Strengthening Rio Convention Synergies

We, the undersigned civil society organisations, knowledge institutions, and non-state actors, call on Parties and the current and incoming COP Presidencies to prioritise and strengthen synergies, policy coherence, and coordination across the Rio Conventions.

The crises of biodiversity loss, climate change and land degradation are deeply interconnected. They share common drivers and compound one another's impacts, directly affecting all areas of society, fundamental human rights and the economy, from food systems, water and energy security to economic stability, public health, livelihoods and resilience. Despite this, policy-making and implementation to address these crises by governments and institutions remain uneven and insufficient, risking further entrenchment of fragmented policy decisions and financing arrangements. These siloed approaches in policy and practice create unnecessary duplication, waste of limited public resources, send conflicting signals to businesses and investors, and can generate unintended trade-offs between environmental and development objectives, leading to less effective outcomes for climate, nature and people. Thus, enhancing policy coherence and strengthening collaboration across the Rio Conventions - often referred to as 'Rio synergies' - is a critically important and practical way to deliver existing commitments effectively, efficiently and equitably.

The next four years must be decisive. Each of the three Rio Conventions carries commitments and milestones to 2030, a critical staging post on the pathway to transformative change by 2050. With implementation underway of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification 2018-2030 Strategic Framework, the interconnectedness of these environmental crises is increasingly evident, and the need for coherent and coordinated implementation more urgent. Enabling greater coherence across the three Conventions would increase the likelihood of successful biodiversity, climate and land restoration outcomes, reduce the risk of failure and offer a practical means of accelerating implementation.

2026 is a key opportunity for progress as a triple COP year across the Rio Conventions, with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) COP17, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) COP17 and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP31 all taking place within months of each other.

Evidence underlines the need for synergistic action, with the IPCC's 2023 Sixth Assessment recognising that biodiversity and ecosystems are both increasingly threatened by climate change and essential to mitigation and adaptation. Monitored wildlife populations have declined by an average of 73% in the fifty years to 2020, according to the Living Planet Report 2024, and the 2022 Global Land Outlook estimates that up to 20 to 40% of the world's land is now degraded, affecting more than three billion people. Retaining ecosystems with high ecological integrity and restoring the integrity of all degraded ecosystems is critical to achieving the goals and targets of each Convention. The economic case is also clear, as fragmented approaches to interconnected environmental challenges cost an estimated USD 10 to 25 trillion annually, according to the 2024 IPBES Nexus Assessment.

This Call to Action aims to send two connected signals. For Parties and COP Presidencies, political recognition of the importance of Rio synergies must now be converted into substantive COP outcomes. COP decisions are needed to unlock the institutional arrangements and implementation pathways required to mobilise synergistic approaches within the Conventions, between them, and at the national level. For implementation, the action agendas and the initiatives of coalitions, businesses, funders and other non-state actors should reinforce national priorities and contribute to coherent implementation of climate, biodiversity and land strategies, rather than create parallel or competing systems.

Below we set out the key actions needed this decade, and the critical steps to enable progress in 2026.

Unlocking Rio Convention synergies action to 2030

In this vital decade of implementation, we call on Parties and relevant stakeholders to catalyse efforts across the following priority areas to unlock Rio synergies, in line with national circumstances, priorities and capacities and underpinned by robust data and the best available science:

1. **Implement existing commitments and address policy fragmentation -** Parties should translate existing political outcomes on cross-convention coordination into practical reforms, enabling conditions, institutional arrangements and implementation pathways that deliver the tangible benefits of Rio synergies on the ground while achieving convention targets. A substantial body of policy outcomes already affirms the political will to deliver cross-convention coordination (see Annex). These outcomes have built significant political legitimacy, but they have not yet produced the reform or alignment within and across conventions needed to enable policy coherence at scale.

2. **Advance national policy coherence and minimise trade-offs** - Parties should establish or strengthen national coordination mechanisms to support policy coherence across their national plans, for example Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), Land Degradation Neutrality targets (LDN targets), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), and other relevant strategies, including through bringing together Rio Convention focal points, finance ministries, planning authorities, sectoral ministries, together with subnational governments, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, people of African descent, civil society and other relevant stakeholders.

3. **Mobilise and align financial resources for integrated implementation** - Parties, public finance institutions, multilateral development banks and private funders should scale up adequate, predictable and accessible financial resources for solutions that deliver benefits across climate, biodiversity and land objectives, and to redirect support or phase out incentives away from practices that drive harm. Direct access for projects led by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, people of African descent, women and youth should be significantly improved. Access criteria, eligibility rules and reporting should enable rather than penalise integrated projects and address concerns over double-counting. For example, a standardised, cross-convention financial tagging framework could be explored to track integrated funding flows (such as NbS), to report multi-benefit investments while maintaining safeguards against double-counting across conventions.

4. **Strengthen whole-of-society delivery** - Implementation initiatives, action agendas, coalitions and whole-of-society efforts connected to the three Rio Conventions should align their work more clearly with national implementation priorities and with one another. This should recognise the rights, knowledge and leadership of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, while ensuring meaningful participation from women, children and youth, civil society organisations, knowledge institutions and other relevant stakeholders in implementation, monitoring, reporting and review of the Rio Conventions.

Critical building blocks for 2026

Beyond high-level statements, we call on all Parties to use the 2026 COP season to agree on practical outcomes that strengthen coordination, learning, and implementation across the Rio Conventions.

We call on Parties of all Rio Conventions:

- **Elevate Rio synergies as a political priority** and align national plans across Conventions.
- **Establish formal coordination mechanisms between Rio Convention focal points and/or explore assigning a single national Rio Convention focal point,** breaking down Ministry siloes within government, equipped with a position of influence and resourced to work across departments and Rio Conventions.
- **Enable the adoption of a 'measure once, report many times across conventions' approach** to track progress towards targets efficiently across the conventions.
- **Champion Rio synergies in relevant UN80 discussions** to improve coherence across the UN environmental agenda and strengthen efficiency and effective delivery of multiple UN goals.
- **Act on the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion** on the Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change (July 2025) and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR) advisory opinion on Climate Emergency and Human Rights (July 2025), treating cooperation across the Conventions as a shared obligation rather than a trade-off of policy choices.

We call on present, incoming and future COP Presidencies to:

- **Sign, take forward and support the delivery of the Belem Joint Statement on the Rio Conventions,** including reporting on progress on its commitments and establishing a delivery mechanism to sustain ongoing work.
- **Elevate Rio synergies as priority COP outcomes** in their own COP decisions and cover texts, championing concrete vehicles such as the CBD multilevel roadmap and the UNFCCC cooperation with other international organisations agenda item.
- **Use the convening power of the Presidency** to give profile and momentum to synergistic implementation beyond the negotiations, spotlighting action-agenda initiatives, coalitions and non-state actor efforts that deliver jointly across climate, biodiversity and land objectives.

Within COP decisions, we call on all Parties to:

- **Strengthen, align, and streamline dedicated negotiating tracks and spaces for exchange** that include substantive negotiations on cooperation across the Rio Conventions, regular reporting back from the Secretariats on cooperative activities and their impact, and meaningful whole-of-society participation.
- **Request the Joint Liaison Group to fully implement its two-part mandate** of *"(a) Enhance coordination between the three conventions, including the exchange of relevant information; and (b) Explore options for further cooperation between the three conventions, including the possibility of a joint work plan"* (Terms of Reference for the Joint Liaison Group) through:
    - Developing and recommending guidance to support enhanced policy coherence across all three Conventions.
- **Convene a cross-convention expert group** to review existing cooperative arrangements, identifying barriers to coordination, and options to address them.
- **Provide adequate, predictable and accessible financial and technical resources** for the Joint Liaison Group to carry out requested activities.

- **Establish formal mechanisms to guarantee the direct participation** of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities and other rights-holders in the governance, co-design, and monitoring of synergies initiatives under the Rio Conventions.

- **Support the creation of national, regional, and subregional coordination mechanisms** to align climate, biodiversity, and land policies, eg, the development of NBSAPs, NDCs, NAPs, and LDN targets; alongside amplifying actions that will support implementation of goals across the conventions, including by accelerating delivery of the goal of halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030.

2026 COP specific outcomes should include

UNCCD COP17

We call on Parties to adopt decisions that:

- **Continue dedicated work on synergies** on land, building on previous decisions, including decision 8/COP.16.
- **Recognise and identify opportunities for collaboration with UNFCCC and CBD,** including ongoing work on the CBD multi-level roadmap.
- **Advance integrated approaches to land degradation and drought resilience**, including through land restoration and sustainable land management; secure land tenure and community-based governance; water resilience and the land–water nexus; strengthened food systems and soil health; climate adaptation and biodiversity protection.

CBD COP17

We call on Parties to adopt decisions that:

- **Strengthen implementation, monitoring and reporting of climate-biodiversity co-benefits,** including work on indicators, safeguards, trade-offs, programmes of work and harmonised monitoring frameworks, with particular attention to Target 3, 8 and 11.

- **Endorse the forthcoming multilevel roadmap** for enhanced cooperation and policy coherence across the Rio Conventions, agree next steps, and encourage its use by Parties, Presidencies, Secretariats and other relevant actors.

- **Recognise relevant biodiversity, climate and land interlinkages** in the first Global Review of Collective Progress, including co-benefits, dependencies and trade-offs, while assessing biodiversity progress without double-counting.

- **Act upon the key messages of the Global Report on collective progress** to accelerate the elimination, phase-out and reform of harmful subsidies, aligning public and private finance with environmental commitments and delivering on resource mobilisation commitments.

UNFCCC COP31

We call on Parties to adopt decisions that:

- **Deliver a substantive outcome under *"Cooperation with other international organisations"* agenda item** that maintains a dedicated and durable space for discussing policy coherence, requests the Executive Secretary, through the JLG, to strengthen its engagement with the Secretariats of the other Rio Conventions and enable the JLG to fully fulfil its existing mandate in line with the recommendation above.

- **Ensure that the second Global Stocktake** builds on GST1 by not only recognising the role of protecting and restoring ecosystems and conserving biodiversity in effective climate action but by recognising the fundamental interdependence of climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation; and by inviting inputs on how coherent implementation can amplify ambition.

- **Maximise opportunities for recognising synergies, policy coherence and collaboration across the Rio Conventions in other agenda items, for example:**
    - **Use negotiations on agriculture and food security** as a practical entry point to connect climate action with sustainable food systems, biodiversity, land restoration, water resilience, soil health and sustainable livelihoods.

    - **Ensure the Belem-Addis Vision on Adaptation, including processes to operationalise the Belem Adaptation Indicators (e.g., related to metadata and methodologies) enables a "measure once, use many times" approach** where possible, as well as facilitates disaggregated reporting for indicators related to ecosystem-based and nature-based approaches where appropriate.

- **Recognise that conserving and restoring biodiversity and ecosystem integrity,** including through the knowledge and stewardship of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, is an effective option for climate mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

Looking to the future

The Rio synergies agenda should not remain an abstract objective. It is a practical way to maximise benefits, improve delivery, reduce duplication, minimise trade-offs, and support countries and communities in implementing the ambitions of the Rio Conventions.

The 2026 COPs of the Rio Conventions create a critical moment, but delivering the tangible benefits of enhanced policy coherence will require continued cooperation through the remainder of this decade and beyond. Where possible, policy coherence must be built into future plans and frameworks at the outset rather than retrofitted, with operational structures for planning, reporting and review designed to interact across agendas, without creating additional burdens for countries, and embedded in a whole-of-society approach. Vitally, ambition in the setting of goals must be matched by equal ambition and commitment in their delivery, including finance provision.

Looking to 2050, our vision is a just, equitable, inclusive and sustainable world in which the goals of all three Rio Conventions are realised together, not in parallel, but through coherent policy approaches that enable governments to plan, finance, implement and report in ways that address the interdependence of climate, biodiversity and land.

Our offer

We stand ready to support Parties, Presidencies, and Secretariats in making policy coherence and collaboration across the Rio Conventions operational. We offer technical expertise, policy analysis, convening power, civil society insights and implementation experience to help identify enabling conditions, document good practices, input into national and regional dialogues, connect communities of practice, and contribute to peer-learning spaces. This includes supporting the forthcoming multilevel road map on enhanced cooperation and policy coherence across the Rio Conventions, developed under the CBD process. We also stand ready to help sustain political momentum beyond the COPs, including through climate weeks, nature and biodiversity events, regional forums, and other spaces that can bridge negotiation tracks, action agendas, and implementation communities.

Signatories to this statement affirm that fragmentation across the Rio Conventions is a systemic barrier to effective implementation and the required transformational change, that the scientific, legal, economic and political case for integration is established; and that the 2026 Rio COPs represent a critical window for action to address this. We call on all Parties to approach the 2026 Rio COPs with the ambition and political will commensurate with the scale of the opportunity the triple COP year presents.

Signatories

ACF Community Canberra
Independently organised ACF group

alana

AMBITION LOOP

AUSTRALIAN RAINFOREST CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Banka Earth FOUNDATION

BRITISH ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY

PLATAFORMA CIPÓ

cosmo políticas

DATA-DRIVEN REGENERATION ECOCITIZEN

FSC

FSC INDIGENOUS FOUNDATION

GLOBAL COMMONS ALLIANCE

Global Youth Biodiversity Network UK

Global Youth Biodiversity Network

Global Youth Coalition

GREENPEACE

IGARAPÉ INSTITUTE a think and do tank

IIS INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

IPÊ

LACLIMA

NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS INITIATIVE

Peoples Climate Assembly

Plantlife Global

Quantum Leap HOLISTIC SOLUTIONS TO CLIMATE CHANGE

RSPB

SEAL Research Trust

TWRA TROPICAL WATER RESEARCH ALLIANCE

TRANSFORMA

UKCEH

Wildlife Conservation Society

Wilderness Australia

The Wildlife Trusts

WORLD LAND TRUST

WWF

YOUTH NEGOTIATORS ACADEMY

YOUTH4NATURE

ZSL Zoological Society of London

Coordinated by

IGARAPÉ INSTITUTE a think and do tank

ZSL Zoological Society of London

Annex

A substantial body of political outcomes already affirms the necessity of cross-convention coordination. We recall and build upon the following.

Parties have already agreed, through negotiation:

- Outcome of the First Global Stocktake, COP28, 2023. The UAE Consensus encouraged enhanced cooperation across multilateral environmental agreements, explicitly naming the Rio Conventions, to advance the goals of the Paris Agreement and the SDGs in "*a synergistic and efficient manner*". UNFCCC COP 28, CMA 5 para 33, explicitly encourages alignment between climate mitigation action in land, forests and other ecosystems with the K-M GBF.

- CBD COP16 Decision 16/22, Biodiversity and Climate Change, 2024. Called on the presidencies of the Rio Conventions to engage with one another on strengthening *"multilateral coordination on climate change and biodiversity loss"*, and requested the CBD Executive Secretary to invite Parties, observers and stakeholders to submit views on options for enhanced policy coherence.

- UNCCD COP16 Decision 8/COP.16, Promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies, 2024. Acknowledged the *"interdependence and interlinkages amongst desertification, land degradation and drought, climate change and biodiversity loss"*, and reaffirmed Party commitment to scaling nature-based and ecosystem-based solutions for land restoration, climate adaptation and biodiversity conservation simultaneously.

Presidencies and Parties have affirmed, politically:

- The COP28 Joint Statement on Climate, Nature and People, 2023. Brought together the Rio Convention presidencies and twenty signatory countries to affirm that the Paris Agreement and the KMGBF cannot be delivered unless climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation are addressed together in *"a coherent, synergetic and holistic manner"*, with signatories committing to stronger alignment in the planning and implementation of national climate, biodiversity and land restoration plans and strategies.

- The Belém Joint Statement on the Rio Conventions, COP30, 2025. Issued by all five incumbent and incoming presidencies, was focused on identifying and promoting synergistic implementation of non-state actor and voluntary initiatives mobilised under each Convention. The statement recognised that siloed efforts severely impede sustainable development and affirmed the imperative of integrating coherent, synergistic approaches across the Paris Agreement, the KMGBF and Land Degradation Neutrality targets.

The Joint Liaison Group

- Terms of Reference and Modus Operandi for the Joint Liaison Group between the Three Rio Conventions

  "The mandate of the Joint Liaison Group (JLG) comprising the Executive Secretaries of the three Rio Conventions (the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) is to:

  - *Enhance coordination between the three conventions, including the exchange of relevant information; and*
  - *Explore options for further cooperation between the three conventions, including the possibility of a joint work plan"*