

# Gender in biodiversity governance

## A compilation by Women4Biodiversity and SwedBio highlights the rising role of gender equality in biodiversity, culminating in the 2022 Kunming–Montreal Framework

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The Conference of the Parties (COP) is the governing body of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It assesses and advances implementation of the CBD through the decisions it takes at its periodic meetings. To date the Conference of the Parties has held 14 ordinary meetings, and one extraordinary meeting since its first meeting in 1994. At every single one of those meetings women and gender has been an important theme of discussion.

Women4Biodiversity, a prominent global advocacy organization, has taken the initiative to compile a comprehensive resource which highlights the evolution through these COPs of the decisions and efforts that have been made to mainstream gender equality in biodiversity conservation efforts. This compilation not only highlights the CBD's recognition of the pivotal role of gender in biodiversity governance but also serves as a comprehensive resource for policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders seeking to integrate gender perspectives into their policies, planning and initiatives. By consolidating decisions that promote women's rights, empowering women as key actors in conservation, and addressing gender disparities in biodiversity management, this compilation underscores the interconnectedness of gender equality and environmental sustainability.

Reading through the compilation, it becomes evident how gender has increasingly become a central and intrinsic part of the discussions and decisions at the COPs. From simply encouraging Parties to promote the mobilisation of women in biodiversity conservation in the agricultural sector in 1996, to the adoption of the Kunming – Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF) and the Post 2020- Gender Plan of Action (GPA) in the 2022 meeting, the actions show the commitment to mainstream gender equality throughout biodiversity policies and actions, ensuring that women's voices are heard and their contributions valued in the pursuit of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development goals.

Article 8 (j) of the COP proceedings underscores the importance of women and especially indigenous women in the conservation of biodiversity. It states that all Parties, subject to national legislation - respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and

practices of indigenous and local communities, embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity; promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge; and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge innovations and practices. These decisions require capacity building, education and training for women and encourage participatory methods of consultation and involvement of women from traditional communities in decision making processes for the utilisation of traditional knowledge.

The 2002 COP decisions included the introduction of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation, sustainable use, access and benefit sharing of genetic resources and the recognition that “Unless [the world's poor] are fully involved in decision-making and benefit-sharing, it is unlikely that long-term solutions to the problem of biodiversity loss can be found. In developing mechanisms to ensure such involvement, it is vital that issues of gender and social structure are properly addressed”.

The 2004 COP introduced the ecosystem approach. It emphasises the importance of women in decision making processes and supports the decentralisation of power and management to the lowest appropriate group, keeping in mind women and indigenous communities. The next few meetings focussed on the implementation of the decisions already made and the assessment of the progress made on ground.

Following six years of intense negotiations, the Nagoya Protocols on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable sharing of Benefits Arising from the Utilisation of Genetic Resources of the CBD, was adopted in 2010. This protocol was the first international instrument of particular relevance to indigenous and local communities, since the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007); it represented a significant step in mainstreaming indigenous rights as a cross-cutting issue in international negotiations.

The 2010 COP also formulated the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets “Living in harmony with nature” and Tkarihwaí:ri code of ethical

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# Gender Equality and the Convention on Biological Diversity

A COMPILATION OF DECISION TEXT  
COP 1 - COP 15



This compilation underscores the interconnectedness of gender equality and environmental sustainability

The Gender Equality and the Convention on Biological Diversity: A Compilation of Decision Texts from COP1 to COP15 by Women4Biodiversity and SwedBio, 2024

Source: <https://icsf.net/resources/gender-equality-and-the-convention-on-biological-diversity-a-compilation-of-decision-texts-from-cop1-to-cop15-by-women4biodiversity-and-swedbio-2024/>

conduct to ensure respect for cultural and intellectual heritage of indigenous and local communities.

In 2014, the theme of biodiversity for poverty eradication and sustainable development was further expounded upon. The integration of biodiversity conservation and poverty eradication sought to take into account the differences in national circumstances, goals and priorities, as well as cross cutting issues related

to gender. It focussed on capacity building, creating enabling environments and generating funding support.

Crafting appropriate policy frameworks for the mainstreaming of gender within the implementation of the convention was a significant topic of discussion included in the 2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action. The objectives were to mainstream gender in the implementation of the convention, to

## Gender Equality in Biodiversity: Limited Progress at COP16

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The parties of the CBD convened for COP16 in Cali, Colombia. A key topic of discussion was the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, particularly Target 23, which includes one of the most robust and inclusive commitments approved by the Convention parties:

“Ensure gender equality in the implementation of the framework through a gender-responsive approach where all women and girls have equal opportunity and capacity to contribute to the three objectives of the Convention, including by recognizing their equal rights and access to land and natural resources and their full, equitable, meaningful, and informed participation and leadership at all levels of action, engagement, policy, and decision-making related to biodiversity.”

Implementing this target implies not only compliance with the Gender Plan of Action approved during COP15 but also the development of clear indicators for effectively monitoring its progress and ensuring the equitable allocation of financial resources for this purpose. However, both issues were postponed for future discussions among the parties, creating a sense of progress but limited commitment until a follow-up meeting is held.

promote gender equality in achieving objectives and to demonstrate the benefits of gender mainstreaming for biodiversity conservation and development. The discussions listed out a number of possible actions that Parties could take, including mainstreaming gender into national biodiversity strategies and action plans, while identifying policy obstacles to gender mainstreaming. The decisions taken included a framework for actions by the Secretariat in order to make these possibilities a reality.

The 2016 COP discussed biodiversity and climate change; ecosystem restoration in the short term, biodiversity and human health; marine and coastal biodiversity: ecologically or biologically significant marine areas and technical and scientific cooperation as well as technology transfers. In all these facets, the importance of mainstreaming gender and participation of indigenous communities was stressed upon.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) is a landmark agreement that was adopted in December 2022 to address biodiversity loss. The GBF aims to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 and achieve the Convention’s vision of living in harmony with nature by 2050. It consists of 23 action-oriented targets for 2030 and 4 goals for 2050. The goals are to reduce the extinction risk of threatened species and increase the abundance of native species; ensure that nature’s contributions to people are maintained and enhanced; share the benefits of genetic resources, digital sequence information, and traditional knowledge with local communities and Indigenous people; and to ensure that all parties have the means to implement the GBF, including financial resources, capacity building, and access to technology. The decisions also included a

monitoring framework for the GBF, as well as an agreement on digital sequence information on genetic resources.

Several of the 23 action-oriented targets of GBF are focussed on gender. These include target 22 to ensure the full, equitable, inclusive, effective and gender-responsive representation and participation in decision-making, and access to justice and information related to biodiversity by indigenous peoples and local communities; and target 23 to ensure Gender Equality and a Gender-Responsive Approach for Biodiversity Action. At the same time, however, there have been few gains made in terms of advancing gender concerns using the GBF Framework. [See box “Gender Equality in Biodiversity: Limited Progress at COP16”.]

2022 also saw the introduction of the Post 2020 – Gender Plan of Action (GPA) - a strategy document that aims to mainstream gender equality and support the implementation of the global biodiversity framework. The GPA is intended to be implemented in a gender-responsive way. Its goals include gender equality: ensuring that women and girls rights are upheld in decision-making and implementation of the GBF; synergy: maximizing synergies between gender equality and environmental concerns; coordination: ensuring coherence and coordination with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and monitoring: serving as a mechanism for monitoring and reporting on progress.

This comprehensive compilation of CBD decisions on gender through COP1 to COP15 by Women4Biodiversity is a critical resource for mainstreaming gender in biodiversity conservation. **■**