

# A ROCHA

## Outcomes from CBD COP16 and A Rocha's Response

Countries worldwide made the ambitious agreement to halt and reverse biodiversity loss at the 2022 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15). The Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) aims to protect 30% of Earth's lands, oceans, coastal areas and inland waters by 2030. The focus of CBD COP16 in Cali, Colombia this year was to create concrete plans to implement the GBF. Talks were suspended on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2024 before countries could reach a consensus on all major issues; in the end, COP16 accomplished some major milestones but also fell short on the high ambition needed to save nature.

### What was accomplished at CBD COP16?

- **Launch of the Cali Fund:** Countries agreed to establish a mechanism to fairly share benefits from digital sequence information (DSI) on genetic resources. Major companies will contribute based on profits, while academic institutions are exempt. The Cali Fund will support the needs of Indigenous peoples and developing countries and includes provisions for capacity building and technology transfer. While operational details are yet to be defined, companies and countries can contribute their fair share for biodiversity use.
- **Climate and biodiversity:** A consensus was reached to address biodiversity loss and climate change together, with new guidance ensuring mutually reinforcing efforts on both fronts.
- **Funding Biodiversity:** The Kunming Biodiversity Fund (KBF), launched at COP16 with a US \$200 million contribution from China, will accelerate efforts to meet the 2030 Agenda, Sustainable Development Goal targets and the 2050 Global Biodiversity Framework goals, focusing on developing countries.
- **Indigenous peoples and local communities:** In a landmark decision, Parties adopted a new Programme of Work on Article 8(j), which ensures the meaningful contribution of Indigenous peoples and local communities in protecting biodiversity, using resources sustainably and sharing benefits fairly. This includes integrating their rights and knowledge into global discussions and recognizing the role of people of African descent in conservation.
- **Ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs):** After 8 years of legal and political challenges, negotiators agreed on new mechanisms to describe EBSAs and keep them up to date with new scientific information.
- **Sustainable wildlife management and plant conservation:** A decision was made to promote the protection of wild species, emphasizing the involvement of Indigenous peoples, local communities and women. It encourages collaborative research on wildlife use, biodiversity loss and zoonotic diseases. Additionally, parties committed to align plant conservation efforts with the GBF monitoring framework.
- **Biodiversity and health:** Parties approved a Global Action on Biodiversity and Health to combat zoonotic diseases, prevent non-communicable diseases and promote sustainable ecosystems. The plan highlights links between biodiversity loss and deforestation, pollution and climate change, while targeting vulnerable groups and promoting collaboration among health, conservation, and policy sectors.
- **Invasive alien species:** Acknowledging invasive species as a major driver of biodiversity loss, COP16 emphasized international cooperation, especially for developing countries, using new databases, improved cross-border trade regulations, and coordination with e-commerce platforms to better manage invasive species risks.

# A ROCHA

## What was left unfinished?

After 24 hours of non-stop negotiations, quorum was lost and COP16 was suspended before the following were approved:

- **Resource mobilization and funding biodiversity:** Countries failed to adopt the 2025–2030 Resource Mobilization Strategy which aimed to achieve GBF targets 18 and 19 by filling the \$700 billion per year funding gap through new money and subsidy reform. Agreement on a dedicated global financing instrument for biodiversity under the CBD's control was also not reached. This leaves critical funding and coordination needs unmet in the face of the biodiversity crisis, hindering a nature-positive future.
- **Cooperation:** While the climate and biodiversity decision provides guidance for countries to align policies addressing these crises, the broader cooperation decision – which would have strengthened collaboration between the CBD and other conventions and initiatives – was not adopted.
- **Monitoring:** With the monitoring framework up for adoption at COP16, countries would have been able to, for the first time, report in a way that can be aggregated and analyzed at the global level, allowing for real understanding of progress to achieve the GBF. Lack of adoption is a significant missed opportunity.
- **Budget & Report:** The CBD Secretariat's operating budget and official COP16 report were not adopted before the COP was suspended. COP16 will reconvene at a future date and location, though all decisions made so far remain valid.

## A Rocha's Presence at CBD COP16

An A Rocha delegation from three A Rocha Organizations (AROs) and A Rocha International (ARI) represented A Rocha at the CBD COP16, championing our unique faith-based approach to biodiversity conservation and environmental education. This delegation included: Sarah French, Director of Environmental Education and Conservation Policy, A Rocha International; Dr Seth Appiah Kubi, A Rocha Ghana National Director; Dr María Los Ángeles La Torre Cuadros, Director of Science and Conservation, A Rocha Peru; Avinash Krishnan, National Director, A Rocha India; and Daryl Bosu, A Rocha Ghana Deputy National Director.

At the Nature Positive Pavillion (one of the CBD COP 16's key pavilions), A Rocha International led the event '[Green Muscle Memory: Addressing Global Challenges](#)' where we shared case studies of transformative experiential environmental education from Ghana, India, Peru and elsewhere within the A Rocha Worldwide Family, and showed that the development of an innate 'green muscle memory' enables learners to instinctively make environmentally friendly choices.



In A Rocha's event 'Cafe Hope' at the Nature Positive Pavillion, we discussed how despair would be a natural reaction to the enormity of global crises we face, namely the rapid loss of our planet's biodiversity. Together with the A Rocha delegation, speakers including Dr. Janice Weatherly Singh (Director, WCS EU), shared how hope motivates, inspires and grounds us in purpose and action. You can watch the recording [here](#).

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Also at the Nature Positive Pavillion, the [Uniting for Nature Report](#) by Faiths for Biodiversity was launched. This report included a case study of one of A Rocha International's Environmental Education Conferences for African AROs in Uganda.



The Faith Hub provided a dedicated space for religious leaders and members of a variety of faith groups to come together and share our unique perspectives on working for a Nature Positive world.

The A Rocha delegation led a panel discussion entitled, 'Faith, Nature and Peace: Faith leaders and communities of faith making a difference in landscape and seascape protection and restoration for making peace with nature', along with speakers from SIL and the Anglican Communion.

Pictured here (left to right) are Peter Jan de Vries from SIL International and A Rocha Netherlands; Avinash Krishnan from A Rocha India; Michelle Cordova, an Anglican Communion youth member from El Salvador; María de los Angeles La Torre Cuadros from A Rocha Peru; Seth Appiah-Kubi from A Rocha Ghana; and Moderator: Sarah French from A Rocha International.

A Rocha Ghana also hosted several side events, highlighting their work conserving biodiversity while strengthening human communities.

In this photo, Daryl Bosu – A Rocha Ghana's Deputy National Director – speaks at the event 'Locally driven businesses cases for nature and climate: lessons for biodiversity finance plans'.



Colombia is a 'megadiverse' country that hosts nearly 10% of our planet's biodiversity. The A Rocha delegation were able to appreciate this through a visit to Fundacion Andoke, a butterfly park just outside Cali, where they learned about local butterflies and their host plants. Afterwards, Avinash Krishnan, National Director of A Rocha India, reflects on what a fitting location Colombia is for the UN Biodiversity Conference: *'With almost half of the country's landmass covered by natural forests, it sadly faces immediate threats to biodiversity due to extensive agriculture, poor political will, armed conflicts, and social inequality.'*

Peter Jan de Vries' reflected on his experiences at COP16 in this A Rocha Netherlands [blog](#). At times overwhelming or even frustrating, COP16 was also an exceptional opportunity to speak with global biodiversity leaders, witness stewardship for creation, and push conservation action forward. We leave with heightened hope and motivation to *'make peace with nature.'*