UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE - UNFCCC

COP31

ZSL RECOMMENDATIONS

Thirty-first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Climate Change (COP-31)

9–22 November 2026 Antalya Turkey

COP31 must turn recognition of the interdependence of climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation int a durable, long term, negotiating space, enabling stronger institutional cooperation and coherent implementation across the Rio Conventions.

COP31 Key Expectations:

Rio Convention Synergies: : Deliver a substantive outcome on agenda item 14 "Cooperation with other international organizations" and enable the Joint Liaison Group to fulfil its existing mandate.

Second Global Stocktake: COP31 launches the start of the second global stocktake (GST2). Parties should use this moment to ensure GST2 assesses progress against the GST1 ambitions alongside progress across all three Rio Conventions, drawing on the CBD global review and UNCCD evidence alongside climate data. GST2 should invite inputs on how coherent implementation across the three Rio Conventions can amplify ambition.

Wildlife for Climate Declaration: Encourage governments to endorse the voluntary declaration and elevate wildlife protection, conservation and restoration within national climate and biodiversity policy.

STRENGTHENING RIO CONVENTION SYNERGIES

SBSTA Agenda Item 14: Cooperation with other international organizations

Strengthening Rio Convention Synergies

Climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation share common drivers and compound one another. Fragmented policy and financing can create duplication, conflicting signals and unintended trade-offs. Greater coherence across the Rio Conventions offers a practical way to deliver existing commitments more effectively, efficiently and equitably.

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. 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.

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. 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.

The CBD and UNCCD have both adopted key decisions on cooperation, policy coherence and synergies in recent years[1]. The UNFCCC has yet to follow with a negotiated outcome on the importance of synergies and policy coherence. The first Global Stocktake in 2023 clearly stated the importance of synergistic approaches[2], and COP30 placed cooperation with other international organisations on the agenda for the first time in 19 years, re-energising negotiations in 2025. However, at SB64 in Bonn Parties could not agree conclusions, and there is still no substantive negotiated outcome on synergies and policy coherence that brings the UNFCCC in line with the UNCCD and CBD. COP31 is therefore a key moment to agree practical measures that strengthen cooperation, policy coherence and implementation.

WE CALL ON PARTIES TO:

Secure a substantive cooperation outcome: Maintain a dedicated and durable space for negotiations on cooperation policy coherence under agenda item 14, "Cooperation with other international organizations", and request the UNFCCC Executive Secretary, through the Joint Liaison Group (JLG), to strengthen engagement with the other Rio Convention Secretariats.

Strengthen the Joint Liaison Group: Enable the JLG to enhance coordination, exchange relevant information and explore further cooperation, including by requesting it to develop and recommend guidance for enhanced policy coherence across the CBD, UNFCCC and UNCCD.

> The JLG is an existing mechanism with a two-part mandate to "(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" [3].
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> Despite the strength of this 2006 mandate, the JLG has been limited in its capacity to implement it though minimal resources allocated and limited political attention being placed on synergies for many years.

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[1] 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 Executive Secretary to invite views on options for enhanced policy coherence. UNCCD COP16 Decision 8/COP.16, 2024: acknowledged the "interdependence and interlinkages amongst desertification, land degradation and drought, climate change and biodiversity loss", and reaffirmed commitment to scaling nature-based and ecosystem-based solutions for land restoration, climate adaptation and biodiversity conservation simultaneously.

[2] 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 Paris Agreement and the SDGs in "a synergistic and efficient manner". Decision 1/CMA.5, paragraph 33, also encourages alignment of climate mitigation action in land, forests and other ecosystems with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

[3] Joint Liaison Group of the Rio Conventions (CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC) (2011), Terms of Reference and Modus Operandi for the Joint Liaison Group between the Three Rio Conventions.

Resources: Provide adequate, predictable and accessible financial and technical resources to the JLG for the requested activities.

Advance national policy coherence: Encourage strengthened coordination between Rio Convention focal points, finance and planning authorities, government ministries and subnational governments to align NDCs, NBSAPs, NAPs and Land Degradation Neutrality targets.

Maximise opportunities for recognising synergies, policy coherence and collaboration across the Rio Conventions in other agenda items at COP31, 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.

SBSTA Agenda Item 14: Cooperation with other international organizations Friends of Synergies and CAN Ecosystems COP31 legal text suggestions
Preamble *Recognising* that strengthened coordination on efforts to address the interconnected challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation will maximise policy coherence and cooperation, minimise trade-offs, increase efficiencies, and support the effective implementation of national and international commitments including the goals of the Paris Agreement. *Also recognising* that effective climate action should protect and restore ecosystem integrity, respect and promote human rights, and support gender equality, intergenerational equity, and the rights, knowledge and stewardship of Indigenous Peoples, local communities and people in vulnerable situations including through intergenerational learning and cooperation. *Recalling* decision 1/CMA.5 paragraph 33 on the importance of conserving, protecting, and restoring nature and ecosystems towards achieving the Paris Agreement goals, in line with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and calling for enhanced cooperation under the Rio Conventions; *Also recalling* decisions 13/CP.8, 1/CP.25 paragraph 15, 1/CP.26 paragraph 21, 1/CP.27 paragraphs 18 and 52, and 1/CMA.5 paragraphs 34 and 163.

Operative paragraphs

1. *Notes* the views submitted by Parties and observers to date under this agenda item on enhancing the inclusiveness of cooperation with other international organizations, as well as on the cooperation with the secretariats of the other Rio Conventions.

2. *Recalls* that the Conference of the Parties recognized that the Rio Conventions have distinct objectives, provisions and principles, as well as governance arrangements, and that it noted the importance of cooperation among them, as appropriate.

3. *Decides* to establish and maintain a dedicated space under the SBSTA agenda item "Cooperation with Other International Organizations" to promote cooperation and synergies among the Rio Conventions.

4. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to collaborate with the Executive Secretaries of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification to:
    a. Strengthen the role and function of the Joint Liaison Group, including increasing engagement, transparency and reporting from the Joint Liaison Group to Parties;

    b. Create opportunities for technical information exchange among Parties, observers and relevant organizations to explore options to enhance cooperation and policy coherence to support the implementation of the Rio Conventions and to report the outcomes of these technical information exchanges to Parties at the thirty-second meeting of the Conference of the Parties;

5. *Decides* to establish an Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) under the SBSTA, with a mandate until the 33rd Conference of Parties of the UNFCCC, to develop recommendations for consideration by SBSTA 65, SBI 65 and other relevant UNFCCC bodies to identify barriers and capacity gaps to effective coordination among the Rio Conventions and identify further opportunities for potential new mechanisms or institutional arrangements.

6. *Invites* the UNFCCC Secretariat to engage with the outcomes agreed at CBD COP17 and UNCCD COP16 decisions on synergies among the Rio Conventions, with a view to strengthening policy cooperation and coherence across the three Conventions.

7. *Invites* Parties to consider opportunities for furthering international coordination between the conventions, including the exchange of relevant intervention, and explore options for further cooperation between the conventions.

THE SECOND GLOBAL STOCKTAKE

The Second Global Stocktake (GST2) will begin at CMA 8 (Nov 2026), during COP31 and conclude at CMA10 (Nov 2028), during COP33. Covering the period of 2024 – 2028, the outcome of GST 2 will inform Parties in updating and enhancing national actions and international cooperation to reach the goals of the Paris Agreement.

The second Global Stocktake (GST2) begins at COP31, and it must reflect the fact that climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation cannot be solved in isolation. Synergies across the three Rio Conventions should be fully represented, enabled and encouraged from the outset of the GST2 process.

WE CALL ON PARTIES TO:

Recognise interdependence: Build on GST1 by recognising not only the role of protecting and restoring ecosystems and conserving biodiversity in effective climate action, but also the fundamental interdependence of climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation. These crises drive and reinforce one another, and nature is not only a contributor to climate action but a condition for its success.

Invite inputs on coherent implementation: Agree that the GST2 should explicitly invite inputs on how coherent implementation across the Rio Conventions can amplify ambition, with submissions from Parties, the secretariats and scientific bodies of the three Rio Conventions, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, subnational governments and other non-Party stakeholders.

Carry the findings forward: Ensure the GST2 outcome encourages Parties to reflect the climate, nature and land nexus in their national plans**.**

WILDLIFE FOR CLIMATE DECLARATION

For more information on the Wildlife for Climate Declaration please see here.

ZSL encourages governments from all regions to formally endorse the Government of Zimbabwe's Wildlife for Climate Declaration and elevate the importance of wildlife within the UNFCCC. The voluntary, non-binding declaration aims to recognise the essential role of wildlife in climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience and to encourage countries to embed wildlife protection, conservation and restoration within national climate and biodiversity policies for this reason.

WE CALL ON PARTIES TO:

Endorse the Declaration: Provide formal support and help build a broad cross-regional coalition around the role of wildlife in climate action.

Embed wildlife in national policy: Integrate wildlife protection, conservation and restoration into national climate and biodiversity planning and implementation where relevant.

Elevate wildlife within the UNFCCC: Use COP31 and future climate processes to increase recognition of wildlife, biodiversity and ecosystem integrity in mitigation, adaptation and resilience.