



# COP16: 2024 United Nations Biodiversity Conference

## Key Outcomes

The 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP16) was held in Cali, Colombia, from October 21 to November 1, 2024. This conference continued the mission set by the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) to address the accelerating biodiversity crisis. COP16 aimed to bolster international collaboration and operationalize initiatives vital to halting and reversing biodiversity loss. The stakes were high, as biodiversity is declining at unprecedented rates, with nearly one million species at risk of extinction due to habitat loss, climate change, pollution, and overexploitation.

The conference centered on advancing biodiversity protection through various strategies, including financial mechanisms, Indigenous inclusion, digital sequence information (DSI), marine conservation, synthetic biology regulation, comprehensive biodiversity-health initiatives, and the 30 x 30 conservation pledge to protect 30% of the Earth's land, sea, and freshwater areas by 2030.



We are thrilled that two members of Senators for Climate Solutions, Senator Cardozo (left) and Senator Galvez (right) attended COP16 as part of the Canadian delegation  
*Photo Source: Senator Cardozo*

### COP16 Outcome:

#### Digital Sequence Information (DSI) and the Cali Fund

Delegates reached [a landmark agreement](#) to operationalize the “Cali Fund,” a significant step toward fair and equitable benefit-sharing from the use of DSI. This mechanism requires large companies in industries such as pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, and agriculture to contribute either 1% of their profits or 0.1% of their revenue. The fund will be used to support biodiversity initiatives in developing countries and Indigenous communities, addressing long-standing inequities in accessing benefits derived from genetic resources.

A rigorous monitoring framework for tracking contributions and transparent fund allocation was introduced to ensure accountability.



## Key Outcomes (continued)

### COP16 Outcome: Strengthening Indigenous Participation

COP16 marked a historic advancement by creating a [permanent subsidiary body](#) which formally integrates Indigenous voices into biodiversity governance. This subsidiary body aims to facilitate meaningful participation of Indigenous peoples and local communities in decision-making, reinforcing their pivotal role in conservation practices.

Prior to this, it was determined that [at least 50% of the Cali Fund's resources must go to Indigenous and local communities](#). This funding will support self-determined initiatives that encompass capacity building, sustainable land management, and preservation of traditional knowledge.

This decision underscores the global acknowledgment that Indigenous knowledge and stewardship are critical to achieving biodiversity targets. Studies show that Indigenous-managed lands often maintain higher biodiversity levels compared to areas managed by other entities. Therefore, supporting Indigenous leadership not only aligns with ethical practices but also enhances the efficacy of biodiversity conservation.



Senator Rosa Galvez participating on a panel discussing how to phase out fossil fuels in the Amazon

*Photo Source: Senator Galvez*

### COP16 Outcome: Resource Mobilization and Financial Commitments

Resource mobilization was a focal point at COP16, addressing the estimated \$700 billion USD annual financing gap needed to meet global biodiversity goals. While a comprehensive strategy to mobilize \$200 billion USD annually by 2030 was not finalized, discussions laid the groundwork for future agreements.

During the conference, [pledges were made totaling \\$163 million](#) USD. Although meaningful, these contributions were recognized as insufficient to bridge the current financing shortfall. The session saw debates on how to engage more private sector funding and incentivize corporate investments in biodiversity.



## Key Outcomes (continued)



COP16 Panel

*Photo Source: Senator Cardozo*

### **COP16 Outcome: Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs)**

Renewed focus was placed on identifying and managing Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs). This aligns with the 30x30 target, which seeks to conserve 30% of global oceans by 2030.

The updated EBSA framework is designed to strengthen international collaboration in marine conservation, recognizing the interconnected nature of marine ecosystems and their role in global biodiversity. Protecting these areas is critical for sustaining fish populations, mitigating climate change through blue carbon ecosystems, and protecting endangered marine species.

### **COP16 Outcome: Monitoring and Implementation Framework**

COP16 reviewed the progress of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and emphasized the importance of implementing structured review mechanisms. Out of 196 Parties, 44 submitted their National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs), marking significant but insufficient progress. The conference called for accelerated action to ensure all Parties meet their reporting obligations.



Senator Andrew Cardozo pictured with Canada's Ambassador to Colombia, Her Excellency Elizabeth Williams





## Key Outcomes (continued)

### COP16 Outcome: Synthetic Biology and Risk Management

COP16 approved an [action plan addressing synthetic biology](#) – focusing on fostering innovation while ensuring ecological safety. Synthetic biology, which includes gene editing and bioengineering, holds potential for advancing medical and agricultural developments, but poses major risks to natural ecosystems if not properly managed.

The plan includes comprehensive capacity-building programs to help countries develop and implement regulatory frameworks. These measures are intended to enable responsible research, development, and use of synthetic biology while safeguarding biodiversity. The need for an international consensus on standards was highlighted to ensure consistency across borders.

Emphasis was placed on fostering international cooperation, with the creation of knowledge-sharing platforms to address challenges and share best practices. The expert group overseeing this action plan will provide periodic updates on technological advancements, risk assessments, and regulatory improvements.



Colombian Environment Minister Susana Muñamed  
Photo Source: Vox Media

### COP16 Outcome: Global Action Plan on Biodiversity and Health

COP16 [adopted the One Health approach](#) to integrate biodiversity considerations into health policies. This comprehensive strategy is designed to prevent zoonotic disease outbreaks, promote ecosystem health, and support traditional medicine practices.

The action plan underscores the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health, advocating for policies that enhance ecosystem resilience as a means of protecting public health. Special attention was given to Indigenous and local communities, whose traditional practices and knowledge contribute to sustainable resource management and health outcomes.



## Focus on Canada

### Canada's COP16 Delegation

Canada's COP16 delegation, comprising around 100 members, had representation from a wide range of stakeholders and representatives including parliamentarians, government branches including ECCC and DFO, Indigenous governments and organizations, youth, labour, business, and civil society groups. Canada's delegation included the Senate's own Senator Andrew Cardozo and Senator Rosa Galvez.

### Canada's Engagement and Leadership during COP16

Canada demonstrated significant leadership at COP16 by taking concrete actions that emphasized both global and domestic biodiversity priorities:

#### Advocacy for Indigenous Rights:

Canada was a driving force behind the establishment of a permanent subsidiary body which ensures Indigenous voices are embedded in biodiversity decision-making. This initiative aligns with Canada's national policies that prioritize partnerships with Indigenous communities.

#### Financial Commitments and Support Initiatives:

Canada [announced \\$62 million in funding](#) for seven biodiversity-focused projects. These initiatives, part of the broader \$350 million commitment made by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at COP15, focus on regions heavily impacted by biodiversity loss, such as Latin America and the Amazon.



Senator Rosa Galvez (left) and Senator Andrew Cardozo (right) pictured with Alicia Bárcena, Mexico's Minister of Environment and Natural Resources

#### Promotion of Gender-Responsive Biodiversity Action:

Canada has committed additional funds, [including \\$15 million for Birds Canada's Conserva Aves initiative](#), which supports ecosystem health across multiple countries, and \$10 million for the Global Plastic Action Partnership to reduce plastic pollution. These efforts showcase Canada's focus on inclusive conservation that benefits women and girls.



## Focus on Canada (continued)

### Leadership in Marine Conservation:

Through partnerships involving Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Canada emphasized its commitment to protecting marine biodiversity in the Eastern Tropical Pacific. Initiatives aim to strengthen marine law enforcement and bolster biodiversity efforts, which align with Canada's support of global 30x30 targets for ocean conservation.

### Hosting Events and Knowledge Sharing:

The Canadian delegation organized multiple sessions in partnership with Indigenous leaders, showcasing successful Indigenous-led conservation programs like the Indigenous Guardians initiative. These events underscored Canada's stance on co-developing biodiversity strategies with Indigenous communities to enhance conservation outcomes.

### Commitment to the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund:

Canada was the first nation to contribute to the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund, pledging \$200 million at the Global Environment Facility's Seventh Assembly in 2023. This leadership inspired other nations to make similar commitments, reinforcing Canada's role as a catalyst for global biodiversity financing.

### World Coalition for Peace with Nature:

Canada signed on to the World Coalition for Peace with Nature, a call to action that recognizes the necessity of harmonious interactions between humanity and the natural world.

## Challenges and Unresolved Issues

- **Resource Mobilization:** Agreement on a comprehensive strategy for resource mobilization remains incomplete. The need for significant international funding to meet the KMGBF's ambitious goals continues to be a pressing challenge. Delegates acknowledged that without sufficient funding, achieving the 2030 targets would be difficult. Further negotiations are expected to push for concrete financial commitments from developed nations.
- **Monitoring Framework:** While a detailed monitoring and review mechanism was outlined, specific implementation details require further development. Ensuring consistent and transparent reporting across all Parties is vital for assessing global progress. The integration of independent reviews and third-party assessments was suggested as a means to enhance the credibility of the reporting system.