in order to learn the lessons of the last two years. This is what will need to be actively prepared from now until COP17 in 2026 for the mid-term review between 2022 and 2030 that will be discussed there.

The financing puzzle: a labyrinth with many exits

While the alignment of strategies and action plans with the GBF remains complex, financing biodiversity also has its own challenges. The negotiations will have to adopt a decision on the new resource mobilization strategy, a jigsaw puzzle in which certain pieces seem to be missing or overlapping, complicating the assembly process.

The financing needs, estimated at several hundred billion dollars a year, contrast with the resources allocated, while harmful subsidies amount to [2,600 billion dollars a year](#). This figure illustrates the scale of the challenge, exacerbated by national and international budgetary tensions² that threaten the mobilization of funds. The risk of a drop in official development assistance would further aggravate the situation—and mutual trust between countries—adding further obstacles.

In this context, negotiations are often blocked by seemingly inflexible positions. However, COP16 could be the stage for innovative solutions, with an approach centered on the needs of countries, particularly developing countries, based on financing plans consistent with the NBSAPs. Overcoming the obstacles will require collective action, such as the [10 points put forward by the United Kingdom](#) offering a comprehensive deal on these financing issues, rather than isolated initiatives. Initiatives such as the [Tropical Forest Forever Facility \(TFFF\)](#) or biodiversity credits point the way to additional sources of funding, but will not solve the financing puzzle on their own.

It is essential to think about how the financial instruments fit together: how do they complement each other, what are their limits, and where could there be further innovation? [Negotiations on the resource mobilization strategy and on multilateral funds](#) should aim to maximize the impact of each tool and ensure overall coherence. Discussions on the effectiveness, accessibility and complementarity of multilateral funds, such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the recent Global Biodiversity Framework Fund, created within the GEF, will be central to COP16. Although modest in volume, these funds can be improved to support developing countries ([IDDRI, 2024](#)).

Will an agreement on digital sequence information be finally reached?

Another important issue that will be addressed in Cali, and [which could yield significant benefits](#) depending on the formula chosen, is the use of information derived from the digital sequencing of genetic resources. Despite the

opportunities that this technology represents for science and research, it raises [complex questions](#) about how to effectively and equitably redistribute the benefits derived from the use of these resources. The type of contributions (voluntary or mandatory) from companies (or certain sectors) that benefit from the exploitation of this data, and the introduction of a fund for this 'digital biodiversity' will no doubt be hotly debated. Questions remain, in particular as to how this mechanism will be set up. If voluntary contributions are chosen as the main mechanism, will this be sufficient to really redistribute the benefits? We need to ensure that the solutions adopted do not leave developing countries with empty promises, and that the benefits actually contribute to financing biodiversity.

Strengthening accountability

Another key issue is the accountability of countries, but also of all stakeholders, for the commitments made under the GBF. As we approach the start of the global review, it is essential that these review mechanisms are strengthened. COP16 must lay the foundations for a transparent and inclusive process, ensuring that governments and those involved in implementation, particularly businesses (which in some countries, such as the European Union and China, are also subject to enhanced accountability obligations)³, are able to identify the shortcomings and key transformations that need to be implemented for the second period of the agreement ([IDDRI, 2024](#)). These mechanisms will be essential to ensure that NBSAPs do not remain mere promises but are translated into concrete actions.

Involving the whole of society in transforming economies

In addition to governments, civil society and the private sector have a fundamental role to play in the success of the GBF. COP16 will therefore be a key moment for better integrating all these players. The aim is to transform the global economy so that it truly benefits the ecosystems on which it depends. The momentum is not confined to the negotiating rooms: outside, progress is being made, particularly with the [deployment of tools](#) to measure the impacts and dependence of companies on nature. The increased participation expected in Cali is especially significant given that COP16 is not a 'signing-agreement COP', as was the case for COP15. This context provides an opportunity to mobilize stakeholders and, in particular, to advance thinking on transitions at sectoral level, despite the expected postponement of the adoption of a [CBD's long-term strategic approach to mainstreaming, launched at COP14](#). In addition, bioeconomy could emerge as an important topic in the discussions, in particular as a result of the recent reflections conducted within the framework of the G20 under the Brazilian presidency, aimed at making investments in areas of high biodiversity value attractive to the financial sector. Although this subject is not, a priori, one of COP16's official priorities, participants could take an interest in it, in order to question its potential contribution to the GBF and to align emerging initiatives with biodiversity goals.

Climate and biodiversity: increasingly intertwined agendas on the road to climate COP30

While international discussions on the climate often attract the most attention, it is increasingly clear that the [challenges linked to biodiversity loss can no longer be dissociated from the challenges of the climate crisis](#), particularly in terms of social justice and achieving a good quality of life for all. COP16 should provide an opportunity to strengthen the synergies between the two agendas, and above all to promote the joint implementation of climate strategies (NDCs) and NBSAPs, in the context of the political build-up to COP30, where forest protection and its financing will be a particular focus of the Brazilian Presidency. The coordination efforts between Bogota and Brasilia on climate-biodiversity issues in Latin America could illustrate this dynamic, with [Colombia pushing for joint national](#)

[contributions on these two strategic fronts](#), and promoting the positive investment plan for climate and nature, in relation to its peace agreement, as an example of a 'country platform' making it possible to coordinate the interventions of public donors and private investors. The Ocean ([IDDRI, 2024](#)), which will be at the heart of the United Nations Conference on the Ocean in Nice in June 2025, is also at the crossroads of biodiversity and climate issues.

Colombia: a key role in advancing dialogue and negotiations

Colombia has made biodiversity a central focus of its national policy, promoting an approach based on equity and co-construction with indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants and local communities, under the theme 'Make Peace with Nature'. As the host of COP16, Colombia has a particular responsibility not only to put forward its own national narrative, but also to play a role in facilitating and catalyzing international discussions.

With the presence of Latin American and African Heads of State expected in Cali, Colombia is in a strategic position to encourage a collective vision of biodiversity and climate issues, and to ensure that COP16 is a decisive step towards more ambitious and coordinated commitments on the international stage, as well as in the search for conditions for effective implementation of the GBF.

¹ The CBD Secretariat has published an [analysis](#) of the targets submitted via the online reporting [tool](#), and WWF provides its own tool for tracking NBSAPs and national targets.

² In 2023-2024, for example: [France & European Union](#) ; [Scotland](#) ; [Australia](#) ; [New Zealand](#) ; [Mexico](#) .

³ See <https://www.esgtoday.com/china-stock-exchanges-announce-mandatory-sustainability-reporting-requirements-for-listed-companies/> and <https://www.china-briefing.com/news/china-releases-esg-reporting-standards-for-businesses/#:~:text=China%20released%20a%20new%20set,support%20sustainable%20development%20goals%20nationwide>

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