



Africa CSO Biodiversity Alliance (ACBA) Reflections on the First Africa Biodiversity Summit Draft Declaration

ACBA welcomes the **Gaborone Declaration** adopted at the close of the first Africa Biodiversity Summit convened 2-5 November 2025. The hosting of the Summit by the African Union and the government of Botswana is a truly historic achievement. It further reaffirms the importance of biodiversity in strengthening Africa's ecosystems, contributing to adaptation and mitigation outcomes, and being central to the culture, livelihoods and wellbeing of African people.

More critical, biodiversity was recognised as a strategic asset for sustainable outcomes for the continent. Any chance to achieve sustainable outcomes for people and nature, must recognise the connectedness of the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and nature's decline and the need for our responses to be equally linked. To address biodiversity loss, requires addressing the underlying causes of the crisis. This can happen when we deliberately shift views, structures and practices in ways that address the very underlying causes of biodiversity loss. This is well articulated by the IPBES transformative change assessment report released in November 2024 and presented at the CBD SBSTTA 27 in Panama.

While the preamble to the declaration doesn't specifically mention governance as one of the key indirect drivers of the biodiversity loss, the Declaration calls for strengthened governance and accelerated implementation of the Africa Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2030, a document that ACBA was privileged to contribute to. The Declaration emphasises the need to integrate biodiversity considerations systematically across all sectors. To be effective, governance systems and institutions must be inclusive, accountable and adaptive.

The Declaration also emphasizes the expansion of protected and transboundary conservation areas, reinforcing Africa's contribution toward achieving the 30x30 target under the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF). In relation to the 30x30 target and the expansion of protected areas, ACBA has consistently advocated for inclusive, bottom-up approaches to conservation that leverage local knowledge and citizen science. ACBA maintains that conservation should take place where people live and derive their livelihoods.

Not surprisingly, as with other Rio Conventions, financing biodiversity was a central theme. Encouragingly, leaders called for the mobilization of domestic resources, urging countries to progressively allocate at least **1% of GDP** to biodiversity. ACBA has argued that the continent's biodiversity contributes towards global public goods such as adaptation and mitigation to climate change, resilient societies, water availability and quality, food systems and health. As such, the developed countries must contribute towards biodiversity conservation and its sustainable use and equitable and fair benefit sharing. The call for an African Biodiversity Fund, while welcome, requires that the modalities for operationalizing the Fund, consider existing funds and the continent's commitment to its capitalisation.

The labelling of financial instruments, such as biodiversity credits, green and blue bonds, and payments for ecosystem services (PES), as innovative financial mechanisms, must be interrogated. Whilst they represent potential opportunities for the continent to raise funding free of conditionalities, there are serious risks of green washing and false solutions when implementing these so-called "innovative financial mechanisms". Many initiatives that fall under this "innovative" banner are opaque, lack transparency and marginalise frontline communities. Africa must avoid solutions that legitimize or even expand the very systems that drive biodiversity destruction. There must be a clear definition of what constitutes funding for biodiversity conservation.



One critical shift required for transformative change that addresses the underlying causes of biodiversity loss, is a mindset shift. ACBA welcomes the call to integrate biodiversity education in national curricula and civic programs. It is important that there is consciousness about the choices people make and the values that underpin such choices. Such a shift will inevitably contribute towards a shift away from practices harmful to biodiversity loss and nature's decline.

The debt crisis imposes an unfair financial burden on African countries, limiting their fiscal capacity to invest in social services, including climate change and biodiversity actions. African countries often face higher interest rates on loans compared to their developed counterparts, as rating agencies classify Africa as a high-risk destination for capital. Therefore, ACBA welcomes the call by African governments for reforms to the global financial architecture that could facilitate grant-based funding for biodiversity.