



Newsletter

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UNPACKING THE CONVENTION OF PARTIES (COP) 16 DECISIONS ON ARTICLE 8(J)

During the January African CSOs Biodiversity Alliance (ACBA) Members Forum, we had the honor of hosting Dr. S. Faizi, who provided a brief history of the Rio Conventions, and an in-depth analysis of the key decisions made at CBD COP 16, particularly those concerning Article 8(j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Article 8(j) is a crucial provision that recognizes and protects the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs). It ensures these communities have a voice in managing natural resources and benefit equitably when their knowledge is utilized.

At CBD COP 16, discussions on Article 8(j) were central, emphasizing its role in reinforcing Indigenous rights, cultural heritage and fair access to biodiversity benefits. Dr. Faizi outlined several key outcomes and commitments from the conference, including:

1. Strengthened Participation of IPLCs

COP 16 established a Permanent Subsidiary Body on IPLCs to enhance their engagement in biodiversity governance, ensuring their voices influence decision-making processes.

2. Revised Programme of Work on Article 8(j) (2024-2030)

A renewed commitment was made through an eight-element framework focused on:

- Conservation and restoration of biodiversity led by IPLCs.
- Sustainable use of biological resources and customary practices.
- Fair and equitable sharing of benefits from genetic resources and traditional knowledge.
- Knowledge and culture protection, ensuring intergenerational transmission.
- Strengthened implementation and monitoring within the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).
- Full and effective participation of IPLCs, including marginalized groups.
- A human rights-based approach to biodiversity governance.
- Direct access to funding for IPLCs for conservation initiatives.

3. The Cali Fund for Digital Sequence Information (DSI)

A major breakthrough was the establishment of the Cali Fund, a global financing mechanism to distribute benefits from Digital Sequence Information (DSI) related to genetic resources. Corporations profiting from DSI will contribute a share of their revenues, with 50% of the funds allocated to IPLCs.

4. Recognition of Afro-Descendant Communities

For the first time, Afro-descendant communities were explicitly recognized as key stakeholders in biodiversity conservation. COP 16 called for their full participation in biodiversity governance and encouraged financial and capacity-building support for their initiatives.

Looking Ahead

The outcomes of COP 16 mark a significant step toward justice, equity, and sustainability in biodiversity conservation. ACBA remains committed to advocating for the full inclusion of IPLCs, ensuring that Africa's biodiversity is protected for future generations.



ACBA MEMBERS ON-GROUND ACTIVITIES

ACBA members who jointly applied for the Global Environmental Fund (GEF) in 2024 officially received the promised funding and are now actively implementing their projects across six countries. Each country, Kenya, Somalia, South Africa, DRC, Cameroon and Tanzania, is independently determining its specific initiatives under the broader goal of restoring degraded mangroves and inland wetlands.

The implementation process is progressing at different stages. Some organizations are in the planning phase, conducting scoping exercises and developing roadmaps, while others have already begun direct restoration efforts.

Progress Highlights

Kenya: Through the Kenya Youth Biodiversity Network (KYBN), 4,000 mangroves have already been planted in Kwale. With the upcoming rainy season in April, additional trees will be planted to further strengthen restoration efforts.

Cameroon: MKAAJI MPYA (not for profit association) has undertaken the following activities to advance wetland restoration in the Ruzizi Plain:

- Hosted a two-day workshop to launch the project, raise awareness, and build
- community capacity for wetland restoration.
- Delineated key wetland restoration zones to guide future interventions.
- Procured bamboo species and oil palm trees for restoration in the Nyagaya marshes and
- conducted two days of community-led restoration activities.

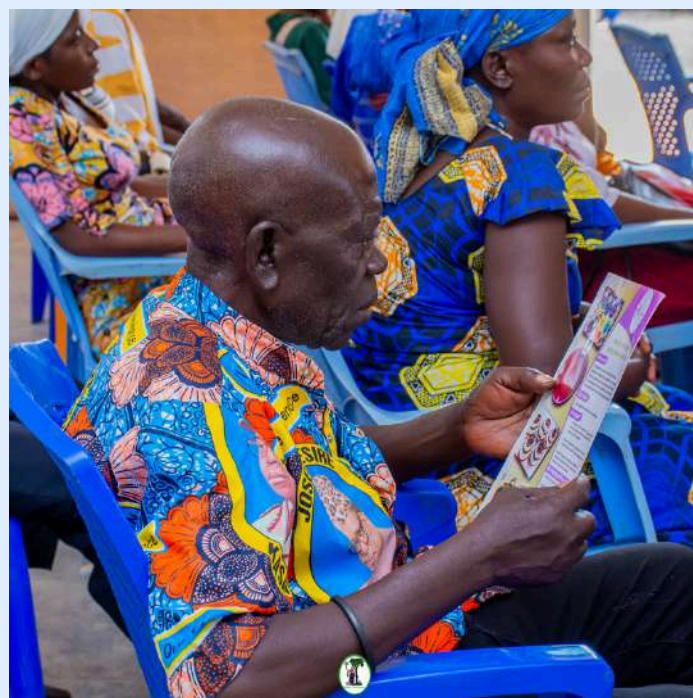
South Africa: The South Africa Youth Biodiversity Network (SAYBN) has embarked on strategic planning and is actively working to bring more organizations on board. They will be collaborating closely with the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve to ensure a well-coordinated and impactful restoration effort. As part of their initiative, they plan to plant over 5,000 mangroves, with the project set to officially commence in April.

Somalia: On January 14, 2025, the Somali Greenpeace Association (SOGPA) organized a pivotal training session at Java Hotel, Mogadishu, aimed at addressing the urgent need for biodiversity protection within the framework of climate change adaptation.



This one-day event brought together 30 participants representing civil society organizations, students, teachers' unions, community leaders, and local members, reflecting a diverse and inclusive approach to tackling one of Somalia's most pressing environmental challenges.

The training sought to enhance understanding of the intricate relationship between biodiversity and climate resilience, emphasizing the role of healthy ecosystems in mitigating the adverse effects of climate change. Participants were guided through an exploration of Somalia's unique ecological systems, including its drylands, coastal areas, and wetlands, while delving into the challenges these habitats face due to human activities and climatic pressures.



ACBA PARTICIPATION IN GEF-9 TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP MEETINGS

The African CSOs Biodiversity Alliance (ACBA) participated in the GEF-9 Technical Advisory Groups (TAG) meetings, represented by Moreangels Mbizah from Wildlife Conservation Action.

The TAGs serve as a critical step in the GEF's replenishment process, where the broader GEF partnership reviews progress and contributes to new programming and strategic directions. ACBA was invited to nominate a representative for the cross-cutting TAG on the Whole of Society Approach: Advancing Inclusion and Civil Society (CSOs) Engagement organized by the GEF Secretariat.

Key Takeaways from the Meeting:

- **Increasing Civil Society Engagement and Funding:** There is a push to raise the share of GEF resources allocated to civil society from less than 5% to 10%.
- **Capacity Building and Inclusion:** Emphasis was placed on the need for meaningful involvement of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in strategic decision-making.
- **Recommendations:**
 - Improve access to information for CSOs.
 - Develop digital systems to track and showcase CSO contributions and results.



MAJOR THREATS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE KUNMING-MONTREAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

The successful implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) is crucial for reversing biodiversity loss and ensuring a sustainable future for people and the planet. However, despite the framework's ambitious targets, numerous obstacles threaten its effectiveness. Recognizing these challenges, the African CSOs Biodiversity Alliance (ACBA) held an insightful brainstorming session to identify and analyze key threats that could hinder the GBF's implementation.

Moderated by Katherine Robinson from Natural Justice, the session brought together at least 30 ACBA members to discuss pressing issues ranging from geopolitical tensions to financial constraints and corporate influence. The discussion underscored the urgent need for stronger global cooperation, increased financial commitments and inclusive decision-making processes to address these systemic barriers.

Some of the critical threats identified during the session include:

1. Geopolitical tensions undermining multilateralism and global governance

The implementation of the 2020 GBF relies on strong international cooperation, but rising geopolitical tensions threaten this. Conflicts between major global powers weaken multilateral

efforts needed for biodiversity conservation, making it harder to negotiate and implement binding agreements. These tensions also lead to reduced trust and collaboration in global governance platforms, affecting decisions related to biodiversity financing, conservation commitments, and cross-border ecological initiatives.

2. Deepening North-South divide, but growing South-South solidarity

The gap between developed and developing nations continues to widen, with wealthier nations often prioritizing economic interests over environmental justice. This divide affects equitable benefit-sharing from biodiversity resources, limits technology transfer, and exacerbates funding disparities. However, South-South cooperation is strengthening, offering alternative partnerships and innovative solutions to advance the GBF, particularly through regional collaborations in biodiversity conservation, sustainable resource management, and policy advocacy.

3. Corporate capture of spaces like CBD and UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Large corporations increasingly influence global environmental negotiations, including those within the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UNFCCC. This corporate influence often prioritizes profit-driven approaches, such as market-based conservation strategies, over community-led and rights-based approaches. As a result, biodiversity policies may favor business interests rather than genuinely addressing the root causes of biodiversity loss, undermining the GBF's goals of transformative change.

4. Lack of alignment across Rio Conventions (CBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD)

The GBF aims for a holistic approach to biodiversity protection, yet there is minimal coordination between key global environmental agreements—the CBD (biodiversity), UNFCCC (climate change), and UNCCD (desertification). These treaties operate in silos, leading to fragmented policy actions, inefficiencies in resource allocation, and missed opportunities for integrated solutions. Without better alignment, efforts to tackle biodiversity loss, climate change, and land degradation will remain disjointed, limiting the overall effectiveness of the GBF.



5. Exclusion of marginalized groups most impacted by biodiversity/climate crises

Indigenous peoples, local communities, women, and youth play a crucial role in biodiversity conservation, yet they often face exclusion from decision-making processes. Despite commitments in the 2020 GBF to enhance participatory governance, systemic barriers persist, limiting their access to resources, land rights, and financial support. Without inclusive implementation, the GBF risks reinforcing inequalities and failing to leverage traditional knowledge systems essential for effective biodiversity conservation.

6. Insufficient financing - Global North resisting adequate funding commitments

A major pillar of the GBF is resource mobilization, but developed countries are reluctant to meet their financial commitments to biodiversity conservation. The resistance to establishing a robust financial mechanism under the GBF mirrors similar challenges in climate finance. Many commitments remain voluntary, lacking enforceability, which limits the ability of developing nations to implement conservation projects, protect critical ecosystems, and achieve the ambitious biodiversity targets.

7. Severe debt crisis in Global South limiting environmental action

Many developing countries, particularly in the Global South, are trapped in a cycle of debt that forces them to prioritize debt repayment over environmental sustainability. High levels of external debt reduce national budgets available for biodiversity conservation and climate resilience. This financial constraint makes it difficult for countries to fulfill their GBF obligations, invest in nature-based solutions, and implement effective conservation programs. Without debt relief mechanisms or alternative funding models, progress toward the GBF targets remains at risk.

STRENGTHENING ACTION FOR EFFECTIVE GBF IMPLEMENTATION

Addressing the systemic threats to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) requires bold action, strategic advocacy, and strengthened accountability mechanisms. As a collective voice for African civil society, ACBA recognizes the critical need to hold governments accountable for their commitments and ensure that biodiversity policies are not just aspirational but actively implemented.

A key takeaway from the discussion was the importance of enhancing engagement at the national level, particularly in shaping and monitoring National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). Many countries have yet to fully integrate the GBF's priorities, including the ambitious 30x30 target, into their NBSAPs. This gap highlights the need for ACBA and its partners to track and influence national policy development, ensuring that biodiversity priorities reflect real, on-the-ground conservation needs. Tools like the Wild wildlife Fund (WWF) NBSAP Tracking Tool can serve as valuable resources for monitoring progress and advocating for stronger commitments.



Beyond national-level advocacy, ACBA must also position itself within key global and regional policy spaces to amplify African voices and influence decision-making processes. Strategic engagement in platforms such as United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES),



International Union for Conservation of Nature World Conservation Congress (IUCN WCC), 30th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 30), Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) Symposia and the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat (RAMSAR) will allow ACBA to raise urgent biodiversity concerns, push for policy reforms, and ensure that African perspectives shape global biodiversity governance.

The road ahead is challenging, but with coordinated efforts, sustained advocacy, and strategic action, we can drive meaningful progress toward achieving the GBF's ambitious targets.



UPCOMING EVENTS

1. RAMSAR COP 15 – **23-31 July 2025 in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe**
2. IUCN World Conservation Congress, **9-15 October in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates**

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