



Policy coherence, including a potential joint work programme of the Rio Conventions

A CBD Women's Caucus submission

April 2025

The CBD Women's Caucus, on behalf of its more than 700 members around the world, submits the following inputs and consideration as contribution to the information that will be made available for the 27th meeting of CBD Subsidiary Body of Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, as requested and mandated by the CBD COP decision 16/22 to take into account the diversity of values, worldviews and knowledge systems, including the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as the intersectional approaches.

The interlinked crises of biodiversity loss, climate change and land degradation are accelerating, with compounding effects on ecosystems, livelihoods, and rights holders. On the one hand, it is women and other systematically marginalised groups that are most negatively impacted by biodiversity loss and climate change and suffer the highest social and economic costs hence further entrenching the rising global inequality. On the other hand, women, especially from Indigenous peoples, local communities and peoples from African descent embedding traditional lifestyles, are key ecological, cultural, social and economic agents in conservation and sustainable use, mitigation and adaptation and offer solutions to climate change and biodiversity loss that focus on building resilient communities and ensuring practices that protect life. They have the potential to be effectively rolled out and integrated at multiple levels to achieve the goals of the three Rio Conventions. However, these solutions are often ignored and not visible to many decision-makers.

The cross-cutting gender perspective recognized in CBD and UNFCCC (and UNCCD), makes it all the more imperative to leverage further synergies and work on a shared programme of work for more effective, just and sustainable actions. The common acknowledgment of the importance of rights, HRBA, gender equality and equity in CBD, UNFCCC, and a priority focus on land and resource rights, participation in policy and decision-making and access to resources, information and justice, can be built upon to effectively and collaboratively address these interconnected challenges and drivers that impact biodiversity, ecosystems and livelihoods alike, and thus achieve the goal of living in harmony and peace with nature.

As reaffirmed by CBD Decision 15/4 (Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework), CBD Decision 15/11 (Gender Plan of Action) and CBD Decision 14/34 (post-2020 GBF), a rights-based and gender-responsive approach to biodiversity policy and action is non-negotiable. Likewise, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), particularly General Recommendations Nos. 34, 37 and 39, and the outcomes of multiple Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), offer binding and normative guidance that must inform a potential joint programme of work across the Rio Conventions.

1. Inter-Conventions coordination mechanism for implementation of the plans of action on gender

Gender action plans have been developed or are under review within the Rio Conventions, aimed at ensuring that gender equality is integrated into environmental governance, policies, and processes. These plans focus on empowering women in decision-making and ensuring that gender perspectives are reflected in the achievement of each Convention's goals.

To enhance the effectiveness of these action plans, the CBD Women's Caucus proposes the establishment of a joint mechanism across the Rio Conventions. A dedicated Inter-convention Gender Coordination Committee should be formed, consisting of representatives from the Secretariats of the three Conventions, Parties (with a particular focus on Gender Focal Points), women's and gender constituencies from each Rio Convention, UN agencies, and other relevant stakeholders.

This committee could have, among others, the following roles:

- **Identifying and harmonizing common gender goals** across the three Conventions to ensure they are aligned and mutually reinforcing, and therefore delivering on impact for gender-responsive biodiversity and climate actions rather than siloed or contradictory.
- **Supporting coordinated monitoring**, evaluation, and review of the plans of action on gender. This would involve definition of relevant indicators to track progress and adjust strategies as needed, regular reporting and participatory feedback mechanisms to ensure that the gender-responsive strategies are effective and meet their intended outcomes.
- **Promoting earmarked allocation of funds** for the implementation of the gender plan of actions, either from existing or future financial mechanisms. The Rio Conventions must ensure that resources are allocated to gender-responsive actions. This includes dedicating specific funds to be mobilised in a predictable and sufficient manner at the international and domestic level.
- **Creating and maintaining a standing exchange and learning spaces** dedicated for Gender Focal Points, and between the Women and Gender Constituencies, of the Rio Conventions are critical. This exchange would include the alignment and coordination, as well as cross-fora capacity building, including knowledge exchange and the sharing of best practices. In this context, regional platforms could be invaluable resources to support these exchanges.

2. Focus on women's land and water rights and tenure security

The Rio Conventions have recognised women's land rights-related obligations within their monitoring frameworks. This includes the inclusion of land tenure indicators under the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) Monitoring Framework, formal initiatives such as the FAO/UNCCD joint initiative on tenure and land degradation neutrality (adopted by UNCCD COP15 and COP16), and strengthened links between gender considerations under the Rio Conventions and the SDG indicators on land tenure.

As stated in Target 23 of the GBF and in the CBD Gender Plan of Action Expected outcome 1, Land rights and tenure security are essential for sustainable land, water and resource governance and sustainable use of , and climate adaptations and resilience. Yet, women and girls in all their diversity—including those from Indigenous Peoples and local and rural communities—often face legal, institutional, and socio-cultural barriers that limit their access to, ownership of, and decision-making power over land and natural resources. Moreover, laws and provisions might be in place.

Securing women's land rights is not only a question of justice, but a strategic and evidence-based investment in effective biodiversity governance. Research shows that when women have secure tenure and can participate equally in land use decisions, biodiversity outcomes improve, and conservation efforts are more sustainable and equitable.

In this sense, a joint programme among Rio Conventions should address this matter by:

- **Promote and support recognition of** diverse tenure systems, including customary and collective rights, ensuring they are equitably accessible to women and girls in all their diversity.
- **Provide evidence of the barriers and opportunities for women and girls'** access to land, seeds, water, and other productive resources, including through legal reforms and the protection of customary tenure systems.
- **Promote and support implementation** at national level of related international obligations, including CEDAW General Recommendation No. 34 and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to uphold women's land tenure rights in practice.
- **Provide evidence of the barriers and opportunities for full, effective, and informed participation** of women and girls in land and resource governance at all levels, including in community-led conservation and protected area management.
- **Institutionalise the use of disaggregated data**—including by sex, age, and tenure type—in monitoring biodiversity and land governance, to expose and address gendered inequalities.
- **Promote and provide guidance for women's** access to justice and remedy for violations of land rights, including through gender-responsive grievance mechanisms and support for legal empowerment.
- **Promote collaboration among relevant actors** for SDG indicators on land tenure (1.4.2, 5.a.1, and 5.a.2 under Target 23) to be systematically tracked not only under the CBD, but also under the UNCCD and UNFCCC, to enhance coherence and enable long-term accountability.

Box 1. “Connecting Rights Across Rio Conventions”

Synergies for women's land rights across the Rio Conventions (and within each Convention) are found from local to global levels. At the local level in Ethiopia, the [Stand for Her Land](#) global advocacy initiative leverages these synergies by working with several local and national Ethiopian organizations that address the nexus between women's land rights and ecosystem management and restoration.

This [case study](#) details the contribution of secure land rights for women to land restoration outcomes, helping fulfill the Government of Ethiopia's commitments to land degradation neutrality under the UNCCD. The case study highlights ways in which women's leadership and rights at the local level can meet goals associated with one Rio Convention, which in turn can contribute to the goals of the other two. As women – relying on their secure rights to land – cultivate and protect native species of plants and demonstrate and train on sustainable land management practices, biodiversity loss can be halted and climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience are strengthened.

This work at the local level is a crucial part of the systems change approach being driven from grassroots to global levels by the women's land rights movement. There is growing global recognition of women's land rights as a basis for effective action across the Rio Conventions, including the [Women's Land Rights in the Rio Conventions Initiative](#), co-sponsored by the Secretariats of each Convention; and contributions to the evidence base and global advocacy supporting the links between women's land rights and the Rio Conventions, as captured in the [synergies paper](#) on gender in the Rio Conventions recently published by UN Women, and this [evidence scan](#) on women's land rights and climate change produced by Landesa.

3. Inter-convention task force on environmental human rights defenders

As recognised under the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (1998) States have a duty to protect environmental and human rights defenders, from reprisals and violence. Despite this, women environmental and human rights defenders (WEHRDs) continue to face targeted threats, harassment, criminalisation, and violence including gender-based violence (GBV) –often fuelled by structural discrimination and the shrinking of civic space. In many countries, those standing up for the environment, land, or water face higher risks if they are women, Indigenous, or from other historically excluded groups. Yet international environmental frameworks have so far failed to adequately recognise or respond to this reality.

To fulfil their mandates effectively, the Rio Conventions could address this pressing issue in a coordinated manner, by establishing an Inter-Convention Task Force on Environmental Human Rights Defenders, with gender as a cross cutting element ensuring comprehensive attention to differentiated impacts against (WEHRDs), including gender based violence. This Task force could bring together Secretariats, focal points and women and gender constituencies, as well as other relevant actors as UN agencies and Academia, including collaboration with UN Special Rapporteurs on human rights defenders, on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, on the human right to a healthy environment and on climate change.

And for it to be effective, the respective financial mechanisms (GEF or GCF for example) should dedicate targeted funding for the Task Force to achieve its objectives.

This Task Force should deliver, among others, on:

- **Establish a harmonised reporting system** to collect and report sex-disaggregated data on GBV, threats, and reprisals against WEHRDs. This data should inform National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Strategies (NASs) and Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets.
- **Integrate gender-responsive human rights safeguards** into biodiversity, climate, and land restoration projects, ensuring that conservation, restoration and climate initiatives do not lead to land dispossession, controlled access to natural resources, forced displacement, or increased risks for WEHRDs.
- **Strengthen access to justice and protection mechanisms**, including by providing access to legal aid and emergency response funds, and formally recognizing WEHRDs as rights holders under environmental governance and legal frameworks. This should be linked to the compliance of adopted declarations on Human Rights and on Indigenous Peoples' Rights, and where applicable, the Escazú Agreement, among others.

Box 2. Integrating gender perspectives to protect those who protect land: the work of the Land rights defenders Platform in Latin America

The International Land Coalition (ILC) is the largest global alliance working to secure land rights, uniting over 300 organizations across 84 countries. To respond to both emergency situations faced by members and a shrinking civic space threatening defenders, ILC has established regional emergency funds, joined partnerships to document attacks against land rights defenders, to connect local struggles to broader advocacy platforms, and to amplify defenders' voices—especially those of grassroots women land defenders.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, ILC brings together 57 members in 16 countries committed to people-centered land governance. In a region marked by violence, extractivism, land grabbing, and criminalization, supporting women land and territory defenders is a key priority.

The Regional Platform of Land and Environmental Defenders (LED), led by ILC LAC since 2014, brings together 16+ member organizations from eight countries—Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, and Peru—and works with over 30 allies. In response to escalating threats, the platform has intensified advocacy to elevate defenders' voices in key decision-making spaces. It has engaged in processes like the Escazú Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the UNFCCC, urging recognition of defenders' protection as essential for environmental and climate justice.

The LED Platform connects two strategic levels: local and international. Locally, it has a unique capacity to reach communities directly affected by attacks—lethal and non-lethal—strengthening their ability to respond and protect themselves. Globally, this engagement enables the platform to gather detailed information on human rights violations and bring that evidence to global mechanisms—helping to raise visibility, demand accountability, and drive systemic change.

Since 2023, it has implemented an advocacy roadmap developed by women defenders. As part of this, efforts are underway to incorporate a gender perspective into the Escazú Agreement's Regional Action Plan. Today, the LED Platform is recognized as a key regional actor on issues related to environmental defenders. Through its work, it has amplified the voices of women defenders, positioning them as essential decision-makers in climate and biodiversity discussions, and ensuring that their demands are heard and taken into account at the global level.

4. Gender-responsive funding and finance

Despite repeated commitments to gender equality across biodiversity and climate frameworks, dedicated and accessible funding to support the leadership, priorities, and rights of women and girls in all their diversity remains scarce. Gender-blind finance perpetuates exclusion and undermines the effectiveness and equity of environmental action.

Women and girls, particularly from Indigenous Peoples and local communities, continue to be excluded from decision-making on funding flows, from the design of funds to the governance of benefit-sharing mechanisms. Meanwhile, the organisations and networks that centre their voices—especially those led by and for women—remain drastically underfunded and overburdened by donor requirements.

Gender-responsive financing is not an add-on. It is fundamental to ensuring that biodiversity and climate finance reaches those who are most directly engaged in protecting and restoring ecosystems.

The CBD Women's Caucus has identified three critical domains for the Rio Conventions to work in a coordinated manner:

- **Incorporate gender-responsive budgeting** into their funding mechanisms principles and programmatic provisions. By earmarking funds for gender-responsive actions, the Rio Conventions can support programmes that empower women in decision-making processes and strengthen their capacities in environmental governance.
- **Enable access to funding, including through direct access mechanisms**, by women's organizations under the Rio Conventions financial mechanisms and instruments. This should include the following: simplifying application processes ensuring they are also accessible and flexible; providing capacity building and technical assistance to create and enhance financial literacy at the local level; ensuring representation of women in financial bodies and instruments; and enabling representation and active participation in decision-making processes for funds distribution.
- **Track the allocation and use of funds** in gender-responsive climate, biodiversity and/or desertification neutrality initiatives through robust monitoring, transparency and accountability mechanisms. Monitoring systems should include gender-sensitive indicators that assess the effectiveness of funding in addressing women's specific needs as identified by them, and advancing gender justice. Moreover, participatory auditing processes should be implemented, allowing women's groups, civil society and any stakeholder to track funding and results for ensuring that allocated resources reach their intended beneficiaries and achieve the desired outcomes in terms of gender justice.

Box 3. Recognizing Women as Crucial Rightsholders in Climate and Conservation Action is the Path to Achieving Gender-Responsive Financing

The Women in Global South Alliance (WiGSA) was catalyzed by Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) in 2022 as a response to the historic \$1.7 billion Pledge made at the UNFCCC CoP26 in Glasgow by governments and donors to support Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Although this funding commitment was a step in the right direction, WiGSA asserts that to repair the historical gap in funding for grassroots organizations, the international donor community must also address the rights of Indigenous, Afro-descendent, and local community women and girls, whose direct access to funding has been severely limited.

With UNFCCC CoP30 in Brazil in 2025 and the anticipated announcement of a second donor Pledge, gender equity and women's tenure rights perspectives cannot be left behind in new financial commitments. Women and girls should be recognized as rightsholders in climate mitigation and adaptation efforts and biodiversity conservation actions and have direct access to global finances.

To build evidence-based analysis on women's direct access to funding, RRI and WiGSA are developing research on the level of global financing reaching Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and local community women's organizations in the Global South. This research assesses the extent to which existing grants and funding mechanisms are considered fit-for-purpose by recipient organizations. Preliminary findings published in October 2024 show that data on women's access to funding is insufficient and inadequate; data is virtually non-existent for Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and local community women; and overall investment in gender equality is declining. The 13 WiGSA members surveyed show that seven had a 2023 annual budget of US\$100,000–US\$500,000, and very few reported budgets greater than US\$ 500,000, even though WiGSA members work in several countries or multiple regions within a single country.

To close the direct funding gap for grassroots women and girls, "the international community needs to recognize community women as leaders and subjects with rights in climate and conservation finance". [WiGSA member, Peru]

5. Recognition and support of women's contributions to food security

Food systems are both a driver and a solution to the interlinked biodiversity and climate crises. Women and girls in all their diversity, including those from Indigenous Peoples and local communities, are central to these systems—as seed keepers, producers, knowledge holders, and defenders of agroecological practices.

Yet dominant models of industrial agriculture continue to erode biodiversity, fuel greenhouse gas emissions, and displace traditional knowledge systems. These models often exclude women from decision-making, limit access to land and resources, and undermine food sovereignty.

Gender-just, biodiversity-positive approaches to agriculture are urgently needed. Agroecology, community-based food systems, and Indigenous and traditional knowledge must be recognised as vital to climate resilience and biodiversity conservation. These approaches are most effective when women's rights to land, seeds, and territories are fully realised.

The CBD Women's Caucus considers that a framework and implementing guidelines for gender-responsive and sustainable food systems should be developed as an essential element of a joint work programme under the Rio Conventions.

The blueprint for this framework could be the general recommendations that the CEDAW Committee has made to State Parties on various issues, including:

- **Support the leadership and knowledge** of women in agroecological transitions, recognising their roles in conserving biodiversity and enhancing climate resilience.
- **Integrate gender justice and biodiversity considerations** into national and international policies on agriculture and food security, including through National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).
- **Provide evidence and guidance on** how Parties could redirect public and private finance away from harmful agricultural subsidies and towards gender-just, biodiversity-positive food systems, with full participation of rights holders in the design and implementation of these transitions.
- **Provide evidence and guidance on how Rio Conventions could** protect and promote Indigenous and traditional knowledge systems, including women's seed networks and community food practices, as essential components of resilient food systems.

Box 4. Afro Colombian women, and Marine Life: A Legacy of Protection and Provision

The marine ecosystems have been a source of livelihood for many local and indigenous communities worldwide. Coastal women have played an important role in the conservation of marine biodiversity by using traditional sustainable practices.

This is the case of afro-descent women in the Pacific Coastal areas in Colombia that for generations have applied traditional knowledge to preserve the mangroves as they are an important source of their livelihoods. In Buenaventura, for example, women, especially the 'piangüeras', work in the sustainable harvesting of the piangua (*Anadara tuberculosa* and *Anadara similis*), a mollusc found in mangrove swamps, and other seafood such as crabs and shrimps.

Their work protects marine ecosystems by: respecting the prohibition of closed periods for harvesting marine life (*veda*) to prevent overexploitation allowing the breeding of species; using artisanal harvesting techniques to avoid the destruction of the natural habitat; and active involvement in mangrove restoration and reforestation projects. Some have organised themselves into associations to promote the fair and direct sale of marine products, improving their income and contributing to the local economy.

In addition, they participate in training on sustainable fishing and marine conservation, strengthening their role as guardians of the ecosystem. They teach the new generations on the importance of mangroves and ecological balance while promoting traditional cuisine. The work of these women not only helps to preserve the marine biodiversity of the Pacific Region Colombia, contributing to climate change but also guarantees access to traditional foods and strengthens the cultural identity of the region.[1]

[1] Gobernación del Valle del Cauca, Proyecto de Piangüeras de Buenaventura; Proyecto Raíces Costeras, Febrero 2025.

6. Coordinated answers to forced migration, displacement, conflict and disaster risk reduction

The interconnected challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation are significant drivers of forced migration and conflict. These environmental and socio-political crises have distinct, gender-differentiated impacts—particularly on women and girls in all their diversity, including those from Indigenous Peoples and local communities—who face heightened risks due to structural inequalities and gender-based discrimination.

CEDAW General Recommendation No. 37 affirms that climate-induced disasters exacerbate existing gender inequalities, increase exposure to sexual and gender-based violence, and limit women's and girls' access to food, water, education, healthcare, and livelihood opportunities. It emphasises that States have an obligation to ensure that disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation measures are gender-responsive and support women's rights to participation, protection, and access to justice.

Within the framework of a joint work programme under the Rio Conventions, it is essential to:

- **Develop a binding framework or set of guidelines** to ensure that all biodiversity, climate, and land degradation policies and projects are conflict-sensitive and account for the rights and specific needs of women and girls affected by conflict and displacement. These should be aligned with CEDAW Recommendation No. 37 and other relevant human rights standards.
- **Build capacity among Parties and stakeholders** to integrate gender and conflict sensitivity into planning and implementation processes, drawing on principles from the Beijing Platform for Action and international human rights obligations.
- **Establish a joint monitoring mechanism** to assess how environmental policy interventions impact forced migration, conflict dynamics, and displacement patterns, with sex- and age-disaggregated data that inform inclusive and context-sensitive responses.

Conclusion

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right—it is a necessary foundation for achieving a just transition and delivering the objectives of the Rio Conventions. Empowering women and girls in all their diversity, including those from Indigenous Peoples and local communities, is a strategic investment in social wellbeing, biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, and sustainable development.

The full, effective, and inclusive participation of women in all aspects of the Rio Convention processes—particularly at national and local levels—is vital to realising the 2050 Vision of Living in Harmony with Nature.

We urge Parties to the CBD and the Rio Conventions to take concrete steps toward greater coherence, accountability, and impact through a joint work programme that is gender-responsive, rights-based, and grounded in the lived realities of women around the world.

The CBD Women's Caucus (CBD WC) is the women's constituency within the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It stands as a self-organised global platform, supporting women and girls worldwide to advocate for their rights within biodiversity-related decision-making processes across all levels.

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