

UN Biodiversity Conference Highlights: Tuesday, 25 February 2025

Delegates met in Rome to resume the UN Biodiversity Conference, including the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 16) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the 11th Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CP MOP 11), and the fifth Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol (NP MOP 5) on access and benefit-sharing (ABS). The first part of the conference, held from 21 October to 2 November 2024, in Cali, Colombia, was suspended due to loss of quorum during difficult negotiations on resource mobilization, with a number of decisions left pending.

Plenary addressed items on resource mobilization, the monitoring framework of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), mechanisms for planning, monitoring, reporting, and review (PMRR), including the global review of collective progress in GBF implementation, and the financial mechanism. Over lunchtime, a signing ceremony took place to launch the Cali Fund for the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources (DSI). High-level informal consultations on resource mobilization were held in the evening.

Opening Plenary

Statements: Opening the resumed session of COP 16 and CP MOP 11, President Susana Muhamad, Colombia, emphasized the need to send a strong signal and deliver on the GBF, a “public policy with the power to unite the world, especially in the current divided geopolitical landscape.” NP MOP 5 President Nneka Nicholas, Antigua and Barbuda, noted the only substantive item left for NP MOP 5 to consider, on DSI.

Delivering a message on behalf of UN Secretary-General António Guterres, Elizabeth Mrema, Deputy Executive Director, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), underlined that the GBF is “a plan to rescue humanity from a crisis of our own making,” and called on delegates to find common ground, noting that “nature cannot wait.” CBD Executive Secretary Astrid Schomaker highlighted achievements made during the first session of COP 16, including the establishment of a Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j) for matters related to Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs), and encouraged delegates to “complete the unfinished business of Cali here in Rome.”

Organizational Matters: Following confirmation that the Bureau continues to serve, delegates adopted the annotated agendas ([CBD/COP/16/Add.4](#), [CBD/CP/MOP/11/1/Add.4](#), and [CBD/NP/MOP/5/1/Add.4](#)) and organization of work and scenario note for the sessions ([CBD/COP/16/1/Add.5](#)).

Resource Mobilization

President Muhamad invited delegates to resume discussions on resource mobilization, noting that document [CBD/COP/16/L.34](#) remains the basis for negotiations, and highlighted the President’s reflection note ([CBD/COP/16/INF.43/Rev.1](#)), published following intersessional consultations at the ministerial level, which identifies points of convergence and includes suggestions on the way forward.

Brazil, for the GROUP OF LIKE-MINDED MEGADIVERSE COUNTRIES, urged developed parties to commit to an ambitious decision, ensuring the availability of new, additional, predictable,

and easily accessible financial resources. They stressed the need to avoid interim arrangements and decide on a robust institutional structure in accordance with CBD Article 21 (Financial Mechanism).

Brazil, for BRICS, underscored the need for a comprehensive solution to close the biodiversity finance gap and fully implement Article 21. They concluded that an ambitious decision on resource mobilization is a critical component of the package of decisions expected to be adopted.

Zimbabwe, for the AFRICAN GROUP, expressed concern over slow progress toward increasing financial resources in line with GBF Target 19 (mobilize USD 200 billion per year), and urged for a robust decision leading to an appropriate financial mechanism for effective GBF implementation.

Fiji, on behalf of 14 PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (P-SIDS), called for an efficient and streamlined intersessional process, avoiding backtracking on existing commitments. They further stressed that future arrangements regarding a new biodiversity fund must be informed by lessons learned and address the needs of the most vulnerable, including efforts to strengthen existing mechanisms.

SOUTH AFRICA, EGYPT, GUATEMALA, BOLIVIA, MADAGASCAR, INDIA, and many others called for establishing a dedicated financial instrument with fair and representative governance under the guidance and authority of the COP, with many underlining that such a mechanism is based on the Convention text. Many developing country parties called for a strong and equitable financial structure, and stressed the need to fulfill GBF commitments on means of implementation. SOUTH AFRICA and others noted that the Global Environment Facility (GEF) can continue to hold a complementary role.

The EU supported a broad process for developing a comprehensive solution to closing the biodiversity finance gap, aimed at decisions by COP 18 and 19. They expressed concern with the narrow scope of the process contained in the reflection note, cautioning against prejudging outcomes and placing excessive burden on COP 17.

CHINA lamented lack of progress towards the goal of mobilizing USD 20 billion annually in official development assistance for developing countries by 2025. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION provided amendments, including to ensure that the financing instrument under consideration corresponds to criteria formulated by the COP.

EGYPT noted that modalities must ensure direct access to funds, with BOLIVIA stressing direct access for IPLCs. PANAMA stressed the need for a financial instrument that ensures fair access to financial resources for IPLCs, SIDS, and least-developed countries (LDCs). NEPAL underlined the need to simplify procedures for access to funds, alongside provision of technical capacity.

On intersessional work, GUATEMALA stressed the need for a clear mandate. The UK highlighted the importance of not overwhelming the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI). NORWAY stressed that discussions on public finance should seek to broaden the contributor base, noting that the Cali Fund addresses only private sector contributions.

The DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (DRC) called for establishing a dedicated fund and setting up an open-ended working group to define its *modus operandi* by COP 17.

Many stressed that the resource mobilization strategy is crucial for achieving the GBF goals and targets. PERU called for defining “dedicated instrument,” considering parties’ vulnerabilities, and achieving balance between agricultural productivity and ecosystem conservation. VENEZUELA called for assessing progress linked to resource mobilization, technology transfer, and technical and scientific cooperation.

JAPAN called for subjecting intersessional activities to the availability of financial resources. AUSTRALIA and CANADA underscored that the decision needs to be clear, avoid prejudging any outcome and duplicating existing processes, and mobilize biodiversity financing from all sources, with NEW ZEALAND adding that existing structures should be given time to portray their significance. SWITZERLAND further proposed reviewing and improving the financial mechanism in the context of the review of the GEF and the GBF Fund, and reviewing implementation of the resource mobilization strategy at COP 17. SAUDI ARABIA highlighted the need to support regional initiatives and, with UZBEKISTAN, called for improving existing mechanisms rather than creating new ones. BAHRAIN supported reform calls, noting they could support a new mechanism under the authority of the COP where it does not create an additional burden for parties. QATAR underlined the need to diversify financial resources, including through voluntary contributions.

AZERBAIJAN shared outcomes on climate finance from COP 29 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, emphasizing the importance of coherence and alignment between the Conventions’ resource mobilization strategies for scaling up finance from all sources.

President Muhammad announced that high-level informal consultations will be held in the evening.

GBF Monitoring Framework

Recalling that the draft decision was thoroughly discussed in Cali, President Muhammad introduced [CBD/COP/16/L.26](#) and invited delegates to focus on bracketed text, in particular around the indicator on pesticide environment concentration and/or aggregated total applied toxicity.

The UK presented a compromise proposal suggesting that: “parties may choose to report on either pesticide environment concentration or aggregated total applied toxicity headline indicator, depending on the availability of methodology and in accordance with their national circumstances and technical capacities”; and that “it is acknowledged that work is under way to further develop and test aggregated total applied toxicity headline indicator by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), which is defined as the responsible organization of Table 1 of Annex II to document [CBD/SBSTTA/26/2](#).”

The AFRICAN GROUP, the EU, PANAMA, PARAGUAY, JAPAN, NAMIBIA, BRAZIL, the DRC, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, MEXICO, EGYPT, SWITZERLAND, ARGENTINA, CHILE, and JORDAN acknowledged the efforts made to reach consensus and accepted the proposal in the spirit of compromise.

Some delegates expressed preferences for pesticide environment concentration or aggregated total applied toxicity, suggesting prioritizing one over the other. PANAMA proposed clarifying that FAO should work to further develop and test the headline indicator on aggregated total applied toxicity “in consultation with member states.” NAMIBIA and others urged accepting the original carefully crafted compromise. Following clarifications provided by FAO and the CBD Secretariat, delegates approved the compromise text.

Delegates then considered bracketed text for the component indicators on “global environmental impacts of consumption” and “ecological footprint” under Target 16 (sustainable consumption). BRAZIL, with the RUSSIAN FEDERATION and EGYPT, suggested deleting the indicator on “global environmental impacts of consumption,” noting that it cannot be validated at the national level. The UK, supported by the EU, NORWAY, and MEXICO, proposed moving it to a list of complementary indicators. JORDAN and SAUDI ARABIA, opposed by the EU, proposed moving the indicator on “ecological footprint” to the list of complementary indicators. Noting divergence, President Muhammad invited further consultations.

PMRR Mechanisms

The Secretariat introduced [CBD/COP/16/L.33](#), noting edits and adjustment of the timeline for the global review. The UK, SWITZERLAND, MEXICO, BRAZIL, AUSTRALIA, NORWAY, CANADA, and many others supported adopting the document without further changes, noting it lays the foundations for a party-driven and participatory global review of collective progress. JAPAN submitted minor amendments in writing, and BRAZIL and CHINA urged that any amendments are read in plenary. The EU underlined that the draft decision presented the minimum level of ambition that they could consider acceptable for a compromise.

Vanuatu for P-SIDS, supported by AUSTRALIA, stressed consistently referencing SIDS when mentioning the special circumstances of developing country parties.

ARGENTINA opposed including reports submitted under related conventions and on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the global report; proposed deleting a provision encouraging parties to collaborate with other reporting processes; and suggested amending “gender balance” to “balance in the participation between men and women.”

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION noted concern regarding the processes for non-state actors to report on commitments only voluntarily, and for informing parties of these commitments. ZIMBABWE noted that non-state actors should engage at the national level.

President Muhammad noted that most parties are ready to adopt the text, adding that informal consultations will be conducted with those having expressed concerns.

Financial Mechanism

President Muhammad introduced [CBD/COP/16/L.31](#) recalling deliberations in Cali, and invited delegates to focus on bracketed text, emphasizing that some bracketed paragraphs are linked to pending discussions on resource mobilization and could be parked.

Following a proposal by the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, delegates approved text on a provision requesting the GEF to provide financial resources to contribute to the development and implementation of national biodiversity monitoring systems, amending a reference to requests by “developing country parties” with “all eligible parties” and adding that such systems could include capacity-building and development.

On a paragraph noting with appreciation the contributions to the GBF Fund, delegates agreed to retain a list of donors. On a provision recognizing that the GBF seeks to promote the implementation of complementary measures that may enhance programmatic synergies among the CBD and other biodiversity-related conventions, agreements, and frameworks, delegates agreed on language “recognizing the need to significantly enhance the transparency and reporting thereof,” following interventions by Bahrain, Brazil, Australia, and the Russian Federation.

On a request to the GEF to further increase flexibility in project cycles for developing country parties, in particular LDCs and SIDS, delegates debated reference to “the most environmentally vulnerable countries in the context of the provisions of paragraph 7 of Article 20 of the Convention.” Some preferred retaining the term, while others cautioned it is not clear which countries are encompassed within this category. Yet more delegates stressed retaining specific references to SIDS. Discussions will resume on Wednesday.

In The Corridors

Morning deliberations made it clear that a stark divergence of views remains on resource mobilization, with the role of the GEF and the need for a dedicated finance instrument under the authority of the COP being at the center of contention. “At least everyone acknowledged the need to close the biodiversity finance gap,” an optimist pointed out, suggesting that high-level consultations may provide the required impetus toward reaching agreement. “Indeed, although agreement on paper is not enough anymore - we urgently need to move from rhetoric to action regarding financial commitments,” a cynical observer responded. Echoing President Muhammad’s words, yet another wondered whether and how the CBD can find “the power to unite the biodiversity community” amid heightened geopolitical divisions.