

Making peace with nature is a flight humankind cannot miss

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In the late hours of 22 December 2022 an extraordinary event unfolded in Montreal at the city's iconic *Palais des congrès*, not far from the headquarters of ICAO. Assembled for COP 15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), its 196 Parties adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF). That moment — locally as the *Moment Montreal* — ushered in hope that the planet's biodiversity crisis can be halted and reversed through globally coordinated action under the CBD.

The thrill that the adoption of the KMGBF still evokes is amply justified: the Framework encapsulates unprecedented collective ambition. Designed as a global masterplan, it is articulated around four overarching goals: protect and restore biodiversity, prosper with nature, share benefits derived from nature fairly, and invest and collaborate to achieve all of the above. These goals are pursued through 23 action targets that must be achieved by 2030.

Remarkably, the goals and targets of the Global Biodiversity Framework are the product of a marriage of reason between diplomacy and science. It is the seminal work of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) on assessing the state of biodiversity on our planet that paved the way for the consensus around the KMGBF.

Montreal -Cali- Rome

Under the compelling theme of “Peace with nature”, COP 16 of the CBD took place in Cali (from 21 October to 2 November 2024) and concluded its work in a resumed session in Rome (25 to 27 February 2025). In these two

instalments, Parties completed the jigsaw they started assembling at COP 15 in Montreal. The final pieces fell into place with their agreement on the monitoring framework and the planning, monitoring, reporting and review mechanisms of the KMGBF.

At COP 16 momentous decisions were also adopted on biodiversity finance including how the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework is to be funded. The adopted package includes the resource mobilization strategy and a roadmap towards the establishment of a permanent financial mechanism under the Convention.

Progress did not stop there. The Parties operationalized the multilateral mechanism on the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources, including the “Cali Fund”, which will receive contributions from companies making commercial use of data sequenced from the DNA of living organisms.

In another landmark decision, Parties established a new permanent subsidiary body with the aim of elevating the engagement and participation of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) in all the processes of the Convention. As custodians of a large percentage of the most biodiversity-rich parts of the world, IPLCs' traditional knowledge and expertise play an important role in biodiversity conservation.

From Montreal to Cali and Rome, the multilateral process under the CBD has delivered everything the Parties need to translate the global ambition of the KMGBF into commensurate national action. That endeavor has taken off in many countries.



FIGURE 1: Next Convention on Biological Diversity - COP17 will be held in Armenia.

Reduce drag, increase thrust

In any journey, reaching midpoint is the moment at which dashboards are checked, and projections are made on what lies ahead and how to reach the final destination in the most efficient way. The KMGBF, as a collective journey of planetary implications, will soon reach that point. The first global stock-take will take place at COP 17 in Yerevan in the last quarter of 2026 (Figure 1). As we approach this crucial milestone, the need for acceleration is clear.

Several Parties have by now aligned their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) with the Global Biodiversity Framework. By doing so, they have set themselves up for success. NBSAPs are the principal vehicles of implementation under the Convention. The success of the KMGBF hinges on well thought-out, participatory, inclusive and adequately funded NBSAPs.

Aligning NBSAPs with the global goals and targets of the KMGBF is a crucial and highly beneficial exercise. It involves establishing what a country will do to contribute to the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework. These plans should reflect a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. By now, it is urgent that all Parties align their NBSAPs and start implementation in earnest. The scale and pace of the unfolding planetary crisis require immediate acceleration and bold course-correction.

Destination transformation

The findings of the most recent IPBES assessments are unequivocal: nothing short of transformational change cutting across all sectors of the economy can fulfill the vision that the world adopted within the KMGBF: life in harmony with nature. In activating these deep, far-reaching and essential transformations, policies must consider and leverage synergies among health, food, water and climate action. The IPBES Transformative Change and Nexus Assessments adopted in December 2024 provide policymakers with pointers to do just that.

In transforming economies, governments are in the cockpit, but the contributions of the private sector, cities and local authorities and communities are key. Many promising initiatives are coming from actors other than national governments. In the race against the clock to achieve the KMGBF targets by 2030, their actions are keeping the momentum even when governmental commitment falters.

Few sectors illustrate the challenge and the promise of the required transformative change as eloquently as aviation does. The sector's global economic weight, its contribution to global emissions, and its recognized impacts on biodiversity—from habitat loss and light pollution to the nature-jarring roar of aircraft engines—make it a real-life laboratory for transformative change. The deliberate mutations that aviation must undertake entail strategic shifts, regulatory reform and whole-of-society uptake.

The Business Plan 2026–2028 of ICAO sends the right signal. It comprises a strategic goal dedicated to environmental sustainability, aiming at achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 and mitigating aircraft noise and other negative externalities. The Plan also reflects alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals. This bodes well for the future of the sector and sends a powerful signal to the economy at large.

Peace with nature is within flying range

The transformation of aviation is welcome tailwind, but one sector alone cannot generate all the thrust the world needs to decouple socio-economic progress from the destruction of nature. All sectors, including shipping, tourism, fashion, manufacturing and agrifood systems must reengineer

the way in which value is created. Our economies can no longer afford to treat vital ecosystem services as disposable commodities. Protecting biodiversity, the foundation of all life on Earth, must underpin new models that deliver for people and protect nature.

In 2020, António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, said that “peace with nature is the defining task of the 21st Century”. An ever-growing body of science confirms that business-as-usual is no longer viable. Inertia means that the planet will be left to hurtle towards dangerous biophysical tipping points. Runaway climate change and biodiversity loss would upend all life on Earth. Veering away from this self-inflicted cataclysm requires vision, knowledge and purpose. By packaging these three ingredients of success into 23 specific, measurable and time-bound action targets, the Global Biodiversity Framework serves as a flight plan the world should use to reach peace with nature.