

A Call for Coordination at the 2024 Climate, Biodiversity, and Desertification (Land) COPs



Humanity is facing simultaneous planetary crises. Climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation are undermining human rights and development, and exacerbating poverty while being spurred onwards by overconsumption.

By 2035, we're on course to pass the critical 1.5-degree warming threshold, while 40 percent of land is degraded, losing its ability to support life, adapt to climate change, and sustain agriculture. An estimated three in four people globally will be affected by drought by 2050. Pollinators, on which a third of the world's crops rely, are declining at an alarming rate. The world is crying out for change; the upcoming COPs (Conferences of the Parties) in Colombia, Azerbaijan, and Saudi Arabia represent important opportunities to make real progress.

The three COPs were established at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit: The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Intended to work collaboratively on intersecting issues, the Conventions and their COPs have ended up being viewed as separate entities. However, many of the same government, civil society, and corporate leaders who attend the CBD in Cali will also participate in the COP in Baku and the UNCCD in Riyadh, alongside the G20 Summit. These leaders need to connect the summits and

ensure they build on one another to bring people—and the laggards—along on the journey.

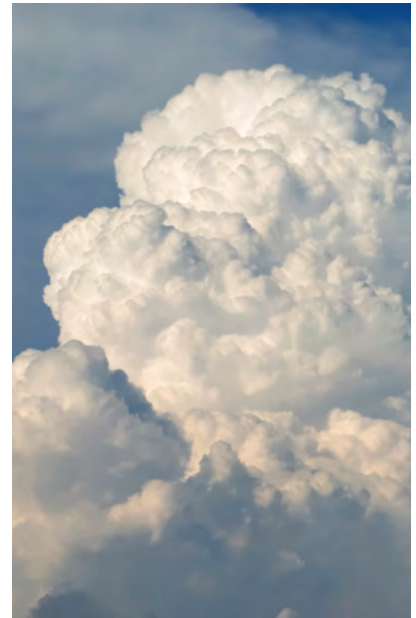
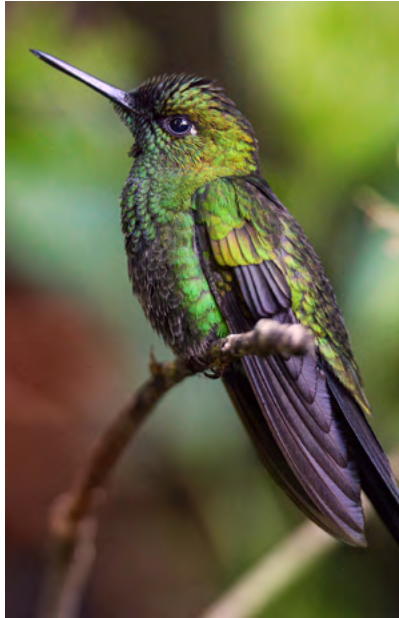
2024 is an opportunity for coordinated action. With the global challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and rising inequality all heading in the wrong direction—and with dire consequences—piecemeal progress is not enough.

In 2023, the current presidents of the COPs came together for the first time,¹ and:

- Underlined the urgency of the situation and the inextricable links between climate change, desertification, and loss of biodiversity;
- Called for a coordinated approach at both international and national levels to tackle these issues in a holistic way;
- Pleaded for more cooperation between the three COPs and their secretariats;
- And asked for urgent, concrete measures to protect the world population, environment, lands, and biodiversity, to ensure a sustainable future for new generations.

2024 must therefore be a moment for collaboration. We need to move forward *together*.

¹ [Presidents of three COPs call for a united approach to climate change, desertification and biodiversity loss | UNCCD](#)



DEFINING THE THREE CONVENTIONS

UNCCD

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification is the global voice for the land, promoting practices that avoid, reduce, and reverse land degradation. Through its establishment, national governments made a promise to the world: To combat the wholesale degradation and destruction of our land, and to tackle the scourge of drought. The UNCCD Executive Secretary Ibrahim Thiaw has said that land restoration is the cheapest solution to climate change and biodiversity loss; today, we still degrade 100 million hectares of fertile land every year. That is why the UNCCD aims to support restoration of at least 1 billion hectares of degraded land by 2030. Its COP is held every two years.

UNCBD

The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity promotes nature and human wellbeing. It sets out commitments for maintaining the world's ecological underpinnings as humanity develops.

It has three main goals:

1. The conservation of biological diversity
2. The sustainable use of its components
3. The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources.

The UNBCD's framework sets out an ambitious plan to bring about a transformation in our societies' relationship with biodiversity by 2030, and ensure that, by 2050, the shared vision of living in harmony with nature is met. Its COP is also held every two years.

UNFCCC

Probably the most widely recognised of the Conventions, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the UN process for negotiating an agreement to avert the climate crisis. The convention's main objective

is the "stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic [i.e., human-caused] interference with the climate system". Increasingly, discussions at the 'Climate COP' are moving away from a siloed focus on energy and mitigation towards wider issues, such as human rights, nature-based solutions, adaptation, loss and damage, and climate finance. Its COP is held annually.

As we can already see through the evolution of discussions at the UNFCCC COP, there is no escaping the interconnectivity of our planet and society. At each of this year's COPs, we urgently need to acknowledge this intersectionality and ensure coordinated action.

CONNECTING THE ISSUES

Food Systems and Deforestation

Agrifood systems are the biggest driver of deforestation and biodiversity loss. What's more, they produce around a third of global greenhouse gas emissions. Land is cleared to satisfy demand for commodity crops and food, which comes with huge social costs, impacting human rights, gender equality, and the rights of Indigenous communities.

Transforming food systems by embracing regenerative agriculture—which includes the widespread adoption of agroforestry and reducing pesticide use—can lead to reforestation, enhancing biodiversity, soil health, and water security. Our food systems must aim to deliver accessible, culturally appropriate, and sustainable diets for all. Such transformation is vital not only to meeting climate targets, but also in delivering climate solutions. It will strengthen human rights and health, while delivering true food security built around cultural practices and sustainable nutrition.

Policy Coherence

Currently, the lack of coordination between the three COPs is hindering progress at both national and local levels, which can lead to contradictory policies and market sig-

nals. Governments will make pledges for action under each COP individually, with no requirement to ensure the pledges are mutually beneficial. Beginning with land use planning and a landscape- or catchment-based approach would be a good place to start.

Coordinated Financing

Financial measures—including climate finance, finance for nature-based solutions, and the Loss and Damage Fund—are crucial, and need to be focused on delivering cohesive solutions, primarily in the Global South. Instead of a host of competing funding models, coordinated action can deliver change at a more affordable and beneficial rate, protecting and restoring ecosystem services, which in turn save money and enhance economic, food, nutrition, and water security.

Currently there are trillions of dollars in wasteful and harmful subsidies, with the energy and industrial agricultural sectors receiving the most. These sectors are the leading causes of climate change and ecosystem destruction, yet would be less viable without subsidies. This money must be redirected to support climate action, nature-based solutions, and regenerative agriculture. This will help a growing population in the medium term, avoiding climate-driven migration and conflict while bringing economic benefits.

Under current, siloed funding models, a project that improves agricultural practices and soil health is unlikely to access funding earmarked for biodiversity or climate, although it directly contributes to both issues. The world's



major development banks must consider the synergies and trade-offs between biodiversity, land, and climate, supporting initiatives that advance multiple goals.

Given that most of the world's biodiversity and tropical forests are in the Global South and provide global benefits like carbon storage and water provision, the Global North must support their protection. Wealthier countries have consistently failed to live up to their financial commitments, promising to provide US\$20 billion in conservation finance by 2025, for example, but there is currently a US\$11.6 billion shortfall.

A Critical Moment for the COPs

The current ways of doing things are simply not working. Ecosystem restoration, agrifood systems, and renewable energies present vital opportunities to advance all three Rio Conventions and build a more resilient world.

We cannot tackle these issues in isolation. Climate change is not just about carbon emissions. Land degradation is not just about soil. Biodiversity loss is not just about endangered species. These issues are part of a much larger, more complex puzzle. And if we are going to solve it, we need to work together, break down silos and approach these problems in an integrated way.

Global targets generate momentum, but they're only made real when countries act. That's why stronger national policies are essential for seizing opportunities for people, nature, and climate. National leaders can start by using this year's gatherings to demonstrate real progress towards their collective commitments. In recent years, countries have made pledges to transition away from fossil fuels, triple renewable energy, slash methane, shift to sustainable food systems, and halt deforestation. By showing concrete signs of enacting these changes within their countries, national leaders can inspire others to make good on their own promises while ramping up ambition.

We all need to see these as interlinked and mutually beneficial processes. We need to actively exchange knowledge on overlapping issues like drought resilience and food security, coordinate the efforts of scientists working on key reports, facilitate the meaningful engagement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and join forces to support government negotiators across all three COPs. This call for coordination goes beyond the three COPs: We need to see meaningful, united action at the UN Environmental Assembly (UNEA), the G20, the World Economic Forum (WEF), the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Committee on World Food Security (WFS). Only through cooperation and coordination can we deliver the necessary changes to safeguard people and nature.

By 2030, we must cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 43 percent compared to 2019 levels to keep global warming to 1.5 degrees above preindustrial levels, while boosting climate resilience. We must conserve 30 percent of land, waters, and seas and restore 1.5 billion hectares of degraded land. 2024 must be the year when we scale up ambition and action by committing to it in national plans and implementing it accordingly. We need the leaders of the world working together for a future where people and nature thrive in harmony. 🌱



The Rainforest Alliance is creating a more sustainable world by using social and market forces to protect nature and improve the lives of farmers and forest communities.

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