

Environment Quarterly

Kwartaalike Omgewingsverslag • Tikologo ka Kotara • Mupo nga Kotara


COP29
Baku
Azerbaijan

**COP29 outcomes-
a step in the right direction**

**COP 16 Achievements after
12-days of negotiations**



**forestry, fisheries
& the environment**

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA





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ENVIRONMENT DAYS

2 February	World Wetlands Day	17 June	World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought
3 March	World Wildlife Day	31 July	World Ranger Day
23 March	World Meteorological Day	12 August	World Elephant Day
22 April	Earth Day	16 September	International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer
12 May	World Migratory Bird Day	22 September	World Rhino Day
22 May	International Day for Biological Diversity	1-30 September	National Arbor Month
5 June	World Environment Day	1-31 October	National Transport Month
8 June	World Oceans Day	21 November	World Fisheries Day



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About the back cover image:

Makuleke Wetlands, Limpopo

Most of Makuleke lies within the Kruger National Park and forms the border of South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique along the Limpopo River. There are 31 scattered pans and other wetland types that makeup Makuleke. It was the first Ramsar Site to be owned and co-managed by a community, not only in South Africa but worldwide. Game is plentiful and buffalo, nyala and bushbuck are common in the area).

The region is not accessible to general tourists. The only way to see this part of the park is as a guest of one of the three concession holders that operate in the region. This arrangement is the result of the land claim settlement with the Makuleke community.



To use this QR code conveniently you must have a smartphone equipped with a camera and a QR code reader/scanner application feature.



Guest Editorial Minister Dion George



Dear Valued Stakeholder,

As we step into the new year, it is a fitting time to reflect on the significant events and developments that have shaped our global approach to climate change and biodiversity. One of the most pivotal moments in recent history was the 29th Conference of the Parties (COP29) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), held in Baku, Azerbaijan. The conference concluded in the early hours of November 24, 2024, after two weeks of intense discussions and negotiations.

At COP29, parties came together to adopt the Baku Climate Unity Pact, a comprehensive agreement that includes a New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) for climate finance, a Global Goal on Adaptation, and the Sharm el-Sheikh Mitigation Ambition and Implementation Work Programme. These decisions mark a crucial step forward

in our collective fight against climate change and represent a commitment to implementing the Paris Agreement more effectively.

One of the standout features of this pact is the commitment from developed nations to mobilise at least USD 300 billion annually by 2035 for climate action in developing economies. This agreement not only aims to support vulnerable countries but also encourages private sector investment, with a target of scaling up financing to USD 1.3 trillion per year by 2035. This financial support is essential for developing nations to enhance their resilience to climate impacts and transition to greener technologies.

In addition to financial commitments, adaptation efforts are also gaining momentum. Parties are working toward finalising adaptation indicators to track progress on the Global Goal on Adaptation, with a significant focus on delivering results by COP30 in Brazil in 2025. Furthermore, the establishment of the Loss and Damage Fund, spearheaded by South Africa and France, represents a critical initiative aimed at assisting communities most affected by climate change. This fund is expected to start disbursing resources to climate-vulnerable communities by mid-2025, offering much-needed support during challenging times.

Moreover, 2024 marked a vital year for biodiversity as COP16 took place, coinciding with the first biodiversity conference since the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. This global agreement aims to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030, emphasising the need

for immediate action. South Africa has embraced this framework by adopting the White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Resources. This document outlines key goals aligned with the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, focusing on conservation, sustainable use, and equitable benefit-sharing.

Additionally, South Africa's participation in the 36th Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol in Bangkok reflects its commitment to protecting our planet's ozone layer. The Montreal Protocol has been instrumental in phasing out ozone-depleting substances since its inception in 1987, and South Africa's involvement highlights the nation's proactive approach to global environmental issues.

As we embark on another year, the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss remain at the forefront of our global agenda. However, the commitments made at COP29 and the ongoing efforts toward biodiversity conservation offer a glimmer of hope. Together, we can work towards a more sustainable future for our planet, ensuring that both people and nature thrive.

Thank you for joining us in this journey as we explore these crucial topics in our January edition of the Environment Quarterly Magazine. We wish you a prosperous and environmentally conscious New Year.

Till next time,

Dr Dion George

Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment

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Climate Change Action Now!

Climate Change continues to exacerbate the frequency and serverity of natural disasters.

To learn more about Climate Change visit: www.dffe.gov.za



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& the environment

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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



COP29 outcomes - step in the right direction

By Peter Mbelengwa



Above: Minister Dr Dion George during Bilateral Meetings with the UN Secretary-General, Mr António Guterres.

Image: UN Climate Change - Kiara Worth.

The Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Dr Dion George, has welcomed the outcomes of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 29th Conference of the Parties (COP29) that was concluded in the early hours of Sunday, 24 November 2024, in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Following an intense two weeks of consultations and negotiations, parties adopted the Baku Climate Unity Pact consisting of a New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on climate finance, Global Goal on Adaptation and Sharm el-Sheikh Mitigation Ambition and Implementation Work Programme as well as the key decisions on implementing the Paris Agreement's Article 6.2 and 6.4. The adoption of Article 6.2 and 6.4 decision on carbon markets will allow South Africa and other developing economy countries

to initiate new carbon market projects which will facilitate investments in green technologies and economic opportunities.

Going into the negotiations, Minister George, who was also the leader of the South African delegation, was optimistic that parties would take meaningful decisions toward quantifying resources for developing economy countries to meet ambitious climate targets.

"There have been complaints from other parties about the leadership of the COP29 Presidency and that the decisions were not reached through full consensus. However, for South Africa, the decisions that were adopted are a win. While we understand the frustration expressed by some parties, we do see the outcomes as a significant step in the right direction as it is more than what we had going into the negotiations and we can now build on that,

especially given that South Africa will be the next President of the G20,” said Minister George.

Regarding the new finance goal, the developed economy countries have committed to mobilizing at least USD300 billion per year by 2035 for developing economy countries for climate action. The agreement also provides signals to private sector and multilateral development banks to scale up financing to developing economy countries to USD1.3 trillion per year by 2035.

“The decision underscores the importance of reforming the multilateral financial architecture, to make it fit for purpose to address the climate crisis. It also calls for scaled up support for climate action from multilateral financial institutions through grant-based and concessional financing,” said Mr Maesela Kekana, Chief Negotiator, Deputy

Director General for Climate Change and Air Quality Management at the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE).

Mr Kekana explained that COP29 decisions further underscores the need to reduce barriers and address disenablers faced by developing economy countries such as limited fiscal space, high levels of debts and high cost of capital, in order to prevent such barriers and disenablers from becoming conditionalities for access by developing economy countries to climate finance.

South Africa’s negotiating team was particularly pleased about the decision on the Mitigation Work Programme, which was Co-Chaired by Minister George and his Norwegian counterpart, Mr Tore O. Sandvik. “The Mitigation Work Programme will



Above: Minister Dr Dion George with the UN Secretary-General, Mr António Guterres. **Image:** UN Climate Change - Kiara Worth.



Above: COP 29/CMP 19/CMA 6 closing plenary. **Image:** Vugar Ibadov, COP29.

provide further opportunities to share experiences and match investment needs with investors. I am pleased with the outcome,” said Minister George.

On adaptation, parties are on track to finalise the work on the adaptation indicators to track progress in the implementation of the global goal on adaptation, at COP30 in Brazil in 2025.

The Conference also welcomed the rapid institutionalisation of the Loss and Damage Fund. Under the leadership of South Africa and France, the Fund is expected to disburse funds to climate vulnerable communities in mid-2025.

Team South Africa believes that COP29 was a huge success, which has inspired hope that we will be able to do more in future.

The agreement also provides signals to private sector and multilateral development banks to scale up financing to developing economy countries to USD1.3 trillion per year by 2035.



About the contributor: Peter Mbelengwa

Mr Peter Mbelengwa is the Head of Communication and the Spokesperson for the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment. He was leading the communication for the South African delegation during COP29.

COP29 agree to \$300bn for developing countries



Climate Finance: The finance agreement at COP29 comes as stronger national climate plans become due from all countries next year.
Image: COP29

The UN Climate Change Conference (COP29) closed on 24 November 2024 with a new finance goal to help countries to protect their people and economies against climate disasters, and share in the vast benefits of the clean energy boom. With a central focus on climate finance, COP29 brought together nearly 200 countries in Baku, Azerbaijan, and reached a breakthrough agreement that will:

- Triple finance to developing countries, from the previous goal of USD 100 billion annually, to USD 300 billion annually by 2035.
- Secure efforts of all actors to work together to scale up finance to developing countries, from public and private sources, to the amount of USD 1.3 trillion per year by 2035.

Known formally as the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG), it was agreed after two weeks of intensive negotiations and several years of preparatory work, in a process that requires all nations to unanimously agree on every word of the agreement.

"This new finance goal is an insurance policy for humanity, amid worsening climate impacts hitting every country. But like any insurance policy – it only works – if premiums are paid in full, and on time. Promises must be kept, to protect billions of lives. It will keep the clean energy boom growing, helping

all countries to share in its huge benefits: more jobs, stronger growth, cheaper and cleaner energy for all," said Mr Simon Stiell, Executive Secretary of UN Climate Change.

The International Energy Agency expects global clean energy investment to exceed USD 2 trillion for the first time in 2024. The new finance goal at COP29 builds on significant strides forward on global climate action at COP27, which agreed an historic Loss and Damage Fund, and COP28, which delivered a global agreement to transition away from all fossil fuels in energy systems swiftly and fairly, triple renewable energy and boost climate resilience.

COP29 also reached agreement on carbon markets – which several previous COPs had not been able to achieve. These agreements will help countries deliver their climate plans more quickly and cheaply, and make faster progress in halving global emissions this decade, as required by science.

Important agreements were also reached on transparent climate reporting and adaptation.

Mr Stiell also acknowledged that the agreement reached in Baku did not meet all Parties' expectations, and substantially more work is still needed next year on several crucial issues.

"No country got everything they wanted, and we leave Baku with a mountain of work to do. The many other issues we need to progress may not be headlines but they are lifelines for billions of people. So this is no time for victory laps, we need to set our sights and redouble our efforts on the road to Belem," said Mr Stiell.

The finance agreement at COP29 comes as stronger national climate plans (Nationally Determined Contributions, or NDCs) become due from all countries next year. These new climate plans must cover all greenhouse gases and all sectors, to keep the 1.5°C warming limit within reach. COP29 saw two G20 countries – the UK and Brazil – signal clearly that they plan to ramp up climate action in their NDCs 3.0, because they are entirely in the interests of their economies and peoples.

"We still have a very long road ahead, but here in Baku we took another important step forward. The UN Paris Agreement is humanity's life-raft; there is nothing else. So here in Baku and all of the countries represented in this room we're taking that journey forward together," said Mr Stiell.

Article 6 of the Paris Agreement

A notable achievement during the past two weeks was the progress made on carbon markets. After nearly a decade of work, countries have agreed on the final building blocks that set out how carbon markets will operate under the Paris Agreement, making country-to-country trading and a carbon crediting mechanism fully operational.

On country-to-country trading (Article 6.2), the decision out of COP29 provides clarity on how countries will authorize the trade of carbon credits and how registries tracking this will operate. And there is now reassurance that environmental integrity will be ensured up front through technical reviews in a transparent process.

On day one of COP29, countries agreed standards for a centralized carbon market under the UN (Article 6.4 mechanism). This is good news for developing countries, who will benefit from new flows of finance. And it is particularly good news for least developed countries, who will get the capacity-building support they need to get a foothold in the market.

In addition, all transparency negotiating items concluded successfully at COP29, with Parties expressing their appreciation for the timely completion of the Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF) reporting tools, the technical trainings, and the support provided to developing countries for reporting under the ETF that took place in 2024.

A total of 42 events were organised under the theme: Together for Transparency, a UNFCCC collaborative initiative that promotes climate transparency with Parties and non-Party stakeholders. These events emphasised the vital role of transparency in preparing NDCs and net-zero pathways, as well as in recognising climate action from non-Party stakeholders. Events included high-level sessions, mandated events and training sessions to prepare countries for their BTRs, as well as to equip technical experts for the upcoming review process.

The critical role of REDD+ was recognized through a £3 million pledge by the UK International Forest Unit to support UN Climate Change's work over four years. This funding will bolster REDD+ activities in many countries, enabling the secretariat to create dedicated spaces for REDD+ experts to engage in technical dialogue. These efforts are expected to enhance the transparency and implementation of REDD+, in line with the Global Stocktake objective to halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation by 2030.



Financing: World Bank Side Event - Climate Finance.
Image: UN Climate Change - Kiara Worth.



Children for a planet: Let's Protect Nature Together.
Image: UN Climate Change - Kamran Guliyev.

Adaptation

COP29 was an important moment for adaptation, with the delivery of several key outcomes. The COP decision on matters relating to the least developed countries (LDCs) contains a provision for the establishment of a support programme for the implementation of National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) for the LDCs. Parties extensively discussed the second five-year assessment of progress to formulate and implement NAPs, and will continue that in June 2025.

A High-Level Dialogue on National Adaptation Plans convened ministers from least developed countries and small island developing States, financial experts and international donors to address the growing urgency of climate adaptation. Their discussions focused on innovative financing, technical support, and accelerated action to meet the 2025 submission deadline for NAPs. The event concluded with a strong call to action to expedite NAPs and translate plans into tangible outcomes.

The outcome on the global goal on adaptation sets a clear path forward on the road to COP30 for the indicators work programme, providing a process for experts to continue their technical work before passing the baton to Parties. COP29 also launched the Baku Adaptation Road Map and Baku high-level dialogue on adaptation to enhance the implementation of the UAE Framework. Finally, the outcome raises ambition by agreeing to continue unpacking transformational adaptation moving forward.

COP29 took a decisive step forward to elevate the voices of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in climate action, adopting the Baku Workplan and renewing the mandate of the Facilitative Working Group (FWG) of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP). The adopted decision acknowledges the progress made by the FWG in fostering collaboration among Parties, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and underscores the leadership of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in addressing the climate crisis.

Gender and climate change:

Countries agreed on a decision on gender and climate change, extending the enhanced Lima

Work Programme on Gender and Climate Change for another 10 years, reaffirming the importance of gender equality and advancing gender mainstreaming throughout the convention.

They also agreed to develop a new gender action plan for adoption at COP30, which will set the direction for concrete implementation.

Civil society participation, children and youth

World leaders at COP29 were joined by civil society, sub-nationals, business, Indigenous Peoples, youth, philanthropy, and international organizations. More than 55,000 people attended COP29 to share ideas, solutions, and build partnerships and coalitions.

The decisions taken at COP29 also re-emphasise the critical importance of empowering all stakeholders to engage in climate action; in particular under Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE). Parties recalled the importance of integrating ACE elements into national climate change policies, plans, strategies and action, and noted the secretariat's compendium of good practices for integrating ACE elements into NDCs.

COP29 marked a significant milestone as dedicated spaces were created to ensure the meaningful participation of children within the Youth-led Climate Forum for the first time. Four children, including the youngest at just 10 years old, took on roles as moderators and speakers, engaging directly with Parties and observer organizations. Their participation highlighted the importance of inclusivity and intergenerational collaboration in driving climate action.

In parallel with the formal negotiations, the Global Climate Action space at COP29 provided a platform for governments, businesses and civil society to collaborate and showcase their real-world climate solutions.

The High-Level Champions, under the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action, launched their 2024 Yearbook of Global Climate Action at COP29, showing that climate action by non-Party stakeholders, including businesses, investors, sub-national actors and civil society, is driving progress towards the goals of the Paris Agreement, and that their engagement is more crucial than ever.

“ COP29 took a decisive step forward to elevate the voices of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in climate action.

Minister George launches SA Pavilion at COP29

"Let it be a symbol of hope, collaborative efforts and determination. Let it inspire bold action and reinforce our shared commitment to achieving a just, equitable, and sustainable future. Together, we can overcome the complexities, seize the opportunities, and ensure that climate action benefits all," these were the words by Minister of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment, Dr Dion George as he launched the South Africa Pavilion at COP 29, in Baku, Azerbaijan.



Above: The South African pavilion showcases the mutually beneficial relationship that exists between government and the National Business Initiative (NBI) in the fight against climate change.



Above: Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Hon Nqabisa Gantsho and members of parliament with Minister George.

COP29 marked seven years of the partnership between government and business in hosting the South Africa Pavilion. This pavilion showcases the mutually beneficial relationship that exists between government and the National Business Initiative (NBI) in the fight against climate change. The South Africa Pavilion is a vibrant space for key climate discussions which mirrors the daily thematic topics of the COP.

"This conference, dubbed the finance COP, presents one of the final opportunities for countries to signal their intentions for new and enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) ahead of the 2025 deadline for the second NDC cycle. These plans will determine whether we collectively fulfil the ambitions set out in the Paris Agreement," said Minister George.

Science has confirmed that climate change is a global existential crisis confronting humankind. Recently, President Ramaphosa signed the highly anticipated Climate Change Bill into law. "This expansive piece of legislation is designed to define, manage, monitor, and implement South Africa's response to climate change. It positions South Africa as playing a defining role in Africa's response to this global situation," said Minister George.

COP29 presents an opportunity to advocate for an innovative and improved financial frameworks that can mobilise substantial resources more efficiently. Such a model must ensure predictable, accessible, and adequate funding, and address the shortcomings of existing systems and empowering countries like South Africa to implement ambitious climate actions.

"Our highly competent team of negotiators has been working around the clock during the technical negotiations. This week marks the beginning of the Ministerial High Level Segment of COP29 where issues are brought to the political process to facilitate outcomes," said Minister George.

The SA delegation to COP29 is representative of government, parliament, business, civil society, youth, NGOs and organised labour. "As we officially launch the South Africa Pavilion, let it be a symbol of hope, collaborative efforts and determination. Let it inspire bold action and reinforce our shared commitment to achieving a just, equitable, and sustainable future. Together, we can overcome the complexities, seize the opportunities, and ensure that climate action benefits all," said Minister George.

Deputy Minister Swarts shares insights on MOP36

By Michael Mokoena



Above: The Deputy Minister of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment, Ms Bernice Swarts, met with the South African Ambassador to Thailand, Mr Darkey Ephraim Africa, to brief him on her visit to the country.

South Africa recently participated in the 36th Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (MOP 36) in Bangkok, Thailand. The Montreal Protocol, established in 1987, is a landmark global treaty aimed at protecting the ozone layer by phasing out ozone-depleting substances (ODS). Despite the Protocol's successes, some ODS replacements, specifically hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), have emerged as potent greenhouse gases, some over a thousand times more powerful than carbon dioxide in driving climate change.

SA remains committed to ozone protection:

At MOP 36, South Africa reaffirmed its commitment to eliminating ozone-depleting substances. "Central to our approach is our belief in the Montreal Protocol as a highly effective framework for reducing ODS while offering significant co-benefits for global climate health. We celebrated the recent decision to allocate \$1 billion to the Multilateral Fund to help developing nations meet their Protocol obligations, showcasing the international community's dedication to this critical cause," said Deputy Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Ms Bernice Swarts.

As one of Africa's most industrialised nations, South Africa recognizes its role as a leader in

climate action. South Africa's national action plan emphasizes transitioning the Refrigeration and Air Conditioning (RAC) sector towards greener refrigerants and energy-efficient systems. "This shift is directly aligned with global climate goals, creating jobs and enhancing sustainability within South Africa's industrial landscape.

By managing refrigerants effectively, we can contribute to reducing global warming by 0.5°C, proving that industry-specific actions can have impactful climate outcomes," said Deputy Minister Swarts.

South Africa is also committed to the full life-cycle management of refrigerants, ensuring that substances are properly controlled, recovered, recycled, or reclaimed.



Above: Deputy Minister Swarts met with Ms Tina Birmbili, (on her left) Chief Officer of the Multilateral Fund Secretariat of the Montreal Protocol, to discuss opportunities for South Africa to access global funds to support projects aimed at phasing out ozone-depleting substances. Next to Ms Birmbili is the DFFE's Chief Director for Chemicals Management, Mr Obed Baloyi, and on Deputy Minister's right is Ms Mamogala Musekene, the DFFE's Deputy Director-General for Chemicals and Waste Management, and next to her is Ms Duduzile Maseko, the Chief of Staff in the Office of Deputy Minister Swarts.

The government – through the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) – and various stakeholders aim to train 1 600 more young people in energy-efficient refrigeration and air-conditioning technologies in the near future. “This investment in local capacity reflects our dedication to minimising environmental impact over the long term,” said Deputy Minister Swarts.

South Africa also used its participation at the MOP 36 to raise an issue of continental significance: the lack of sufficient monitoring facilities across Africa. “Our country operates three monitoring stations through its Weather Services, but there is an urgent need for additional resources to expand this capability. We called for financial assistance to establish more state-of-the-art monitoring stations across Africa, enhancing the global repository of scientific data for tracking and managing emissions.

This call for support underscores Africa’s crucial role in contributing to a global climate response. South Africa has also made significant progress in phasing out methyl bromide, a highly ozone-depleting substance, showcasing our commitment to long-term environmental sustainability,” said Deputy Minister Swarts.

Shift to greener alternatives

Another critical issue addressed at MOP 36 was the healthcare sector’s reliance on ozone-depleting substances, particularly in metered-dose inhalers. South Africa urged a shift to greener alternatives, emphasizing the dual importance of public health and environmental protection. “Our experience also demonstrates the value of strict regulatory enforcement to prevent illegal trade in controlled substances and low-efficiency products. By investing in customs training to detect illegal trade, South Africa is addressing an often-overlooked aspect of environmental governance: the importance of preventing leakage through illicit imports and exports that could undermine international agreements. Our proposal included a two-pronged approach—strict regulations and penalties for non-compliance—aimed at helping all nations meet their environmental goals,” said Deputy Minister Swarts.

During her remarks at MOP 36, Deputy Minister Swarts called for the ratification of the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol, urging all nations to take action against climate-warming HFCs. This appeal highlights the interconnected nature of environmental challenges and the importance of collective global action. The Montreal Protocol stands as a model for effective international cooperation, and South Africa’s call for universal ratification underscores our commitment to preserving and extending its benefits.

“I do want to stress that South Africa’s presence at MOP 36 was a powerful reminder of the urgency of climate action. Through robust national initiatives and a vision for global cooperation, we called on the world to strengthen efforts in environmental protection, ozone layer preservation, and climate change mitigation for future generations. Our actions and commitments reflect a roadmap for immediate impact and a testament to the resilience needed to secure a sustainable future for all and for future generations,” said Deputy Minister Swarts.



About the contributor: Michael Mokoena

Michael Mokoena is the Deputy Director, Media Relations in the Chief Directorate: Communication Services.

BIOPROSPECTING ECONOMY

LIVING TREASURES



THE BIOPROSPECTING VALUE CHAIN



SA supports Global Biodiversity Framework implementation

By Zibuse Ndlovu and Tshagofatso Ndhlovu



COP16: The Deputy Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Mr Narend Singh during a side event on Synergies, at the COP 16.



BILATERAL: Deputy Minister Singh lead a delegation in a bilateral meeting with Canadian Head of Delegation, Ms Tara Shannon and Director of the Campaign for Nature, Mr Brian O'Donnell.

“South Africa supports synergistic approaches to implement the Global Biodiversity Framework at the national level and hosts national focal points for biodiversity-related conventions and agreements,” said the Deputy Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Mr Narend Singh during a side event on Synergies, at the COP 16 held on 21 October - 1 November 2024, in Cali, Colombia.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), which outlines four goals for 2050 and 23 targets for 2030, sets an ambitious pathway toward the global vision of a world living in harmony with nature by 2050.

“The guide, entitled: Mapping Biodiversity Priorities, is a valuable resource that has been welcomed by both the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and the Convention on Biological Diversity Secretariat. First published in 2016, this second edition includes important updates that address the targets and indicators of the Global Biodiversity Framework. It serves as a transformative resource for any country working to implement and monitor the Global Biodiversity Framework by providing practical, updated methodologies to help nations integrate biodiversity into their national prioritisation and planning processes,” said Deputy Minister Singh.

South Africa has successfully followed the sequential processes of mapping, assessment, prioritisation, and planning using IUCN standards, leading to significant benefits for conservation action and monitoring of key biodiversity

indicators. “The South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), in partnership with the UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre, has demonstrated remarkable foresight and leadership in producing this guide. It details the sequential approach in a manner that is accessible to all, which is precisely the kind of work SANBI aims to continue as a subregional support centre under the technical and scientific cooperation mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity,” said Deputy Minister Singh.

Deputy Minister Singh further stressed that capacity building and enhancing the knowledge base for guiding biodiversity action were just as important as resource mobilisation, as reflected in Targets 20 and 21 of the Global Biodiversity Framework. “In this regard, our scientists and technicians in Southern Africa are demonstrating cooperation and collective learning, which is often all too rare,” said Deputy Minister Singh.

COP16 marked the first biodiversity conference since the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, a pivotal global agreement aimed at halting and reversing biodiversity loss by 2030. Since adoption of the GBF, South Africa adopted the White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa’s Biological Resources which outlines four broad goals aligned with the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity; conservation, sustainable use, access and benefit sharing and transformation.



About the contributor: Tshagofatso Ndhlovu

Mr Tshagofatso Ndhlovu is a Senior Communications Officer in the Communications and Advocacy Chief Directorate. He holds an Advanced Diploma in Journalism from the Tshwane University of Technology and is an avid sports fan with his favourites being Tennis and Formula 1.

COP 16 World leaders meet to discuss biodiversity

By Zibuse Ndlovu



The 2024 Biodiversity COP 16, hosted in Cali, Colombia, brought together global leaders, environmentalists, and stakeholders to address the pressing challenges of biodiversity loss and environmental degradation. This year's conference focused on the theme of: **Making Peace with Nature**, emphasising the need for a harmonious relationship between human activities and the natural world.

One of the key outcomes of COP 16 was the agreement on an expanded role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in saving biodiversity and a groundbreaking agreement on the operationalisation of a new global mechanism to share benefits from digital genetic information.

Significantly, the results at COP 16 are important strides towards achievement of the 23 targets for 2030 laid out in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), adopted at the previous meeting of the Convention's 196 Parties in Montreal in 2022. With billions of people depending on nature's contributions, threats to biodiversity intensifying, and financial resources in short supply, the stakes at COP 16 were high.

"We have seen Indigenous Peoples and local communities, civil society, businesses and financial institutions, sub-national governments, cities and local authorities, women and youth present remarkable initiatives and action. And through it all, this COP delivered a seminal message: the time has come to make peace with nature. It has never been clearer that the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the Paris Agreement in a synergistic fashion will make peace with nature within reach," said Ms Astrid Schomaker, the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, Ms Inger Andersen, said another big win of the COP16 was the new mechanism and fund for fair and equitable benefit-sharing from Digital Sequencing Information of genetic resources which will ensure that those who profit from biodiversity give back to nature, countries and communities. "Of course, we would have liked to achieve more on resource mobilisation and advances on the monitoring framework, but we will not slow down the pace of work. 2030 is rapidly approaching and action cannot wait," said Ms Andersen.



About the contributor: Zibuse Ndlovu

Zibuse Ndlovu is the Assistant Director in the Communications and Advocacy Chief Directorate at the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment..

COP 16 Achievements after 12-days of negotiations:

COP16 launches “Cali Fund”

Having agreed at COP 15 to establish a multilateral mechanism, including a global fund, to share the benefits from uses of digital sequence information on genetic resources (DSI) more fairly and equitably, delegates at COP 16 advanced its operationalization – a historic decision of global importance.

This complex decision addresses how pharmaceutical, biotechnology, animal and plant breeding and other industries benefiting from DSI should share those benefits with developing countries and Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Under the agreed guidelines, large companies and other major entities benefiting commercially from DSI uses should contribute to “the Cali Fund,” based on a percentage of their profits or revenues. The model targets larger companies most reliant on DSI and exempts academic, public research institutions and other entities using DSI but not directly benefiting.

At least half of the funding is expected to support the self-identified needs of indigenous peoples and local communities, including women and



FUND: Developing world countries will benefit from a large part of this fund, with allocations to support implementation of the KMGBF, according to the priorities of those governments.

youth within those communities, through government or by direct payments through institutions identified by indigenous peoples and local communities. Some funds may support capacity building and technology transfer.

Strong monitoring and reporting will ensure industries see the impact of their contributions in a transparent and open way, and regular reviews will build the mechanism’s efficiency and efficacy over time.

This agreement marks a precedent for benefit-sharing in biodiversity conservation with a fund designed to return some of the proceeds from the use of biodiversity to protect and restore nature where help is needed most



Above: Digital Sequence Information (DSI) is changing the way genetic resources are used in agricultural research and development, and has implications for new benefit-sharing norms.

“ At least half of the funding is expected to support the self-identified needs of indigenous peoples and local communities, including women and youth within those communities.

Empowering indigenous communities for biodiversity success

The transformative programme sets out specific tasks to ensure the meaningful contribution of indigenous peoples and local communities towards the three objectives of the Convention ((a) the conservation of biological diversity, b) the sustainable use of biological diversity, and c) the fair and equitable sharing of benefits), as well as the implementation of the KMGBF. Through this Programme, rights, contributions and traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities are further embedded in the global agenda.

Parties also agreed to establish a new permanent subsidiary body on article 8j and other Provisions, with its modus operandi to be developed over the next two years. The new Subsidiary Body is expected to elevate issues related to the implementation of Article 8j and enhance the engagement and participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in all convention processes.



Above: In a landmark decision at COP 16, Parties adopted a new Programme of Work on Article 8(j) and other provisions of the Convention related to indigenous peoples and local communities.

A further decision was taken to recognize the role of people of African descent, comprising collectives embodying traditional lifestyles, in implementing the Convention and in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Funding Biodiversity: strategy for resource mobilisation



Parties at COP 16 will resume discussions later to approve a new "Strategy for Resource Mobilization" to help secure \$200 billion annually by 2030 from all sources to support biodiversity initiatives worldwide, representing one of the KMGBF's goals. Another is the redirection by 2030 of \$500 billion per year in subsidies that harm biodiversity.

To date the Convention has been able to count on resources mobilized to support the goals and targets of the GBF through a variety of bilateral arrangements, private, and philanthropic sources, as well as dedicated funds such as:

- The Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF), agreed at COP 15 in 2022 and established in less than a year by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The fund accepts contributions from governments, the private sector, and philanthropies, and finances high-impact projects in developing regions, with emphasis on supporting countries with fragile ecosystems, such as small island states and economies in transition. To date, 11 donor countries as well as the Government of Quebec have pledged nearly US \$400 million to the GBF Fund, with US \$163 million pledged during COP 16.
- The Kunming Biodiversity Fund (KBF), launched at COP 16 with a US \$200 million contribution from the Government of China. The KBF supports accelerated action to deliver 2030 Agenda and SDG targets and 2050 goals of the Kunming-Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework, particularly in developing countries.

COP 16 also considered an evaluation of the effectiveness of the GEF, which serves as the financial mechanism of the Convention. The evaluation noted that the GEF has made significant progress in its role in resource mobilization and in supporting the implementation of activities that achieve the objectives of the CBD. The report of the GEF to COP 16 noted that during the first two years of its current funding cycle (GEF-8), the GEF approved 2.42 billion in direct support to the KMGBF.

Implementing and Monitoring the KMGBF

Delegates also took stock of progress in implementing the KMGBF since its creation in 2022. Some 119 countries, representing the majority of CBD's 196 Parties, submitted national biodiversity targets – policy measures and actions to help reach the 23 KMGBF targets.

Additionally, to date 44 countries have submitted National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans as the policy document which will support the implementation of these national targets. COP 16 acknowledged the remarkable progress made within two years and highlighted the need to accelerate action.

Synthetic Biology

Synthetic biology was a prominent topic at COP 16, with an eye toward its potential benefits while considering the risks. To address inequity in the participation of developing countries in the synthetic biology field, the decision introduces a new thematic action plan to help address the capacity-building, technology transfer and knowledge-sharing needs of Parties, and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities. By helping countries assess and apply synthetic biology technologies, COP 16 aims to foster innovation while safeguarding biodiversity.

An expert group will guide identification of synthetic biology's potential benefits and review the potential impacts of recent technological developments – a unique opportunity to explore synthetic biology in relation to the CBD's three fundamental objectives and in implementing the KMGBF.

Invasive Alien Species



Above: Invasive alien plants multiply rapidly once they are established in an area, which increases clearing costs and compounds adverse effects on the environment

COP 16's decision on invasive alien species addresses one of the top five direct drivers of biodiversity loss, highlighting the need for international cooperation, capacity-building, and technical support for developing countries. It proposes guidelines for managing invasive alien species, touching on issues such as e-commerce, multicriteria analysis methodologies and others. New databases, improved cross-border trade regulations, and enhanced coordination with e-commerce platforms aim to address gaps in managing invasive species risks and align with the goals of KMGBF, where cross-sectoral and collaborative approaches are central to biodiversity protection.

Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas

COP 16 agreed on a new and evolved process to identify ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs). Under the CBD, work on EBSAs, which identifies the most critical and vulnerable parts of the ocean, began in 2010 and became a central area of ocean-related work. Continued development of the programme was stymied for more than 8 years due to legal and political concerns. COP 16 gave new life to this process, agreeing on new mechanisms to identify new EBSAs and update existing ones, ensuring that the cataloging of information of these areas can support planning and management with the most advanced science and knowledge available.

This comes at a time when EBSAs can play an important role for marine biodiversity protection, with major steps being taken to implement the 30×30 protected areas target and to prepare for the future implementation of the new agreement for marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction.

Sustainable Wildlife Management and Plant Conservation

Among the most crucial areas of discussion was the protection of wild species. A decision on sustainable wildlife management underscores the necessity of monitoring, capacity-building, and the inclusive participation of indigenous peoples, local communities, and women. To this end, the decision calls for the cooperation of international bodies like CITES and FAO to implement. The framework encourages research on how wildlife use, biodiversity loss, and zoonotic diseases are interconnected, a vital area for a world increasingly aware of the public health implications of biodiversity loss.

Additionally, COP 16 saw a commitment to align plant conservation efforts with the KMGBF monitoring framework. This includes updating the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation with specific indicators and a standardized reporting template, ensuring that progress in plant protection is measurable and consistent with global biodiversity targets.

Biodiversity and health

At COP 16, CBD Parties approved a Global Action Plan on Biodiversity and Health designed to help curb the emergence of zoonotic diseases, prevent non-communicable diseases, and promote sustainable ecosystems. The strategy embraces a holistic “One Health” approach that recognizes the health of ecosystems, animals, and humans as interconnected.

Recognizing that biodiversity loss and poor health often share common drivers—such as deforestation, pollution, and climate change—the Plan emphasizes the urgency of tackling these threats to benefit both ecosystems and humans.

The strategy underlines the need for education and promoting understanding of the connections between biodiversity and health, and the need to strengthen policies that promote sustainable ecosystems, support traditional medicine, and reduce habitat destruction. Special attention is

accorded to vulnerable populations, including Indigenous peoples, who depend on local biodiversity for food, medicine, and cultural identity, as well as youth, seen as vital contributors to conservation and health initiatives.

At the heart of the plan is a collaborative framework that brings together health professionals, conservationists, and policymakers. The COP decision invites nations to designate national focal points for biodiversity and health, and to develop policies reflecting these interconnections, integrating biodiversity-health considerations in policies across the range of sectors from agriculture to urban planning.

Parties further called for close cooperation with international organizations, including the World Health Organization, to develop monitoring tools and metrics for assessing the progress of biodiversity-health initiatives.

Risk assessment

In Cali, Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety welcomed new, voluntary guidance on assessing the risks posed by living modified organisms (LMOs) containing engineered gene drives, a milestone in international biosafety management aiming to bolster the scientific rigor and transparency of risk assessment procedures in the Protocol.

Engineered gene drives have the capacity to propagate genetic modifications rapidly through wild populations and the move to strengthen protocols comes amid increased debate over genetic engineering, particularly for applications for pest control, disease control, and agriculture. The new guidance prioritizes scientific transparency and accuracy in risk assessments, an essential step toward unified safety standards for managing LMOs worldwide.

The new guidance materials bring together the best available scientific resources and guidance materials available for environmental risk assessment, while also emphasizing the precautionary approach.

The voluntary nature of these guidelines allows individual countries to tailor assessments to national contexts, considering ecological variables unique to their environments. This flexibility is crucial in regions with diverse ecosystems and will help regulators make informed decisions, taking into account both the benefits and risks of LMOs with gene drives.

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COP29 and COP 16 in pictures

By Tshegofatso Ndhlovu, Zibuse Ndlovu and Letti Mosemi

BASIC meeting to consolidate SA's negotiating position

The Minister for the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Dr Dion George alongside South Africa's Chief Negotiator, Mr Maesela Kekana lead the South African Delegation during the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Baku, Azerbaijan on 11-22 November 2024 under the theme "In Solidarity For A Green World".



Above: The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment's (DFFE) Chief Director for International Climate Change Negotiations and Relations, Mr Maesela Kekana participated in the BASIC meeting to consolidate South Africa's negotiating position ahead of the Ministerial High-Level Segment at the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Baku, Azerbaijan.

African Ministerial Conference on the Environment



Ministerial: Minister, Dr Dion George alongside his counterparts participated in the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment under Ethiopia's Presidency and Kenya's leadership of Africa Group of Negotiators where African Ministers took stock and charted a way forward for COP29. Picture by UNEP Africa.

Minister George gets key role at COP29



Left: Minister, Dr Dion George alongside Norway's Minister of Climate and Environment, Tore Onshuus Sandvik. The Ministerial pair was appointed by CoP29 President-designate and Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources in the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mukhtar Babayev to engage various parties and negotiating groups, focusing on key issues related to mitigation and its broader implications during COP29.

Minister George receive Biennial Transparency Report certificate



Recognition: Minister, Dr Dion George received the Biennial Transparency Report (BTR) certificate from COP29 President, Mr Mukhtar Babayev. The certificate aims to recognize South Africa as a BTR champion for being a front runner in submitting its first Biennial Transparency Report.

SA delegation to COP29



Above: "The SA delegation to COP29 is representative of government, parliament, business, civil society, youth, NGOs and organised labour," - Minister George.

World leaders working for peace



Bilateral: Minister Dr Dion George met with Ms Mary Robinson from the Elders for a bilateral during COP29. Founded in 2007 by the late President Nelson Mandela, The Elders are an independent group of global leaders working for peace, justice, human rights and a sustainable planet.

Enhancing mitigation ambition



Plenary: Delivering the report of the ministerial pair on mitigation to the stocktaking plenary at COP29, DFFE Minister Dr Dion George said the work of the ministerial pair started early when they facilitated the High-Level Mitigation Round table on pre-2030 mitigation ambition where parties engaged in a rich exchange on how to enhance mitigation ambition and action in this critical decade.

Minister receives the Biennial Transparency Report certificate



Above: Minister Dr Dion George received the Biennial Transparency Report (BTR) certificate from the COP29 President which recognises SA as a BTR champion for being a front runner in submitting its first Biennial Transparency Report (BTR), in the picture the Minister is with the South Africa's Chief Negotiator, Mr Maesela Kekana. Mr Kekana chaired the Resumed High-Level Segment on behalf of the COP29 President in the main plenary.

SA delegation in Colombia, Cali for COP 16



Delegation: South Africa's delegation led by Deputy Director-General (DDG) for Biodiversity and Conservation, Ms Flora Mokgohloa hit the ground running in Colombia, guided by a strong negotiating mandate that aligns with the African Common Position as per resolutions of the 10th Special Session of the African Ministers Conference for Environment held in Cot d'Ivoire.

COP16: Mapping biodiversity priorities



Keynote address: Deputy Minister Singh delivered a keynote address at a side event hosted together with the South African Biodiversity Institute aimed at offering a practical experience of mapping biodiversity priorities to support national implementation and monitoring of the Global Biodiversity Framework.

Colombian government's Africa Strategy



Above: Deputy Minister Singh together with DDG for Biodiversity and Conservation, Ms Flora Mokgohloa attended an event hosted by Vice President of Colombia, Honourable Francia Márquez Mina aimed at discussing the Colombian government's Africa Strategy 2022-2026.

COP 16 side event on finances



Above: Deputy Minister Singh together with CEO of the South African Biodiversity Institute, Mr Shonisani Munzhedzi attended a side event with a focus on finances.

High-level segment plenary



Above: Deputy Minister Singh delivered a keynote address during the occasion of the high-level segment plenary of the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity.



Above: Deputy Minister Singh lead a delegation in a bilateral meeting with Canadian Head of Delegation, Ms Tara Shannon and Director of the Campaign for Nature, Mr Brian O'Donnell.



Above: Deputy Minister Singh delivered a keynote address during the occasion of the high-level segment plenary of the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity.

16th Conference of the Parties



Above: Deputy Minister Swarts, accompanied by the South African delegation, is currently in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, attending the 16th Conference of the Parties (COP 16) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), which commenced this morning.



Above: Deputy Minister Swarts met with Ms Tina Birmpili, (on her left) Chief Officer of the Multilateral Fund Secretariat of the Montreal Protocol, to discuss opportunities for South Africa to access global funds to support projects aimed at phasing out ozone-depleting substances. Next to Ms Birmpili is the DFFE's Chief Director for Chemicals Management, Mr Obed Baloyi, and on Deputy Minister's right is Ms Mamogala Musekene, the DFFE's Deputy Director-General for Chemicals and Waste Management, and next to her is Ms Duduzile Maseko, the Chief of Staff in the Office of Deputy Minister Swarts.



Above: Both Ms Swarts and Ms Birmpili emphasized South Africa's commitment to implementing projects that will create jobs and contribute positively to the country's economic growth.

Pay up the climate debt



Above: COP29 - 21 Nov 24 - Civil Society Actions.

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