

Biodiversity and Climate Change: COP16 and the Global Efforts to Address the Crisis

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Introduction

- As the world grapples with the twin crises of **climate change** and **biodiversity loss**, global conferences like the **UN Biodiversity Conference (COP16)**, scheduled in **Cali, Colombia**, are gaining significance.
- Following the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**, which was established at the **1992 Rio Earth Summit**, COP16 focuses on protecting biodiversity, restoring ecosystems, and ensuring fair distribution of the benefits derived from the world's biological resources.
- This meeting comes after a landmark agreement, the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework** (2022), which set ambitious targets for conserving biodiversity by 2030.

- These conferences are increasingly gaining attention as the impact of environmental degradation becomes more apparent globally.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

- The **Kunming-Montreal Framework**, finalized at **COP15** in 2022, established four major goals and 23 specific targets to be achieved by 2030. One of the most prominent of these is the **30 x 30 target**, which aims to:
 - **Conserve 30% of the world's lands and oceans** by 2030, particularly focusing on biodiversity-rich areas.
 - **Restore 30% of degraded land or marine ecosystems** by 2030.
- This framework is an essential step in reversing biodiversity loss and restoring natural ecosystems.
- However, progress has been slow, and one of the main objectives of **COP16** is to accelerate efforts to meet these targets.
- Countries are required to submit their **National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs)**, which are equivalent to the **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** under the **Paris Climate Agreement**.
- Despite the ambitious framework, only **32 countries** have submitted their NBSAPs, and more are expected to do so during **COP16**.

Interconnection Between Climate Change and Biodiversity

- The crises of **climate change** and **biodiversity loss** are deeply intertwined:
 - **Climate change accelerates biodiversity loss**, with rising temperatures and erratic weather patterns destroying ecosystems.
 - In return, **ecosystem changes**—such as deforestation and ocean warming—contribute to **global warming**, further exacerbating climate issues.
- Although these two crises have been addressed on separate tracks for decades, there is now a growing recognition of their interdependence.
- As a result, biodiversity and climate discussions are starting to converge, with **COP16** focusing on biodiversity while parallel efforts continue in **climate change negotiations**.

High Seas Treaty and Ocean Conservation

- Another significant development in the fight against biodiversity loss is the finalization of the **High Seas Treaty**, also known as the **Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdictions (BBNJ)** agreement.
- This treaty aims to protect biodiversity in oceans outside of national boundaries.
- The treaty calls for the creation of **protected areas** in biodiversity-rich parts of the oceans where human activities can be regulated, similar to national parks on land.
- Additionally, the treaty ensures equitable sharing of benefits from the exploitation of genetic resources in the oceans.
- These genetic resources, ranging from microbes to large marine species, hold immense commercial potential, especially in the fields of **medicine**, **biotechnology**, and **agriculture**.

- The **High Seas Treaty** ensures that these benefits are shared among all nations, not just a few.

Access and Benefit Sharing: The Nagoya Protocol

- The **Nagoya Protocol**, finalized at **COP10** in 2010, laid down rules for **Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS)**.
- This mechanism ensures that the benefits from the commercial use of biological resources are fairly distributed, especially to the countries and communities that own or manage these resources.
- At **COP16**, countries are expected to discuss the sharing of benefits from the **digital genetic information** of plants and organisms.
- Advances in science now allow genetic sequences to be stored and shared digitally, and these sequences are highly valuable for the creation of **high-yield crops, medicines, and beauty products**.
- The debate centres around how these digital sequences can be used and who gets to share in the profits, particularly **indigenous populations** who might have originally owned these resources.

Financial Mechanisms for Biodiversity Conservation

- Like in climate change discussions, **finance** plays a critical role in biodiversity negotiations.
- One of the 23 targets of the **Kunming-Montreal Framework** is to mobilize **\$200 billion per year** by 2030 from all sources for biodiversity conservation. This includes:
 - **\$20 billion annually** from developed countries to developing nations for their biodiversity efforts.
 - An increase in this amount to **\$30 billion per year** by 2030.
- At **COP16**, the focus will also be on how countries can eliminate or repurpose **harmful subsidies** that negatively affect biodiversity, such as subsidies for **fossil fuels, deforestation, and overfishing**.
- The goal is to redirect these subsidies to sustainable activities and scale up efforts to **\$500 billion** by 2030.

Conclusion

- As the world moves towards addressing the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, conferences like **COP16** play a pivotal role in driving international cooperation and action.
- The **30 x 30 target**, the **High Seas Treaty**, and the push for **financial mobilization** are crucial elements in the global fight to preserve biodiversity.
- As biodiversity loss accelerates, there is a growing understanding that both developed and developing countries must work together to achieve these ambitious goals.
- **COP16** will be a critical platform for countries to make meaningful progress towards protecting our planet's **biodiversity**.

Q1. What do you mean by CBD?

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is an international legal agreement that aims to conserve biodiversity, sustainably use its components, and fairly share the benefits of genetic resources.

Q2. What is the meaning of Climate Resilience?

Climate resilience is the ability to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to hazardous events, trends, or disturbances related to climate. Improving climate resilience involves assessing how climate change will create new, or alter current, climate-related risks, and taking steps to better cope with these risks.

News: The Biodiversity COP

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