

Statement by the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity at the opening of the seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from Their Utilization

Yerevan,
19 October 2026

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, distinguished representatives of indigenous peoples and local communities, dear participants,

Welcome to the United Nations Biodiversity Conference 2026!

Thank you again, Armenia, for hosting us, for your dedication and energy, for the amazing show last night.

Thank you to all of you for having come to Yerevan.

Four years ago, in Montreal, the world came together to adopt an ambitious blueprint for living in harmony with nature: the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

It was a defining moment for environmental multilateralism, a moment when the international community united around a common vision and 23 targets to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030, a moment of optimism where we all saw what is possible when we unite. At the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, we made history.

At its sixteenth meeting, the Conference of the Parties put important mechanisms in place and pushed the agenda forward. Its seventeenth meeting is an opportunity to build on and double down on those achievements.

For the first time, we are holding up a mirror to our collective progress. Halfway to 2030, the just launched *State of Biodiversity Action* report provides a clear picture of implementation since the adoption of the Framework.

It reveals both remarkable mobilization and considerable unfinished business.

The global report tells us that progress is not yet occurring at the pace or scale that we need.

Implementation is uneven across the 23 targets. The widest gaps are found in areas requiring deep economic and societal transformation. They pertain to finance, harmful incentives and changes in business practices and consumption.

The global review must respond, charting a clear pathway forward: the Yerevan Pathway.

To course correct, the Conference of the Parties must act with accountability, alignment and acceleration in mind.

First: accountability.

In 2022, 196 countries made commitments. But we are all accountable to one another and to future generations. What happens here in Yerevan matters. Billions of people whose lives are being upended by the impacts of biodiversity loss depend on progress made here during the next two weeks.

Second: alignment.

We need to align national action with global ambition, finance with the needs of nature, and consumption and production with the finite resources of our planet.

Third: acceleration.

Only four years separate us from 2030. To fast-track action, we need to open spaces for greater whole-of-society engagement. Let us enable and empower indigenous peoples and local communities, women and youth to do even more. There is untapped energy and ideas that we cannot afford to waste. We need even greater engagement from cities, business and financial institutions. In short, we need all hands on deck.

Distinguished delegates,

The science is clear. No nation, no economy, no society is immune from the impacts of biodiversity loss.

What is equally clear is that taking action for nature does work.

Over the coming days, you will consider more than 50 agenda items under the Convention and the Cartagena and Nagoya Protocols. The decisions that you will adopt need to send the right signal for the way ahead. This means leveraging science, the lifeblood of the Convention and its Protocols, for policy and action.

From health and agriculture to protected areas, forests, synthetic biology, biosafety, invasive alien species, marine and island biodiversity, biodiversity-climate change linkages, and others. Decisions taken must reflect the latest science.

These meetings in Yerevan are also an opportunity to discuss coordination and policy coherence, including through greater synergy among the Rio conventions, as a catalyst of progress.

However, even the best decisions that you will take at this meeting will be meaningless if there is no capacity to implement, monitor, make informed decisions and manage risks. A strong focus on building equity is necessary. Progress on closing the finance gap, making the Cali Fund work and supporting our technical and scientific cooperation support centres will be among the achievements that will make this meeting a success.

These issues must be discussed with everybody at the table.

Let me thus conclude by thanking a number of institutional donors and Parties that have generously supported the participation of delegates from developing countries and from indigenous peoples and local communities. Thank you, Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Monaco and the Republic of Korea.

It is now time for taking action for nature. For all people and all life on Earth.

Once again, the world is mobilizing. Indigenous peoples and local communities, women, youth, judges, business leaders, mayors, scientists, farmers and representatives of fisherfolk communities, financial actors and many others have come to Yerevan to share solutions, innovations and “AI” – ancestral intelligence - that can help us all to achieve our objectives.

Let us seize this moment. Thank you.
