

Biodiversity and climate : two sides of the same coin

TAKING ACTION IN THE FACE OF EMERGENCY



The climate and biodiversity crises are interdependent and these two central elements of life on Earth must be protected with equal ambition. While at the international level this statement is always more recognised, the different approaches, concepts and solutions for solving these twin crises raise questions. This note aims to highlight good practices while warning of those that are harmful, in order to foster a transformative change in our model of society that is beneficial for biodiversity, as well as for the climate.

Our principles for aligned biodiversity and climate agendas

1. Recognise that the **climate and biodiversity crises are interlinked**,¹ as are the practices and solutions to mitigate their effects². Both crises **have to be addressed with the same level of ambition**.
2. **Prioritise effective reductions in greenhouse gas emissions (GHGe)**, as it is the most effective way to meet the targets of the Paris Agreement, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The practice of providing **land- and forest-based carbon offsets** to industries (aviation, fossil fuel industry, agribusiness) should be **excluded**.
3. Ensure that any policy prioritises nature and climate while **respecting human rights**, and in particular the **rights of indigenous peoples**.
 - a. People affected by climate and biodiversity protection measures must be **fully involved in decision-making and implementation**
 - b. Their **knowledge, existing practices and contributions** to climate and biodiversity protection must be taken into account, respected and promoted
 - c. **Gender inequalities** must always be taken into consideration in this context: the **full implementation** of the **Gender Action Plans (GAP)** adopted by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)³ and the CBD⁴ is imperative for this purpose
4. **Stop deforestation, forest degradation** and conversion of natural ecosystems - taking into account territorial specificity.
 - a. **Reforestation projects** can be implemented according to specific criteria (avoiding competition with food security objectives, excluding monospecific plantations, or in the case of projects providing carbon credits, not substituting these credits for reductions in GHGe)
 - b. In addition, it is essential that governments **stop imported deforestation**
5. Acknowledge that the **use of bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS)**, or **technologies inspired by nature** (e.g. GMOs, synthetic biology, agrofuels) are **not sustainable** solutions.
6. **Ban 'climate-smart'**⁵ **agriculture techniques** offering carbon storage and offsetting credits. They lead to land grabbing or financialization of natural resources, are inadequate

¹According to IPBES, climate change is one of the major direct causes of biodiversity decline. Sources: IPBES. *Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Service*. 2019. <https://bit.ly/3cUxPx7> ; IPCC. 'Climate Change and Land'. 2019. <https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2019/11/SRCCL-Full-Report-Compiled-191128.pdf>

²Please refer to the following IPCC report : *Climate Change and Land - Summary for policy makers*, (2019) (https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/4/2020/02/SPM_Updated-Jan20.pdf)

³Conference of the Parties. *Report of the Conference of the Parties on its twenty-fifth session. Enhanced Lima work programme on gender and its gender action plan*. 2020. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cp2019_13a01E.pdf

⁴Convention on Biological Diversity. "Mainstreaming Gender Considerations". October 2014. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-12/cop-12-dec-07-en.pdf>

⁵Refer to the following note for details about agricultural models (in french only): Réseau Action Climat. *L'agriculture de précision: un modèle aux antipodes de la transition écologique et sociale*. 2020. <https://reseauactionclimat.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/notes-rac-agriculture-de-precision.pdf>

in preserving biodiversity, and distract from the primary need to reduce GHGe from the agricultural sector.

7. Commit to the **energy transition** ensuring absolute respect for the climate and biodiversity. Unsustainable sectors must be eradicated (fossil fuels, nuclear). In the renewable energy sector, the application of impact assessments (specified in existing regulations) and monitoring processes need to be improved.
8. Promote **regular dialogue between all international institutions**, encourage **alignment of the CBD and the Paris Agreement implementation** (and monitoring) processes through a common mechanism and through clear and agreed definitions of concepts and practices, with safeguards.

Protecting natural areas and community rights: two inseparable priorities

Any policy prioritising nature and climate must be conditioned on respect for human rights in order to prevent the negative social consequences of certain practices. Ensuring respect for this principle is fundamental, especially in three areas of particular relevance to this note: **procedural rights of communities** (e.g. access to information or consultation; free, prior and informed consent); rights related to **food security and sovereignty**; **land rights** (access to, ownership of, or use of land⁶) and legal recognition of resource ownership, with a **focus on indigenous⁷ and women's rights**.

In addition to **protecting, rehabilitating and enhancing the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples** and their role in climate action,⁸ criteria must be established to ensure the ongoing **inclusion of their members in decision-making processes**, and the implementation of projects must be conditional on the creation of local and sustainable employment for the target groups⁹. **All countries must ratify, without delay, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples¹⁰ and the International Labour Organisation Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Populations¹¹.**

Finally, it is essential to **identify and address structural barriers and gender inequalities that violate human rights and limit women's participation in climate action and biodiversity protection**. Indeed, the **role of women is key to agricultural production or seed saving¹²**. They are also **holders of traditional knowledge** essential for climate and

⁶Women and Gender Constituency. *Submission, Koronivia road map under the Koronivia joint work on agriculture*. 2020. <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/SubmissionsStaging/Documents/202006102100---WomenGenderConstituency-Koronivia-Submission-SB52.pdf>

⁷Climate Land Ambition and Rights Alliance. *Statement at COP 25: Climate action in land, forests+other ecosystems*. 2019. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b22a4b170e802e32273e68c/t/5deee346f9cab8076806cfcf/1575936839250/CLARA+statement+for+COP25.pdf>; Lisa Song, Paula Moura. *An even more inconvenient truth: why carbon credits for forest preservation may be worse than nothing*. 2019. *ProPublica*. <https://features.propublica.org/brazil-carbon-offsets/inconvenient-truth-carbon-credits-dont-work-deforestation-redd-acre-cambodia/>

⁸Linda Etchart. *The role of indigenous peoples in combating climate change*. 2017. *Palgrave Commun* 3, 17085. <https://www.nature.com/articles/palcomms201785>

⁹Following criteria could serve as a model: WWF. *WWF's Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework (ESSF)*. 2019. https://c402277.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/publications/1249/files/original/ESSF_Network_Implementation_11-2020.pdf?1608300127

¹⁰United Nations. 'United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples'. 2007. https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/61/295

¹¹International Labour Organisation. *Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention*. 1989. https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/fr/f?p=1000:12100:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID,P12100_LANG_CODE:312314,en:NO

¹²For instance, in sub-Saharan Africa, 50-80% of women are employed in the agricultural sector. Sub-Saharan Africa excluding Gulf of Guinea States, Botswana, Namibia and South Africa. Source: World Bank. 'Employment in agriculture, female'. 2019. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.AGR.EMPL.FE.ZS?view=map>

biodiversity protection¹³. Both the UNFCCC and CBD emphasise in their GAPs that systemic gender inequalities limit climate action and call on Parties to address them; such as **unequal access to land** (often a prerequisite for access to credit or inclusion in political decision-making processes¹⁴), **water**, **finance**¹⁵, **decision-making** or **resource management bodies**¹⁶.

Practices that combat global warming whilst respecting biodiversity and people

- **Maintaining and protecting carbon sinks:** the restoration and preservation of terrestrial ecosystems alone (wetlands, grasslands, senescent woodlands, etc.) would reduce our emissions by 14.77 billion tonnes of CO₂ per year by 2050¹⁷.
- **Fighting against natural risks aggravated by climate change, by preserving and restoring** major river beds (avoid and mitigate the effects of floods), forests (avoid soil erosion, filter air and water), urban nature, or meadows and copses.
- **Protecting resources (water, wood, food) through the preservation and restoration** of wetlands or wild biodiversity, involving indigenous populations.
- **Committing to produce sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis**, with the aim of preventing the interconnected effects of the climate and biodiversity crises from exacerbating existing gender inequalities, but also to strengthen the effectiveness, equity and sustainability of climate policies and the Aichi targets.

→ 3 examples of good practices and inspiring policies:

- **Green infrastructure strategy**¹⁸ (European level) or the **green-blue grid** (French national level)¹⁹, which ultimately preserve and restore ecosystems.
- **Agroecology**²⁰ and **dietary change** (e.g. reducing animal product consumption).
- **Efforts to stop deforestation, forest degradation** (accounting for 12% of GHGe²¹) and **conversion of natural ecosystems**. Conversely, **support for massive restoration of degraded forest ecosystems** (e.g. primary forests). Guiding principles for these projects must be the integration of territorial specificities as well as respect for human rights and the rights of indigenous populations.

¹³Rights and Resources Initiative. 'Power and potential - A comparative analysis of national laws and regulations concerning women's rights to community forests'. 2017. P. 14. https://rightsandresources.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Power_and_Potential_Final_EN_May_2017_RRI.pdf

¹⁴FAO. 'Rural Women and Girls 25 years after Beijing: critical agents of positive Change'. 2020. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/cb1638en/CB1638EN.pdf>

¹⁵WEDO. 'Feminist Climate Finance Brief'. 2020. https://wedo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CanadaClimateFinance_FINAL_8312020.pdf

¹⁶FAO. 'Rural Women and Girls 25 years after Beijing'.

¹⁷Of which 6.1 billion tonnes of emissions avoided by halting ecosystem degradation and deforestation and 8.67 billion tonnes sequestered through restoration and sustainable management. Source: Climate Land Ambition and Rights Alliance. *Missing pathways to 1.5°C, the role of the land sector in ambitious climate action*. 2018. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b22a4b170e802e32273e68c/t/5bc3cbf28165f51c6af2c7de/1539558397146/MissingPathwaysCLARAexecsumm_2018.pdf

¹⁸ European Commission. *Ecosystem services and green infrastructure*. https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/ecosystems/index_en.htm

¹⁹Ministère de la Transition Écologique. *La Trame Verte et Bleue, Un outil pour maintenir la biodiversité dans nos territoires et lutter contre le changement climatique*. 2017 http://www.trameverteetbleue.fr/sites/default/files/references_bibliographiques/16216_brochure-16p_trame-verte-et-bleue-outil-territoires_web_pap.pdf

²⁰Climate Land Ambition and Rights Alliance. *Missing pathways to 1.5°C*.

²¹IPCC, WG I. *Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis, Contribution of Working Group I to the IPCC 5th Assessment Report*. 2013. <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1/>

Unsustainable practices for climate, life and human populations and which must be firmly excluded by States and private companies

- **All practices that are not decided and implemented with and for the benefit of indigenous peoples and local communities, with particular attention to the too often marginalised people, such as women, living in the territories concerned.**
- Practices whose objective is to **calculate and provide compensation credits** based on the capture and storage capacities of natural terrestrial environments. They feed greenwashing methods, or **distract from the real ambition of net zero emissions**. This goal cannot be achieved by offsetting, but by reducing emissions.
- **Afforestation and reforestation practices based on monoculture plantations with non-native species** are also harmful²². They store less carbon than natural and diverse forests, are less resistant to natural hazards and diseases, and put biodiversity at risk²³. Moreover, countries that consume products causing imported deforestation (e.g. palm oil, rubber, soja) must stop these importations.
- **'Climate-smart' agriculture techniques** offering carbon storage and offsets.
- The **use of BECCS**: these technologies remain untested, unproven and potentially dangerous for ecosystem integrity²⁴.
- **Technologies inspired by nature**, as well as **certain innovations sometimes using natural materials** (e.g. GMOs, synthetic biology, agrofuels).
- **Infrastructure projects that are harmful to biodiversity** or lead to population displacement, particularly in the **energy sector** (e.g. hydroelectric dams). In addition to unsustainable energy sectors (e.g. mining, nuclear), some renewable energy projects can also have problematic impacts on biodiversity if not well managed.
- **Land artificialisation**, which is a determining factor in biodiversity loss and a limiting factor for carbon storage.

²²IPCC, WG III. *Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU)*. 2014. https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/ipcc_wg3_ar5_chapter11.pdf

²³CAN Position. *Climate and Biodiversity*. 2019. https://climatenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/can_position_climate_biodiversity_june_2019-1.pdf

²⁴Climate Land Ambition and Rights Alliance. *Missing pathways to 1.5°C*.

Conclusion: aligning the different international agendas for the preservation of life and climate

Parties must prove that **halting biodiversity loss is essential to achieving 1.5°C** and that **mitigating climate change helps maintain ecosystems**. **Human and indigenous peoples' rights, gender equality, and full respect for our ecosystems** must be the compass for all policies and decisions.

Beyond Parties, the **interdependence between climate and biodiversity must be integrated into the main international conventions** (e.g. Biodiversity and Climate COPs) and other **key international instruments** (e.g. conventions related to the protection of biodiversity, or the SDGs). Actions taken under the UNFCCC must be consistent, integrated and co-beneficial with those of the CBD. **Aligning the implementation and monitoring processes of the CBD and the Paris Agreement** could help raise Parties' ambition and actions for both climate and biodiversity²⁵. Finally, the respect for climate, biodiversity and human rights **must be integrated in other international fora**, such as the **G7, the G20, the World Health Organisation** or the **World Trade Organisation**.

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²⁵IDDRI. *Aligning high climate and biodiversity ambitions in 2021 and beyond: why, what, and how?* 2021. https://www.iddri.org/sites/default/files/PDF/Publications/Catalogue%20iddri/Etude/202104-ST0521_EN.pdf.pdf;