



Newsletter

April 2025 Issue

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ACBA WELCOMES TWO NEW BOARD MEMBERS: DR. NYIMALE GRACE ALAWA AND RONALD KIRABIRA

We are honored to announce that Dr. Nyimale Grace Alawa and Ronald Kirabira, two individuals with extensive experience and a deep commitment to biodiversity, have joined the Board of the African CSOs Biodiversity Alliance (ACBA). The Secretariat is excited to work alongside Grace and Ronald as we strengthen our collective efforts to elevate African voices in global and regional biodiversity spaces.



Dr. Nyimale Grace Alawa is a passionate conservationist, researcher and educator whose leadership reflects a deep commitment to biodiversity and sustainable development across the continent. Her experience as the CEO of Sustainable Actions for Nature in Nigeria and her PhD in Ecology and Environmental Biology from Rivers State University make her a perfect fit for ACBA's mission. Grace brings transformative energy and a hands-on approach that will enrich ACBA's strategic direction and advocacy work.

Ronald Kirabira, a seasoned finance professional, joins the board with over two decades of experience in the international NGO sector. Ronald, a chartered certified accountant (ACCA) with an MBA from Oxford Brookes University (UK), has led financial strategy and operations across Africa, Asia Pacific, and Europe. His expertise in aligning financial management with mission-driven goals and building strong internal systems will support ACBA's growth and sustainability.



Grace and Ronald will bring their expertise to enhance the board's functions, especially strategic direction and financial management. Their backgrounds in conservation and finance will help strengthen ACBA's initiatives and expand its impact on biodiversity advocacy and sustainability efforts. We warmly welcome Grace and Ronald to the ACBA family and look forward to the knowledge, leadership and integrity they bring to the Alliance.



CENTERING COMMUNITIES IN CARBON MARKETS: ACBA AT THE 6TH AFRICAN CLIMATE TALKS



From April 7–8, 2025, Kampala, Uganda played host to the 6th African Climate Talks (ACT!) and SDGs Forum, bringing together government representatives, parliamentarians, civil society, researchers, and activists to discuss Africa's role in shaping climate solutions. ACBA was invited to participate in a dynamic panel on carbon markets, offering a conservation perspective rooted in equity and community empowerment.

ACBA's message was clear: carbon markets can be a force for good but only if they are built on fairness, transparency, and community leadership.

A key point ACBA raised was the need to simplify the design and implementation of carbon projects. Too often, communities and Indigenous Peoples (IPs) enter into agreements they barely understand, due to technical language and unclear terms. These agreements, shaped by imbalanced partnerships with powerful developers and traders, leave local people without the tools or information to make informed choices or demand accountability. As ACBA emphasized, if communities cannot read or understand what they're signing, they cannot defend their rights. Local languages and plain communication must be the norm, not the exception.

ACBA also called for strong national laws to guide carbon markets. These laws should guarantee access to information, protect community rights, ensure fair benefit-sharing, and provide simple, accessible ways to raise concerns when things go wrong.

Beyond structure and laws, ACBA urged participants to cut through the confusion around carbon markets. It's time to stop reacting to external narratives that distort what carbon markets are and are not. Carbon markets should never replace real climate action like reducing emissions and consumption. They are just one tool, and they must be used responsibly.



Most importantly, ACBA emphasized a future where frontline communities, women, and youth are not just included they are leading. From the design of projects to decision-making, these groups must have the power to say “yes” or “no” based on their own values, needs, and knowledge.

This means adopting human rights-based and gender-sensitive approaches, while actively confronting the power imbalances that keep communities on the margins.

“WHAT IS FOR ME, WITHOUT ME, IS NOT FOR ME”



ACBA CONTRIBUTES TO THE LAUNCH OF GLOBAL CAMPAIGN ON ECONOMIC AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

On 29 April, the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) launched a bold global campaign on Economic and Climate Justice, aimed at confronting the root causes of inequality, climate breakdown and systemic injustice. ACBA was honored to be invited to share its perspectives on the role of the conservation sector in contributing to this urgent and transformative initiative.

ACBA welcomed the campaign as a timely and hopeful effort, one that presents a genuine opportunity to chart a new path for Africa anchored in justice, equity, and sustainability. During the discussions, ACBA emphasized that while the campaign rightly challenges those with power and influence, it must also be prepared for resistance. The demands, debt cancellation, fulfillment of Rio Convention obligations by developed countries and restructuring of the global financial system, represent bold steps that will require unity and resilience.

Importantly, ACBA stressed that critique alone is not enough. The conservation community must be ready to offer viable and forward-thinking alternatives, informed by rigorous research and credible data. The campaign must avoid siloed thinking: climate change and biodiversity cannot be addressed in isolation, nor should they be seen as the sole responsibility of the UNFCCC or the CBD. Rather, these issues intersect with a broader set of crises, from debt and illicit capital flows to financial exclusion, which affect all sectors of society.

ACBA also underlined that systemic change does not begin with treaties, it begins with people. Broad, inclusive and grassroots-driven movements are key to confronting injustice. The campaign must intentionally include youth, women and local communities, while resisting elitism and ensuring messages are accessible and grounded in lived experience. Recognizing the long-term nature of this struggle, ACBA called for a sustained approach that adapts to evolving geopolitical realities.

While the campaign is global in ambition, ACBA emphasized the need to remain grounded in the African context, ensuring the continent's realities, voices and solutions remain at the heart of this movement for economic and climate justice.

COUNTDOWN TO THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIODIVERSITY!

We are less than a month away from celebrating the International Day for Biodiversity on May 22, 2025! This day is a global celebration of the rich diversity of life on our planet and an opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of biodiversity for our health and well-being.

This year's theme is "Harmony with Nature and Sustainable Development."

As we prepare, remember that achieving the Key Messages of the Global Biodiversity Framework (#KMGBF) and the Sustainable Development Goals (#SDGs) isn't a solo act. These are global initiatives that aim to protect and restore biodiversity and promote sustainable development. We need governments, businesses, CSOs, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and youth working together to achieve these goals.

We want YOUR voice to be heard!

ACBA secretariat invites you, dear members, to join the campaign by sending a short video sharing how your community is acting to implement the KMGBF. Your voice is essential and we want to hear it! Those interested to be part of the campaign Send your video to oliviachepkemoi@gmail.com by **15th of May, 2025**

Here is the message from the CBD secretariat: <https://youtu.be/DyuzdDqSKdE> that might help you with content to record your videos. Those interested in joining this campaign please share your videos by 10th of May.

Also, for those planning to carry out their organizational campaign, the CBD secretariat has shared some of the materials that might be useful. Kindly see the attached notification from the Secretariat

: <https://www.cbd.int/notifications/2025-050>.



**INTERNATIONAL DAY
FOR BIODIVERSITY 2025**

Harmony with nature and sustainable development

CSO OF THE MONTH (GROUPE ACADÉMIA RDC)

Groupe Académie RDC, a dynamic youth-led organization based in Butembo, North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), is spearheading a national initiative to commemorate World Bee Day 2025. Celebrated every year on May 20, World Bee Day highlights the essential role of bees and other pollinators in maintaining food security, biodiversity, and healthy ecosystems while also raising awareness about the threats they face and the urgent need for their protection.

Founded on July 2, 2014, Groupe Académie RDC is committed to youth empowerment, environmental protection, education, and sustainable local entrepreneurship. It operates offices in Butembo and Masereka, and manages La Voix de la Jeunesse—a community radio station amplifying youth voices and civic engagement in eastern DRC.

The organization also runs a vocational training center, equipping young people with practical skills in apiculture, agriculture, carpentry, and tailoring—building both self-reliance and environmental responsibility in conflict-affected communities. Groupe Académie RDC is a proud member of the African CSOs Biodiversity Alliance (ACBA), the Réseau de la Jeunesse Francophone (RJF), and the Alliance of Indigenous Peoples' and Local Communities' Organizations for Conservation in Africa (AICA).

At the heart of this impactful work is Kakule Vutsapu Michael, founder and President of the Board of Directors. A lifelong beekeeper and youth advocate, Michael promotes beekeeping as a practical and sustainable approach to biodiversity conservation and rural development. He also serves as the DRC focal point for the Community Leaders Network (CLN), bringing grassroots insights into national and global conservation conversations.

For World Bee Day 2025, Groupe Académie RDC is organizing a series of community-focused activities including:

- Capacity-building workshops on modern beekeeping techniques
- School-based environmental education programs;
- Tree planting campaigns to restore pollinator habitats
- Media outreach through community radio
- Advocacy meetings for bee-friendly policies and green jobs for youth.



This celebration will gather local leaders, farmers, educators, youth groups, and conservation partners to promote the vital importance of pollinators. Through this initiative, Groupe Académie RDC hopes to spark a new generation of green innovators and environmental stewards in eastern Congo.

For partnership opportunities or more information about World Bee Day 2025 activities in the DRC, please reach out to:

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President, Groupe Académie RDC
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Phone: +243 990 562 695



ACBA-GBIF COLLABORATION: EXPANDING ACCESS TO BIODIVERSITY DATA ACROSS AFRICA

In a recent engagement meeting, the African CSOs Biodiversity Alliance (ACBA) and the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) explored promising opportunities for collaboration to strengthen biodiversity data sharing and capacity building in Africa.

The GBIF team, led by Maeva blaursen and Laban Musinguzi, GBIF Africa, lead presented key initiatives, including the Biodiversity Information for Development (BID) program, the Data Use Club, hosted data portals and a grant program supporting data mobilization across sub-Saharan Africa. GBIF emphasized the importance of accessible, open biodiversity data to support research, policy-making and conservation efforts. They also introduced tools such as free access to DataCamp training and upcoming data mobilization workshops tailored for African institutions.

A key highlight of the meeting was the discussion on potential collaboration with ACBA, particularly in co-developing training modules for the ACBA Biodiversity Academy a proposed initiative aligned with ACBA's mission to enhance capacity and visibility for African-led biodiversity action.

Maeva explained that institutions in eligible countries can apply for institutional grants of up to €30,000 (for projects lasting up to 24 months) or multi-institutional grants of up to €60,000 for the same duration.

A data mobilization workshop is also planned to address capacity needs and promote data publication in Africa. Limited to 30 participants, the workshop will run from May to July and include coursework, assessments and evaluations. Laban encouraged participants to apply for data licenses through DataCamp, an online learning platform for data scientists and emphasized the importance of tracking progress in training.



UPCOMING EVENTS

- 1.ACBA-IPBES Webinar (Unpacking IPBES Assessment for African Biodiversity Action) – **7th May, 3:00pm to 4:30pm EAT**
- 2.International Day for Biodiversity - **22nd May 2025**
- 3.IUCN World Conservation Congress, **9-15 October in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates**
- 4.2025 UN Ocean Conference - **France 9 June - 13 June 2025.**

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