



CBD Women

Policy Analysis

CBD COP 16.2

Key outcomes from a gender justice perspective

By Amelia Arreguin (CBD WC), Cristina Eghenter (WWF International), Edda Fernandez (AVAAZ), Meenal Tatpati (W4B), and Valentina Figueroa Martinez (GFC) as members of the CBD Women's Caucus policy team.

The resumption of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Conference of the Parties (COP) 16 in February 2025 in Rome marked another important moment in the ongoing effort to implement a gender-responsive Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). As parties and stakeholders came together to conclude negotiations on remaining pivotal decisions, the CBD Women's Caucus worked to ensure that the outcomes be gender-responsive and aligned with our overarching goal of advancing gender justice in biodiversity conservation. This analysis provides an overview of the gender-relevant outcomes from key decisions, highlights the progress made, and identifies the gaps that require further advocacy and action.

1. Resource Mobilisation & Financial Mechanism

1.1 Updated resource mobilisation strategy

One of the primary areas of focus of attention for the CBD Women's Caucus (CBD WC) was the Resource Mobilisation Strategy, a key decision for securing financial resources to implement biodiversity actions. Our position was clear: the strategy must be rooted in a human rights-based approach, ensuring that it is gender-responsive and inclusive. We also called for the allocation of dedicated funds for the implementation of the Gender Plan of Action (GPA), alongside mechanisms to enable direct access to funding for women. This would provide women with the autonomy to manage resources and implement biodiversity projects, a crucial step toward access to decision-making for women in the conservation space.



While the final decision on the resource mobilisation strategy does mention the importance of timely access to financial resources and capacity-building for women, the term direct access was notably absent from the operative text. This is a critical gap, as direct access would allow women's groups and local rightsholders to more effectively implement biodiversity projects without the bureaucratic barriers and intermediaries often associated with traditional funding channels. Direct access would facilitate establishing priorities to halt biodiversity loss, proposing bottom-up inclusive solutions, fulfilling human rights, and ensuring gender equity, in line with the objectives of the Convention.

Although there is recognition of the need for environmental and social safeguards and a gender-responsive approach in scaling up finance, efforts must be focused on promoting non-market based and human rights-based approaches which prioritize the integrity, connectivity and resilience of all ecosystems, rather than instruments favoring economic interests.

Moving forward, the CBD WC will continue engaging with Parties and key international financial institutions to ensure that direct access becomes a formal component of the resource mobilization framework in future negotiations. We must also continue to advocate for the creation of a dedicated financial mechanism for the implementation of the GPA, ensuring that gender-focused biodiversity actions are adequately funded. The CBD WC will continue to advocate for the scaling-up of biodiversity finance to be responsible and adopt a gender-responsive and human rights-based approach.

1.2 Financial mechanism

The decision regarding the Financial Mechanism presented a more positive development in terms of gender inclusion. Global Environment Facility (GEF), as the interim financial mechanism of the CBD, has an opportunity to play a significant role in advancing women's participation in biodiversity finance. The GEF's ninth replenishment cycle provides an important window for change as the Trust Fund shall explore ways to maximize support for women, and will explore options for direct access to funding for women-led initiatives, as well as initiatives from youth, Indigenous Peoples, and from local communities. Moreover, the Gender Plan of Action has been listed as one of the elements that GEF-9 shall be supported during the ninth replenishment cycle.

However, while this represents progress, the decision lacks concrete language on how direct access will be operationalized, what will be the ways in which GPA will be supported, and what governance mechanisms will ensure that women are fully involved in GEF's decision-making processes. It is critical that the CBD WC remains engaged and active as the ninth replenishment cycle progresses and GEF reforms take place, ensuring that women's groups effectively engage in the decision-making and that women-led initiatives receive the attention and monetary support they deserve.



2. Monitoring Framework

The discussion around the Monitoring Framework was another significant item to be finalized to ensure the effective implementation of the GBF. While the framework was for the most part already negotiated in Cali, there were brackets around headline indicators to be adopted for Targets 7 and 16. The final decision reflects a hard-thought compromise related to indicators for Target 16 on global consumption.

Regrettably, Target 23 is still without a headline indicator; that is, there is currently no agreed measure to help track and report advances on gender justice, women's rights, and empowerment in the implementation of the GBF, and monitor its gender-responsiveness. However, an important paragraph was agreed to allow for an intersessional process to submit additional indicators supported by a robust methodology. This provides a potential avenue for the CBD WC to advocate for the elevation of gender-related indicators to headline status, in particular the current component indicator on the implementation of the Gender Plan of Action.

To make meaningful progress, the CBD WC must work closely with champion Parties to improve current indicators to be gender-responsive or to develop new ones as appropriate, and ensure that Target 23 is effectively implemented and progress monitored beyond binary indicators, and therefore given the significance the nexus of gender justice and biodiversity deserves.

3. Mechanisms for Planning, Monitoring, Reporting, and Reviewing (PMRR)

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The decision on Planning, Monitoring, Reporting, and Reviewing (PMRR) was another area where the Women's Caucus made significant gains. The key element of the decision to allow for non-state actors, including civil society organizations, to submit communications directly to the CBD Secretariat remains and is finally adopted, while the principle of non-objection by Parties stands for a 4-week period after the submission is posted on the website. While this is a critical step towards enabling more participation of women's groups and other non-state actors in monitoring and reporting processes of the CBD and incorporates the whole of society for GBF implementation, the submissions will be made available to the NFP and could be withdrawn from publication at any time if there is an objection.

On a positive note, which was also a critical ask of the CBD WC, the Secretariat clarified in plenary that the result of the midterm review of the GPA will be one of the critical considerations to inform the global review process, thus creating an important opportunity to bring gender issues to the forefront of the broader CBD discussions.

4. Cooperation

The Cooperation decision, although an important area for potential gender inclusion, fell short of our expectations. The text of the decision outlines the need for cooperation between the CBD and other international institutions, but lacks specific language on the role of women as stakeholders. There was an opportunity to ensure that women would be included in the FAO's sustainable food systems program, but this was not fully addressed in the final decision.

This decision highlights the importance of specificity when it comes to integrating gender considerations into international cooperation frameworks. Moving forward, the CBD WC will continue to push for the active inclusion of women in biodiversity governance and sustainable development initiatives, particularly in food systems and other cross-sectoral programs.

5. COPs Programme of Work

The discussion on the Programme of Work for the Conference of the Parties 17, 18 and 19 was deferred to the next COP. This decision presents an opportunity to gather stronger support to ensure that gender remains a standing agenda item at future COPs, which will make it possible that women's and girls' rights are central to the conversation in a systematic fashion.



Conclusion

While the decisions adopted at CBD COP 16.2 lay important groundwork for integrating gender considerations into biodiversity governance, significant gaps remain. The continued absence of direct access to funding for women's groups, the lack of headline gender-responsive indicators, and the limited recognition of women as key actors in international cooperation underscore the urgency for sustained advocacy, accountability, and political will from Parties.

The CBD Women's Caucus will remain vigilant and proactive in the months ahead, advocating for stronger gender commitments across all CBD processes and reinforcing collaboration with Parties and partners committed to gender and biodiversity justice. We must leverage critical opportunities ahead, including the midterm review of the Gender Plan of Action and the GEF-9 replenishment cycle, to ensure gender justice is not treated as a secondary issue, but as a core element of the biodiversity agenda.

Toward COP17, we will advocate for a robust and participatory mechanism for the GPA midterm review—one that goes beyond a simple call for submissions. This must include a dedicated process for evaluating feedback, supported by regional meetings and inclusive dialogues, in partnership with the CBD Women's Caucus and with the meaningful involvement of the women- and girl-led collectives. As this process unfolds, it is essential that it be backed by adequate resources and strong monitoring mechanisms to ensure that commitments to gender equality lead to tangible outcomes for women and girls in all their diversity, particularly those from Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

The CBD Women's Caucus invites all Parties, partners, and civil society allies to collaborate with us in the lead-up to COP17 to ensure that women's rights and gender justice remain central to the Convention's implementation and future agenda.

About CBD Women's Caucus

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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