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The biodiversity Global Review at COP17: what to know and how to make it count

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The Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) sets global targets to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. The question now is how implementation is progressing, and how the international community should respond if it is not on track. The first Global Review, an ongoing process culminating at COP17, is designed to address this challenge. This blog post examines what the Global Review is, what can be expected from its first iteration, drawing on key findings from our recent *Study*.

Not just a report but a mechanism for continuous improvement taking shape

The Global Review is designed as a collective assessment mechanism under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to assess global progress in implementing the GBF, with two iterations (leading up to COP17, and then to COP19 for the second Global Review) before 2030. It brings together national reports, global indicators and other scientific and technical inputs to provide an overall picture of implementation. At its core, the Global Review functions as a diagnosis tool: it helps identify where progress is happening, where it is lagging, and what challenges are emerging across countries and stakeholders. Its findings are expected to inform discussions and possibly further action.

At the same time, the Global Review should be understood as a process in the making, and as part of a broader collective learning effort under the CBD. The challenge is not only to produce a robust assessment (called the “global report”), but to progressively learn how to connect diagnosis with action. In that sense, the Global Review can be seen as a governance mechanism under construction, whose role could expand over time to support continuous improvement, coordination and more effective collective responses. This implies that its first iteration should not be judged as a one-off exercise, but as a foundation to build upon.

Options to translate assessment into action and cooperation

A major step forward for the first Global Review is the submission of 130 national reports.1 Together, they provide unprecedented evidence, combining quantitative data with qualitative insights on challenges and needs. This evidence, however, remains uneven and complex to interpret, given differences in reporting, data quality and the need to integrate multiple sources. The Review should therefore not be expected to determine conclusively whether the GBF is “on track”. Its main value lies in helping to identify emerging patterns, gaps and challenges.

This diagnostic function is likely to reveal different types of gaps, both in ambition and implementation, requiring tailored responses.

Sectoral dynamics will be central, as key drivers of biodiversity loss lie in sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, infrastructure, and energy. The Review can help highlight inconsistencies (for example, progress on protected areas alongside continued ecosystem pressure from agriculture, mining or infrastructure) and open space for more structured discussions on sectoral transitions, both within and outside the CBD, bringing together key producer and consumer countries within specific sectors or along value chains, implying sectoral international organizations, etc. It could also support the emergence of coalitions of countries willing to move forward on sensitive issues, for instance on targeted types of pollution or specific sectoral pressures. This may be particularly relevant in sectors that are major drivers of biodiversity loss (such as chemicals or industrial systems), where technical and political discussions need to be better articulated, as transitions are both economically demanding and politically difficult. Such initiatives could help turn the findings of the Global Review into more targeted and actionable pathways for change.

The Review is also expected to highlight **structural constraints**, including limited financial resources, fragmented access to funding, and capacity or data challenges. It could help find solutions to these needs, for instance through the development of country platforms, i.e. platforms where a country’s needs for a sustainable development pathway are highlighted (public policies, local funding, international funding, etc.) and where stakeholders providing solutions to those needs are coordinated. The Review may also help make visible key macroeconomic and financial

constraints such as unsustainable levels of debt, which put additional strain on some country's limited fiscal space. While these issues cannot be addressed solely within the Convention, the Global Review could signal the need for engagement from other international processes and institutions (e.g. IMF and the World Bank), and encourage coherent responses across fora.

The findings can also be interpreted through a **target-based perspective**, with a granular understanding of gaps on each of the 23 targets of the GBF. For example, targets related to protected areas may show progress in quantitative terms, while raising challenges related to governance, equity or effectiveness (Immerzeel et al., forthcoming, 2026). Others, such as those related to ecosystem services, may suffer from lower visibility, weaker data or limited integration into sectoral policies. Highlighting these differences can help orient more targeted forms of cooperation and exchange. It can also provide useful guidance and signals for a range of actors, including international cooperation actors, implementation partners, existing initiatives (such as accelerators), and the civil society by helping identify where implementation is already advancing and where additional efforts may be most needed (including on the targets themselves). For instance, in the case of protected areas, this could translate into more focused dialogues or support initiatives aimed at strengthening management or governance practices, equity considerations or long-term financing.

From findings to collective action at COP17

The key challenge for COP17 will be to translate the Global Review's findings into clear signals that guide action. COP decisions can play a central role by signaling priority areas, shaping the narrative around progress, and encouraging follow-up through partnerships, coalitions, and high-level initiatives. This also raises a political tension: whether to explicitly address the economic drivers of biodiversity loss and pair them with opportunities and solution-oriented pathways, as was done for climate change at COP28, where the call to transition away from fossil fuels was paired with global energy targets resulting from the first Global Stocktake, or to prioritize consensus. Ultimately, the added value of the Global Review may lie less in general calls for increased ambition than in enabling more targeted, differentiated, and actionable responses across sectors, targets, and actors. COP17 and both technical and political dialogues organized before then (see Figure) could therefore focus not only on assessing progress, but on creating the conditions for more effective follow-up, including through international cooperation and stronger links with other key coordination processes and organizations.

See Figure on How the Global Review can inform action, key lenses for action and responses

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Only 120 reports, submitted before the February deadline (as set by the COP15 decision in 2022) will be taken into account for the Global Review.

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