



MEP Group on Climate Change,
Biodiversity & Sustainable Development

FINAL REPORT

DELIVERING THE GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK IN PRACTICE: AN EU-SOUTHERN AFRICA DIALOGUE ON HUMAN-CENTERED CONSERVATION, SUSTAINABLE USE AND INCLUSIVE BIODIVERSITY GOVERNANCE

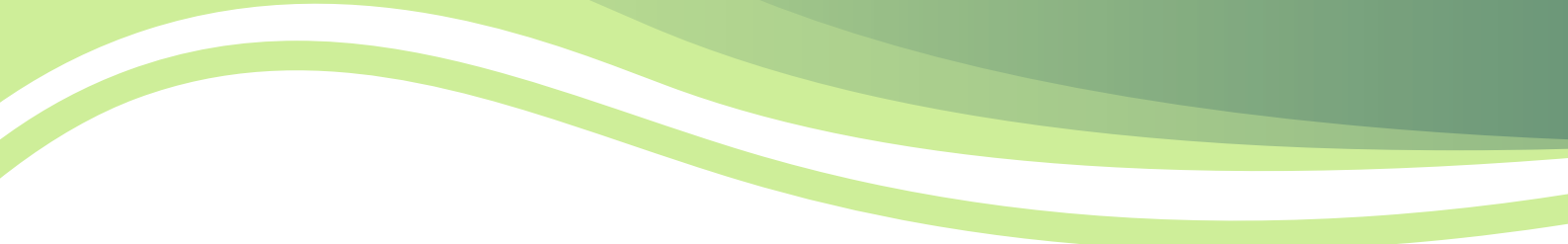
Tuesday 13 October 2026 - European Parliament



DELIVERING THE GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK IN PRACTICE: AN EU-SOUTHERN AFRICA DIALOGUE ON HUMAN-CENTERED CONSERVATION, SUSTAINABLE USE AND INCLUSIVE BIODIVERSITY GOVERNANCE

In his opening remarks, **MEP Michal Wieszik** underlined that as the international community approaches CBD COP17, a critical moment for global biodiversity policy has arrived. He emphasised that the fundamental challenge is not merely agreeing on ambitious commitments, but actively translating them into concrete results for nature and the communities dependent upon it. He highlighted the European Union's strong commitment to the 2015 Paris Agreement and the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), noting the adoption of robust environmental legislation under the Green Deal and the EU's key role in international development cooperation. However, he pointed out that effective implementation requires additional policies, sustained funding, and listening to on-the-ground experiences, while integrating local knowledge. Reflecting on the experiences of Indigenous Peoples and local communities living alongside wildlife in Africa, he acknowledged that the scale and realities of human-wildlife coexistence differ significantly from those in Europe. He emphasised that these lived experiences provide important perspectives for European policymakers, particularly in ensuring that conservation policies recognise the practical realities and challenges of living alongside wildlife. Furthermore, he underscored the progress made regarding Target 9 on managing wild species sustainably to benefit people, pointing to the integration of local communities as essential partners. Ultimately, he called for COP17 to transition from discussions to practical solutions, ensuring EU policies support both conservation and sustainable use while enabling local communities to participate directly in decision-making.

After this opening speech, **Mr. Anne Theo Seinen** (Team Leader for Global Biodiversity, DG ENV, European Commission) reaffirmed the European Union's full commitment to the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), describing it as a major milestone for nature. Addressing the upcoming COP17, he highlighted that the first Global Review will examine national reports (NBSAPs), revealing that while the EU is on track for 15 out of its 45 targets, there is an urgent need to accelerate implementation for the remaining targets through robust regulatory frameworks. He expressed particular concern regarding the global implementation and ambition gaps between countries' national targets, noting that the EU supports the negotiating of the Yerevan pathway and a Yerevan call to action to establish clear guidance on where collective efforts should be directed. On the issue of funding, he emphasised that official development assistance must be maintained and combined with programs that integrate nature, people, and climate change to guarantee sustainable livelihoods. He detailed ongoing work on innovative financing mechanisms to encourage companies and the private sector to invest directly in nature additionality rather than merely compensating for losses. Additionally, he underscored the importance of knowledge sharing and international research cooperation, pointing to significant biodiversity funding within EU research programs. Finally, he insisted that the EU will maintain a key



role in planet monitoring and technical guidance at COP17, advocating for broader financial participation among countries and supporting programs of work on protected areas that enforce sustainable wildlife management and protect IPLC rights.

Subsequently, **Ms. Bianca Brasil** (Program Manager for Mainstreaming, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity) underscored that the dialogue comes at a particularly timely moment as governments prepare to gather in Yerevan, Armenia, marking the halfway point toward achieving the 2030 targets since the framework's adoption in Montreal. She commented that the core issue is no longer about the commitments made, but how to convert those pledges into meaningful outcomes for biodiversity and people. She highlighted that a central element of COP17 will be the first global review of collective progress, based on national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs), scientific assessments, and broad stakeholder contributions. While acknowledging positive signs such as political engagement - evidenced by over 170 parties submitting national targets and around 130 delivering their seventh national reports - she expressed particular concern that overall implementation is not occurring at the required pace or scale. She noted that fewer than half of the assessed national targets are currently on track, identifying severe gaps in resource mobilization, the reform of harmful incentives, business impact integration, and sustainable consumption patterns. To address these shortcomings, she emphasised three interconnected issues: first, the necessity of mainstreaming biodiversity into economic and development decisions (Target 14), as drivers of nature loss are linked to ministries of finance, agriculture, trade, and infrastructure; second, strengthening the means of implementation (Targets 18 and 19) by expanding financial resources, reforming harmful subsidies, and aligning private financial flows with nature goals; and third, ensuring inclusive governance (Targets 5, 9, and 22) through the full, equitable participation of Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs). Concluding her intervention, she stressed that success by 2030 will not be measured by policies announced, but by whether the drivers of biodiversity loss are reduced and local well-being is effectively secured.

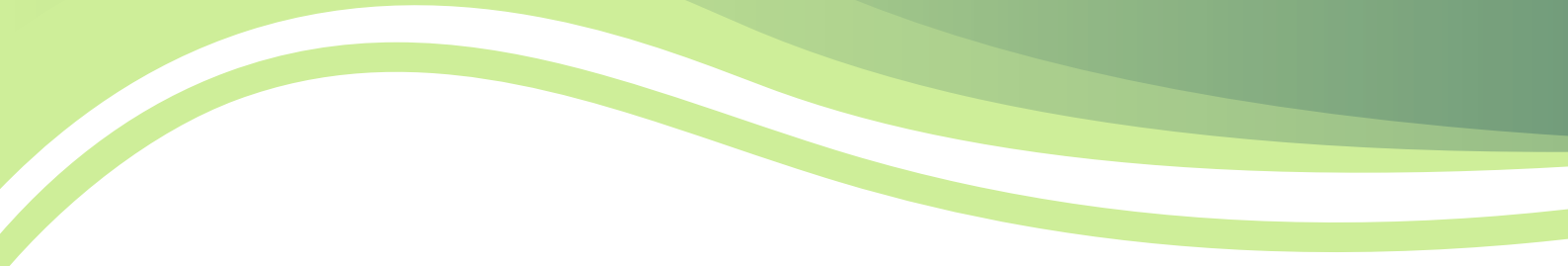
Ms. Taguhi Paremuzyan (Third Secretary, Mission of Armenia to the European Union) outlined Armenia's upcoming COP17 presidency, emphasizing that the event serves as a crucial milestone to assess collective achievements, pinpoint implementation gaps, and strengthen international cooperation. She asserted that Armenia's primary priority is to support an inclusive, transparent, and action-oriented summit that builds consensus and yields practical outcomes. She highlighted the critical relevance of Targets 5, 9, and 22, noting that they capture the essential human dimension of conservation by requiring that the use and trade of wild species remain legal and sustainable, that wild species management benefits local livelihoods, and that IPLCs, women, and youth participate equitably in decision-making processes. She warmly welcomed the initiative of the Armenian Presidency to host the "Leaders for Nature" Summit in Yerevan ahead of COP17, aiming to raise biodiversity on the global political agenda and adopt the Yerevan Call to Action.



Furthermore, she emphasised the priority of strengthening engagement with the business and financial sectors, sharing plans to convene a dedicated event alongside the CBD Secretariat for finance ministers and heads of international financial institutions to integrate biodiversity into economic and fiscal policies. She concluded by reinforcing that governments alone cannot achieve this transformation, highlighting that partnerships with the EU, Southern Africa, and international stakeholders will be essential to move from ambition to measurable progress.

Dr. Dilys Roe focused her intervention on Target 9, which centers on managing wild species sustainably to benefit human populations, reminding the audience that unsustainable use remains a primary driver of biodiversity loss. She explained that parties are required to report using key indicators, specifically the benefits derived from sustainable use and the percentage of the population involved in traditional occupations. However, based on the global review, she highlighted a clear mismatch: while several countries have incorporated these indicators into national targets, the majority have failed to report against them. She asserted that this discrepancy stems from a reporting gap and lack of capacity, rather than a lack of ambition or real progress on the ground. To illustrate this, she pointed to Southern Africa, where countries demonstrate high ambition by putting Target 9 into practice through the "wildlife economy" - integrating biodiversity-based products and services into national economic development. While acknowledging regional strengths such as effective Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) networks and rich natural capital, she highlighted significant challenges, including resource constraints, data monitoring issues, and external policies such as trophy import bans. To support progress, she urged the EU to support efforts that raise the profile of sustainable use within the CBD, strengthen IPLC decision-making rights within CITES, promote inclusive bioeconomy initiatives, and avoid unilateral domestic measures that curtail sustainable hunting and inadvertently undermine Target 9.

Moreover, **Dr. Prof. Patience Gandiwa** (Director International Conservation Affairs, ZimParks) presented Zimbabwe's conservation achievements and operational strategies, explaining that ZimParks operates within a multi-scale, multi-faceted legal framework that aligns national policies, species management plans, and blueprint strategies with international obligations under the CBD. She highlighted Zimbabwe's extraordinary wildlife heritage, noting that it hosts the world's second-largest elephant population, the fourth-largest rhino population, and the largest carnivore population in Africa. She asserted that Zimbabwe's success formula, anchored in the Parks and Wildlife Amendment Act, balances the conservation mandate with financial self-sufficiency through the responsible, science-guided use of wildlife resources, including tourism, regulated hunting, and fishing. At the grassroots level, she emphasised that success relies on strong multi-sectoral partnerships, ecotourism services, robust scientific research, and investments in ICT and administration to manage vast conservation landscapes effectively. Looking ahead to COP17, she expressed concerns over uneven global progress and the persistent resource gap, calling for the operationalization of financial mechanisms like the Cali Fund for Digital Sequence Information (DSI) and greater support for local authorities and community-led conservation initiatives.

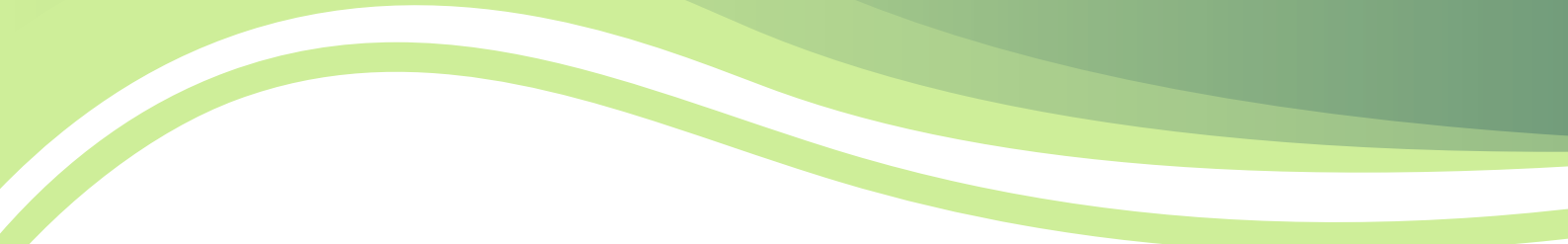


Ms. Lesle Jansen (Managing Director of ACRRA) advocated strongly for a human-centered conservation approach, stressing that global biodiversity targets must fully recognize and respect the traditional ways of life of Indigenous peoples and local communities. She highlighted the operational focus on Targets 3 (30% protection), 5 (sustainable and legal trade), and 9 (benefiting livelihoods), arguing that empowering local communities to manage natural resources sustainably bridges the gap between policy and implementation. She detailed the actions of two supporting structures: IPNESA (Indigenous Peoples Network of Southern Africa), which assists communities with key biodiversity species, and the Community Leaders Network, which focuses on governance, rights, sustainable livelihoods, conservation, and financing mechanisms. She underlined the principles of the Nairobi Declaration adopted by African IPLCs at the Africa Protected Areas Congress (APAC), which calls for a rights-based approach to the GBF. In conclusion, she emphasised the necessity of implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, securing land tenure and conservancy rights, and safeguarding traditional hunting practices and sustainable wildlife trade.

Mr. Hacky Gcao (Committee Member, Nyae Nyae Conservancy) provided a detailed account of communal conservancies in Namibia. He explained that communal conservancies grant local communities legal rights to manage, protect, and benefit directly from wildlife, including key species like the "Big Five," while preserving traditional knowledge related to food and medicinal practices. He highlighted that main management decisions are determined democratically through Annual General Meetings (AGMs) to ensure the proper execution of conservancy plans. He emphasised that revenues generated from trophy hunting, ecotourism, and research are reinvested directly into paying conservancy staff salaries and providing social benefits to the broader community. Ultimately, he asserted that these structured conservancy activities effectively protect traditional hunting rights and reinforce local communities' fundamental right to sustainable development.

Following these presentations, Members of the European Parliament took the floor to offer their remarks. To begin with, **MEP César Luena** (S&D, Co-Chair of the European Parliament Delegation to CBD COP17) asserted that the dialogue arrives at a crucial moment as governments prepare for COP17, stressing that the core question is whether the Global Biodiversity Framework is being translated into tangible change on the ground - in forests, farms, rivers, national parks, and coastal areas - alongside local populations. He warmly welcomed the rich biodiversity and long-standing wildlife management expertise of Southern Africa, noting that Europe must come ready to listen and learn. He emphasised that nature protection cannot occur by excluding local communities who bear the daily costs of conservation, advocating for their rights, knowledge, and fair benefit-sharing in line with Targets 5, 9, and 22. Addressing the upcoming global review, he expressed particular concern that current global progress remains insufficient to meet 2030 targets, arguing that the Yerevan Pathway must shift momentum and ensure the full, effective involvement of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), notably through the new body on Article 8(j).





Regarding finance, he highlighted that public funds remain essential and called for the operationalization of the Cali Fund on Digital Sequence Information (DSI) to ensure fair benefit-sharing reaches developing nations and IPLCs. Finally, he insisted that the EU's international credibility depends on domestic consistency, such as implementing the Nature Restoration Regulation and maintaining biodiversity funding in the next European budget, concluding that global decisions must align with local realities through genuine partnerships built on trust and mutual respect.

Subsequently, **MEP Stefan Köhler** (EPP, Co-Chair of the European Parliament Delegation to CBD COP17) highlighted that COP17 forces the world to address biodiversity loss, which is not a distant environmental issue, but the very foundation of healthy ecosystems that underpin food security, economic resilience, and quality of life. He mentioned that protecting nature and building prosperous societies are not competing objectives, stressing that the key duty of policymakers is to find balanced solutions that achieve both. Pointing to past lessons where none of the 20 Aichi targets were fully met by 2020, he expressed particular concern over repeating past failures, calling for realistic plans, robust science, careful monitoring, and strict accountability. He emphasised that achieving global biodiversity targets requires moving from abstract commitments to delivering concrete resources, reinforcing that farmers, fishers, and local communities are essential partners who manage land and waters daily. Ultimately, he insisted on the goal of mobilizing \$200 billion annually by 2030, while ensuring that funds are utilized effectively to yield measurable recovery for nature rather than merely tracking administrative activity.

Furthermore, **MEP Manuela Ripa** (EPP) asserted that four years after adopting the Kunming-Montreal Framework, the central question is no longer defining objectives, but determining how to deliver effective conservation, restore degraded ecosystems, and mobilize sufficient financing. She emphasised that biodiversity protection can only succeed by working with local communities as guardians of nature, arguing that participation must mean early involvement and direct benefit-sharing rather than late-stage consultation. While acknowledging that Europe can learn from Southern Africa's experience with community-based conservation, she highlighted the EU's internal responsibility as a major donor and market, warning against weakening key domestic tools such as the Nature Restoration Law and the Birds and Habitats Directives. On sustainable use, Ms. Ripa clarified that sustainable use should not justify every form of wildlife exploitation and must be reviewed through a science-based management approach. Furthermore, the MEP advocated for strengthening sustainable non-consumptive alternatives like ecotourism where viable, concluding that COP17 must be a "COP of implementation" based on adequate financing and genuine partnership between Europe and Africa.

In his closing remarks, host **MEP Michal Wiezik** warned that humanity risks driving wild species to permanent extinction, if conservation measures fail. He asserted that any new policymaking process must remain extremely cautious and avoid crossing points of no return, stressing that decisions must be firmly anchored in solid scientific data and rigorous evidence. Also, MEP Wiezik



highlighted the importance of differentiating between sustainable and unsustainable use of natural resources. Concluding the dialogue, he called on CBD COP17 negotiators to rely on robust, solid data to secure the long-term survival of wildlife indefinitely, rather than short-term gains, reminding the audience that human well-being ultimately depends on the health of global ecosystems.



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