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Supporting the global review of the CBD: a key mechanism to enhance efforts

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International biodiversity governance, much like other global arenas, seeks to balance universality with flexibility, enabling countries to contribute to shared goals while considering unique circumstances. In an era where environmental cooperation faces significant hurdles and elusive transformative change, supporting emerging global innovations (IDDRI, 2025) is more critical than ever. The first global biodiversity review exemplifies this effort. Anchored in principles of transparency and responsibility, it involves a technical assessment over the next 2 years, and, hopefully, a political phase at COP17 to strengthen an underdeveloped accountability. Inspired by the climate Global Stocktake (GST), the review must learn from the GST limits to ensure transformative impact. As COP16 continues in Rome in February after it had to stop in Cali in early November, countries have yet to reach a consensus on critical issues. This includes the modalities of the review needed to showcase progress, identifying gaps to achieve 2030 targets and charting pathways to realize the 2050 goals. This blog post suggests avenues for a purpose-oriented, multi-stakeholder, and multi-evidence-based review to support implementation and enhance efforts if 2050 goals stay out of reach.

The opportunity (and necessity) of a global review that can strengthen accountability, trust, and the definition of concrete solutions

Since countries hold sovereignty over their natural resources (article 3 of the 1992 CBD Treaty), ensuring sufficient progress without being prescriptive is a complex challenge. How to ensure that COP17 in 2026 produces tangible recommendations for the next phase of action (2026-2030) in this context? An "honest and constructive assessment" is crucial to restore confidence in these processes, especially 10 years after the adoption of major innovative international commitments such as the Paris Agreement and the SDGs (IDDRI, 2025), and in the context of a perfect storm for multilateralism (IDDRI, 2025).

Identifying progress and understanding blockers and enablers within the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) is essential to addressing obstacles that can be removed through its own mechanisms (COP and other bodies' decisions), issuing calls to other actors and forums (for example financial actors and funders), and creating partnerships if relevant (not only between Parties, but also with Non-State Actors [NSAs]). Forward-looking recommendations should be developed to guide future action and policies and sustain a sense of solidarity among countries and NSAs to create a positive ambition cycle (IDDRI, 2024).

To make the GBF transparency and responsibility mechanism operational, Parties to the CBD must adopt working modalities for this process. At COP16 in Cali, major sticking points revolved around its governance–striking a balance between ensuring it is open and inclusive while remaining Party-led and non-intrusive. Another challenge was integrating multiple types of dialogues,1 and determining criteria for robust and legitimate sources to be incorporated into the global report and review. An issue hardly addressed is how the global review will result in tangible follow-up and specific COP decisions that could effectively enable a 'ratcheting' process. It will be helpful to draw lessons from the success and shortcomings of the GST's aftermath, particularly in terms of its uptake and potential to drive greater ambition and implementation, in further developing the CBD global review. The challenges of translating the GST's conclusions into actionable engagement strategies, as seen during COP29 where financing debates delayed progress, underscores the need for a more strategic and coordinated approach to ensure its impact.

Science-driven and concrete solutions: including diverse perspectives and the latest science

Many organizations are planning to assess progress or to produce recommendations for strengthening the implementation of the GBF. Initial lessons from assessing the extent to which the collective ambitions of Parties and NSAs are sufficient for achieving the 2050 GBF goals (see Kok *et al.*, 2024 for an analysis of the potential impact of a fully implemented GBF) will be crucial to inform the global review. Recent and upcoming studies, including the latest reports from IPBES and other scientific and technical reports and articles contributing to a 'biodiversity gap analysis' (like the UNEP *Emissions Gap Report*), will provide valuable insights. It is also important to consider reports from on-the-ground actors (like the Local Biodiversity Outlook reports) and those impacted by biodiversity loss or the measures implemented to address it or sectoral and thematic reports (the FAO could report on transformative pathways for 'nature-positive' agriculture like the IEA reports on pathways towards net zero).

These contributions will feed the global review, ensuring it is comprehensive and informed by the latest scientific and technical knowledge, as well as practical experiences from various stakeholders.

The importance of inclusive and informed dialogues

Procedural equity is paramount, as a necessary (but not sufficient) condition of the process ownership (IDDRI, 2025). While a new body for representing Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) was established at COP16, all voices–IPLCs, underrepresented Parties, smaller NGOs and businesses, vulnerable populations–must be constructively heard and proactively supported in old and new processes like the global review.

Posing the right framing and questions is essential. A technical advisory group is likely to be formed after the Rome session to oversee the scientific and technical work. Major stakeholder groups must also be mobilized, in the advisory group and throughout the process–whether by thematic areas like conservation, finance, sustainable use, or benefit-sharing and/or by sectors. For instance, identifying and overcoming barriers hindering sustainable practices in businesses is a critical area of focus. Key questions that could guide the process (both the technical global report and the technical dialogue) should not only focus on the progress achieved and the identified gaps but also on ways to fill those gaps at the global level. Although it is agreed that the review will not address specific countries, similar issues relevant for smaller groups of countries will need to come up in the analysis to be relevant and actionable for Parties. For example: What capacities or technologies are lacking the most globally or regionally and are there practices that could be scaled up? What are the barriers to achieving sustainable agricultural transformation and what tools and incentives are most effective in achieving this? How can financial flows be redirected toward practices that support biodiversity-friendly outcomes, particularly in sectors like forestry and agriculture?

This could be the subject of technical dialogue(s) in 2026–if agreed upon at the COP in Rome–following the production of the technical written assessment (the global report). These dialogues must be adopted to ensure the process follows the GBF's "whole-of-society" approach, enabling the inclusion of diverse perspectives and preventing the oversight of key elements that could otherwise hinder a comprehensive and impactful review. Constructive hindsight on similar innovative processes that were organized, for instance for the GST technical dialogues, can inform the organization of such dialogue(s) (Winkler, H. & Akhtar, F., 2025).

The COP17 Armenian Presidency could also choose to orchestrate the political "high level" discussion around the outputs of the process and consider a follow-up process in 2027 to accelerate the implementation of the identified transformations. In essence, the global review could be a cornerstone for the CBD's efforts to drive progress and must not be overlooked as it offers a critical opportunity to strengthen dialogue and coherence in an increasingly fragmented world.

Creating an informal "community of review"

To facilitate informal dialogues and voluntarily inform the global review, we invite all stakeholders and experts with insights to express their interest in being updated or involved to register here. IDDRI and PBL are committed to mobilizing and engaging stakeholders and experts on these issues as part of their analysis to inform the global review. Our project will provide an opportunity to further contribute to the discussion during the next 2 years.

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Many types of dialogues have been organized or considered these last few years, including *regional or subregional dialogues* to exchange experience and lessons by country representatives, a global “open-ended forum” piloted before Cali’s COP16 and which could become an *“interregional dialogue”*, and the potential new “technical dialogue” of the global review.

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