

A ROCHA

Faith and Conservation: A Rocha's Perspective on CBD COP16

Why is CBD COP16 important?

CBD COP16 is a critical step in implementing the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), which was agreed to at COP15. This framework aims to transform global efforts to protect biodiversity through specific targets. COP16 will focus on creating a concrete plan to meet these targets.

Over 190 countries will participate, including representatives from governments, Indigenous communities, businesses, youth groups, civil society, and academia, to advance the most ambitious plan ever to save the vast diversity of life Earth. Key objectives for governments include reviewing progress on the Global Biodiversity Framework, aligning National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, negotiating a monitoring framework (namely, how the implementation will be financed), enhancing resource mobilization, and advancing Access and Benefit Sharing mechanisms.

The theme of COP16 is 'Peace with Nature', symbolized by the Inirida flower native to Colombia, which represents resilience in the face of environmental challenges. This aligns with A Rocha's vision of a world where nature flourishes as people live equitably and sustainably.

We are facing not one, but three interconnected global crises: climate change, biodiversity loss, and human poverty and inequality. Biodiversity conservation is equally important as addressing the other two crises. Likewise, the IUCN emphasizes that to achieve the goals and targets of the Global Biodiversity Framework, we need decisive climate action that minimizes negative impacts on biodiversity and integrates responses to these interconnected crises.

Success at COP16 hinges on establishing effective monitoring and accountability systems, securing funding, incorporating local and Indigenous knowledge, and harmonizing conservation efforts with economic growth. The outcomes of COP16 will be crucial for shaping the future of our planet.

Why is A Rocha at CBD COP16?

A Rocha brings decades of biodiversity conservation expertise and strong partnerships worldwide. We are committed to caring for creation through hands-on scientific research, environmental education and community-based conservation projects. Faith-based communities play a vital role in implementing the Global Biodiversity Framework by engaging in conservation actions and holding governments and the private sector accountable for effective implementation. Churches can further promote environmentally responsible behaviour change.

The A Rocha Worldwide Family, represented by A Rocha International and A Rocha Organizations from Ghana, India and Peru, will engage in negotiations, workshops, and collaborations at COP16. We will inform the A Rocha Worldwide Family about key issues and initiatives emerging from COP16 in order to empower A Rocha's global conservation efforts.

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A nexus between Christian faith and biodiversity

For Christians, caring for the earth is rooted in God's concern for life in all its variety. This theme is woven throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, where biodiversity is at the heart of God's plan for redemption and renewal. In Genesis 1, God's delight in plants, fish, mammals, birds and 'creeping things' is repeated, culminating in God declaring 'all that he had made' to be 'very good'. Psalm 24:1–2 emphasizes that the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it; God created and sustains life, and we are accountable for our use or abuse of the earth and its creatures.

A Rocha, founded in 1983, is a Christian conservation organization dedicated to living out God's calling to care for creation and equipping others to do likewise. We aim to demonstrate that caring for the environment is an integral part of Christian life. Given that Christianity has so many adherents, strong commitment from the Church for the recovery of nature across the world can catalyze the enormous changes and improvements that are needed.

Case studies from the A Rocha Worldwide Family

Influencing National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs): A Rocha Ghana has been involved in facilitating the drafting of Ghana's national Biodiversity Policy and most recently the revision of Ghana's NBSAPs. Contributions have included providing information on the outcomes of our conservation interventions and how these can contribute to achieving the national goals. A Rocha Ghana has also been involved at the national level in drafting Ghana's targets for achieving the Global Biodiversity Framework. A Rocha Ghana's work contributes to achieving GBF targets 1–5; targets 9–12; targets 14,16,19–23

Restoring wildlife corridors for co-existence: A Rocha India works with stakeholders in the Bannerghatta–Hosur Landscape to restore elephant corridors connecting three wildlife ranges. These corridors facilitate migration and reduce the chance of inbreeding, and they are important for the genetic diversity and ecological health of elephant populations in a landscape extremely prone to human threats and biotic pressures. The project aims to 'effectively manage human–wildlife interactions to minimize human–wildlife conflict for coexistence.' This work incorporates GBF Target 4 (b)(c) and complements Targets 1, 3, 7, 8 and 21, by offering a species–specific management intervention which ensures its conservation and creating locally contextualised environmental education which promotes a nature–positive vision for living in harmony with elephants.

Promoting environmental education through conservation clubs: In Nigeria, Eden Creation Care Initiative (An A Rocha Associated Project) has worked with schools to set up 19 conservation clubs, which have been essential for engaging children in environmental activities and projects. Club activities include plastic recycling, establishing tree nurseries, sack gardening and biodiversity identification, which inspire change in the minds and actions of club and community members. Educational materials have also been adopted in school' curricula supporting club activities. Thanks to these clubs, hundreds of children understand why it is important to prosper with nature. This contributes to Goal B, Target 21 and Target 16.