

INTERNATIONAL
LAND
COALITION

2026 UPDATE

LAND RIGHTS IN THE RIO CONVENTIONS

TECHNICAL GUIDE FOR ADVOCATES



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RIO CONVENTIONS

→ *Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)*

→ *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)*

→ *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)*

THEMATIC AREAS



Land tenure rights



Indigenous and traditional knowledge



Women's land rights



Participation in decision making



Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)



Fair and equitable sharing of benefits



Pastoralists

INTRODUCTION

Rooted in deep structural inequalities, the climate, biodiversity, and land degradation crises collectively pose some of the gravest threats currently facing the planet and its people. The *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)*, the *Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)*, and the *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)*—collectively known as the Rio Conventions—address these interlinked global environmental challenges and aim to find climate change, biodiversity, and desertification solutions.

The targets set by the Rio Conventions largely rely on land-based solutions, including reforestation, afforestation, conservation, restoration, climate friendly land use and land-based carbon offsetting projects. However, the scale of land required for these solutions is immense and puts an enormous pressure on land, primarily focusing on land located in the Global South.¹ Though often categorised as unused, empty or waste lands, such lands have been home to communities with deep social ties to the land for centuries.

Indigenous and community stewardship today is not only considered compatible with biodiversity conservation, but many of the world's most important biodiversity hot spots are found in Indigenous lands and territories. A 2023 report by One Earth² found that 39% of the world's most ecologically intact lands are governed by Indigenous Peoples and they are better maintained than in non-Indigenous areas, with 92% of these lands minimally impacted by human activity. Similar assessments highlight the role of pastoralist systems in maintaining healthy soils and rangelands.³ Also, smallholder and family farmers employing sustainable agricultural methods, such as agroecology, are key contributors to climate change mitigation efforts.⁴ It has been proven that secure land rights are crucial for Indigenous Peoples, local communities, pastoralists, small-scale farmers and women to manage their lands sustainably and equitably.^{5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12}

- 1 The Land Gap report. (2022). <https://landgap.org/2022/report>
- 2 Kennedy, C. M., Fariss, B., Oakleaf, J. R., Garnett, S. T., Fernandez-Llamazares, A., Fa, J. E., ... & Kiesecker, J. (2023). Indigenous Peoples' lands are threatened by industrial development; conversion risk assessment reveals need to support Indigenous stewardship. *One Earth*, 6(8), 1032-1049. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590332223003408>
- 3 FAO. (2023). "Pastoralist Knowledge Hub: Key facts." <https://www.fao.org/pastoralist-knowledge-hub/en/>.
- 4 IFAD. (2022) "Agriculture is not just a contributor to climate change. It is an essential part of the solution." https://www.ifad.org/en/w/news/ifad-s-reaction-to-the-latest-ipcc-report?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- 5 WRI. (2016). (<https://www.wri.org/research/climate-benefits-tenure-costs>)
- 6 PNAS. (2017). Titling indigenous communities protects forests in the Peruvian Amazon (pnas.org)
- 7 IPBES. (2019). 2020 IPBES GLOBAL REPORT(FIRST PART)_V3_SINGLE.pdf
- 8 WRI & RRI. (2014) Securing Rights, Combating Climate Change—Rights + Resources—Supporting Forest Tenure, Policy, and Market Reforms (rightsandresources.org)
- 9 IPCC. (2019). Special Report on Climate Change and Land SRCLL_SPM.pdf (ipcc.ch)
- 10 FAO (2011). https://www.academia.edu/44373375/Agriculture_and_climate_change_Law_and_governance_in_support_of_climate_smart_agriculture_and_international_climate_change_goals
- 11 Mmasa, Joel. (2015). Women Participation in Agriculture in Tanzania. Challenges and Policy Recommendations. CLKNET Tanzania Country Level Knowledge Network
- 12 Data shows that more secure tenure is associated with greater investments in land quality and productivity. Prindex (2024) reported that a higher share of people with insecurity tenure rights in 2020 was associated with a smaller share of agricultural land used for organic production in 2021 and 2022, based on FAO land use data. ref p. 39 — https://prindex-dev-bucket.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/documents/PRINDEX-Comparative_Report-2024_-_ENG_-_DIGITAL.pdf

International environmental frameworks are increasingly recognising this, incorporating language around land tenure security in policies for adapting to and mitigating climate change or conservation targets.¹³ However, the legal and binding implementation of securing land rights, both individual and collective, within these environmental instruments remain insufficient, resulting in inadequate legal support particularly for Indigenous Peoples and local communities in both international and national environmental policy spaces. This combined with the green land rush driven by carbon markets and the energy transition highlights the need for secure land rights to protect the critical ecosystems these communities preserve while preventing further evictions in the name of conservation and/or mitigating climate change. Strong, secure, appropriate and equitable land rights are central to addressing our global environmental crises,^{14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19} which needs to be at the core of the objectives of the Rio Conventions.

This policy brief examines how land rights are addressed within and across the Rio Conventions and their respective instruments, identifies policy gaps, and proposes improvements for future policy integration, emphasising secure land tenure as essential, just and effective elements of the Rio Conventions for both people and the planet.

Efforts must be made to integrate land rights into continuously evolving global environmental policy frameworks. Doing so will be critical to align international commitments and recognize the importance of secure land rights in achieving climate, biodiversity and land degradation goals while protecting smallholder and family farmers, Indigenous Peoples, pastoralists, peasants, forest dwellers and fisherfolks and local communities against top-down initiatives.

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- 13 Global environment and development instruments, such as the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the New York Declaration on Forests, the Bonn Challenge and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognise the role of rural people and tenure security
 - 14 J. Quan with N. Dyer (2008). "Climate Change and Land Tenure: The Implications of Climate Change for Land Tenure and Land Policy". IIED and Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich.
<https://www.fao.org/3/aj332e/aj332e.pdf>
 - 15 RRI 2014 Securing-Rights-Combating-Climate-Change-1.pdf (rightsandresources.org)
 - 16 UNCCD (GLO) 2021. Strengthening Tenure and Resource Rights for Land Restoration. UNCCD GLO WP tenure.pdf
 - 17 Land Portal 2022 Land Degradation & Tenure | Land Portal
 - 18 WRI 2016 <https://www.wri.org/research/climate-benefits-tenure-costs>
 - 19 FAO (2011). https://www.academia.edu/44373375/Agriculture_and_climate_change_Law_and_governance_in_support_of_climate_smart_agriculture_and_international_climate_change_goals

HOW DO THE RIO CONVENTIONS OPERATE



Each Convention has its own specific focus, text with commitments, and monitoring and implementation instruments to achieve this.

CONVENTION TEXT

The *foundational legal document* for each convention, outlining the objectives, principles, obligations, and institutional arrangements. It sets the legal framework within which the conventions operate.

FRAMEWORKS AND OTHER INSTRUMENTS

Frameworks and other instruments such as agreements and *guidelines are strategic plans* or sets of guidelines designed to achieve the conventions' objectives or monitor national commitments. They are often the result of decisions made by the Conference of the Parties (COP) and provide a structured approach for implementation.

SECRETARIAT

Administrative body that supports the COP and its subsidiary bodies, facilitates the coordination and implementation of activities.

CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES (COP) MEETINGS

Regular *meetings* where parties review progress, make decisions, and negotiate and adopt new frameworks. *CBD and UNCCD COPs are held every two years* (in 2026, both conventions held their 17th COP), while the *UNFCCC holds a COP every year* (in 2026, COP31).

DECISIONS

Decisions are adopted by the COP during their regular meetings. These decisions provide detailed guidance on the implementation of the conventions, address specific issues, and may establish new initiatives or frameworks.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL BODIES

These bodies provide *scientific and technical advice* to support the conventions' work, ensuring that decisions and frameworks are based on the best available science. In some cases, supervisory and subsidiary bodies hold meetings to report to the Secretariat, creating important draft frameworks that form the base of the COP. Controversially, supervisory bodies or subsidiary bodies have increasingly been making decisions themselves, reporting back to the COP instead of having the COP decide on their recommendations.

WORKING GROUPS

Working groups are established to *focus on specific issues or tasks*, facilitating detailed discussion and preparation of recommendations for the COP. These groups are often composed of experts, representatives of parties, and stakeholders. Working groups tend to be ad-hoc with a time bound mandate.

NATIONAL ACTION PLANS AND STRATEGIES

Countries develop and implement *national strategies and action plans* that align with the objectives of each convention. These are referred to by different names in each convention.

MAJOR GROUPS, CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (CSOs) AND STAKEHOLDER PLATFORMS

Civil society, including women's groups, youth, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, farmers, and other stakeholders, are involved in the decision-making process of the COPs through *public consultations, participation in COP meetings, and engagement in national action plans*.

LAND RIGHTS IN THE RIO CONVENTIONS



Land rights are mentioned either directly in the Rio Convention texts and their instruments, or indirectly.

This could be through recognizing rights that are tangential to the rights to land, but not in and themselves equal to the right to land. This includes, for example, the right to Indigenous/traditional knowledge and related customary use of land and resources, the right to participation in relevant decision-making processes, the right to Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), or the right to fair and equitable sharing of benefits. This section describes which *legal entry points* are included in this publication and why.



Land tenure rights

Indigenous Peoples, local communities, smallholder and family farmers, peasants, pastoralists, and other rural people have different levels of inherent rights to the lands and natural resources that they have traditionally occupied and/or used.²⁰ Not all land rights are the same, some of these, especially as they relate to Indigenous Peoples' rights, are collective. In the case of pastoralists, this may extend to rights to mobility as a form of land rights. This means the right to ownership, possession, management and use of territories and natural resources in their ancestral domains, including the right to determine and decide priorities for their development and to benefit and share from the profits from such use. Securing land rights involves enacting supportive legislation and ensuring the registration and documentation of these lands.²¹



Indigenous and traditional knowledge

The preservation of Indigenous/traditional knowledge is closely tied to secure land tenure, as land is fundamental to sustaining the traditional lifestyles that support the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.²² These lifestyles are linked to the land, territories, and resources where Indigenous and traditional knowledge is generated and passed down through generations. This intrinsic link between land, knowledge and practices, highlights the importance of securing land rights as a key strategy for safeguarding both cultural heritage and sustainable environmental stewardship.



20 Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues (2014). "Lands, Territories and Resources". https://www.un.org/en/ga/69/meetings/indigenous/pdf/IASG_Paper_Lands_territories_and_resources-rev1.pdf

21 Secure Land Rights to Fight the Climate Crisis, ILC 2022_5_land_rights_and_the_climate_crisis.pdf (d3o3cb4w253x5q.cloudfront.net)

22 In the ethical principles of CBD COP9 the following is stated: "to recognize traditional land tenure of indigenous and local communities, as access to traditional lands and waters [and sacred sites]] is fundamental to the retention of traditional knowledge and associated biological diversity." cop-09-dec-en.pdf ([cbd.int](https://www.cbd.int)) p.75.



Women's land rights

Women are more likely to be impacted by climate destructive activities (e.g. oil extraction) and more likely to be harmed by climate change (e.g. floods/draughts).²³ Rural women play vital roles in agriculture, food production, health and nutrition, and land-based livelihoods. However, globally, women own less land and have less secure land rights than men. Women's land rights are critical for democracy, peace, justice, and sustainable development. Strong land and productive asset rights for women are associated with enhanced status, improved living and gender conditions, better nutrition and food sovereignty, improved health and education outcomes, higher earnings and savings, better access to credit, and greater protection from gender-based violence.²⁴ Advocating for women's land rights also means advocating for secure land rights overall.



Participation in decision making

Open, transparent and inclusive decision-making processes with meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples and other communities to be affected, at every stage and level of policy making are crucial for democratic and people-centred land governance. Their participation fosters implementation of their rights, including over their lands and territories.



Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)

FPIC is a principle in international human rights law²⁵ that ensures Indigenous Peoples and other communities are not coerced or manipulated and that their consent is sought (freely), and given before any project affecting their lands, territories and resources starts. It requires consensus of all members of communities to be determined in accordance with their respective customary laws and practices, free from external manipulation, and obtained after fully disclosing the intent and scope of an activity, in a language and process understandable to the community.²⁶ FPIC is crucial for safeguarding land rights by ensuring Indigenous Peoples' and other relevant communities' participation in decision-making and protecting their lands and natural resources from top-down initiatives.



Fair and equitable sharing of benefits

Rights-based, secure land tenure enables clarity for fair and equitable sharing of benefits. Tenure considerations are essential for the equitable distribution of benefits and the management of transaction costs in environmental and development efforts.²⁷

23 One Earth 2022 <https://www.oneearth.org/why-women-are-key-to-solving-the-climate-crisis/>

24 Women constitute less than 20% of the world's landholders but make up an estimated 43% of the agricultural labour force. UN Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice (2017). "Insecure land rights for women threaten progress on gender equality and sustainable development". <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Women/WG/Womenslandright.pdf>

25 <https://un-declaration.narf.org/resources/fpic/>

26 D. Hunter, J. Salzmann and D. Zaelke (2021). "International Environmental Law and Policy". Foundation Press

27 submission-climate-change-food-international-land-coalition.pdf ([ohchr.org](https://www.ohchr.org))



Pastoralists

Pastoralists are people who gain their livelihoods primarily from livestock (domesticated and semi-domesticated animals) that graze predominantly on natural or seminatural rangelands.²⁸ There are an estimated 500 million pastoralists worldwide²⁹, and about 45% of the Earth's land are rangelands under pastoralist livestock production systems.³⁰ Ensuring land tenure security for these pastoralists is critical for sustainable and resilient livelihoods, food security, climate adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation.³¹ For pastoralists, land rights imply the recognition of collective use, seasonal access, and shared stewardship of lands and landscapes. The right to mobility is key for pastoralist adaptation to rainfall variability, drought, conflict, land-use change and climate shifts. Hence, policies must protect the flexibility to have access to pastoral resources when and where they become available.³² Pastoralists fall within the broader group of Indigenous Peoples and local communities referenced in international frameworks. Strengthening their participation in related decision-making spaces is essential, as is mainstreaming their specific needs across the conventions, given their distinct roles as food producers and mobile communities.

28 <https://learn.landcoalition.org/en/resources/understanding-and-monitoring-the-tenure-security-of-pastoralists/>

29 UNCCD. (2024). Global Land Outlook Thematic Report on Rangelands and Pastoralism. United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, Bonn

30 ILRI, IUCN, FAO, WWF, UNEP and ILC. (2021). Rangelands Atlas. Nairobi Kenya: ILRI

31 McGahey, D., Davies, J., Hagelberg, N. & Ouedraogo, R. (2014). Pastoralism and the green economy: a natural nexus? Nairobi, IUCN and UNEP

32 <https://iyrp.info/sites/default/files/2025-07/Policy-brief-Securing-Land-Rights-for-Pastoralism-final-14.22.50.pdf>

REPRESENTATION OF LAND RIGHTS IN THE CBD AND ITS INSTRUMENTS

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was established in 1992 to conserve biological diversity, promote the sustainable use of its components, and ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources.³³ Secure land tenure is crucial for biodiversity conservation, not only for Indigenous Peoples and local communities as they manage biodiverse ecosystems, but also for women, pastoralists, smallholder and family farmers, peasants and other communities who live on and from the land.

The CBD has a long standing commitment and experience in collaborating with Indigenous Peoples and local communities through its respective caucus, the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity³⁴, established at COP2. The adoption of the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF)³⁵ at COP15 in 2022, marked a significant milestone, explicitly recognizing the importance of securing land and resource rights for Indigenous Peoples and local communities as a critical component in achieving biodiversity conservation goals. Overall, the KMGBF was broadly celebrated, though some Indigenous Peoples' groups argue that its provisions can be considered as tokenistic and promote top-down conservation schemes.³⁶ And while the KMGBF does not explicitly recognize the particular rights frameworks of mobile Indigenous Peoples and local communities, several of its provisions do recognize customary land use practices and tenure systems, including seasonal land use. Understanding the link between the KMGBF and pastoralist communities is particularly important as sustainable pastoralism represents a primary strategy for advancing the Framework's goals, given that 67% of biodiversity hotspots and 38% of key biodiversity areas globally include rangelands.³⁷ Pastoralists are critical for maintaining biodiversity richness in rangelands, they ensure plant diversity and richness by supporting seed dispersal, and they breed locally adapted breeds of livestock ensuring the conservation of animal genetic diversity. Yet international conventions seldom recognize this vast biodiversity repository.³⁸

The adoption of the KMGBF was preceded by a series of important reflections. From COP7, in 2004³⁹, onwards there was increasing emphasis on establishing protected areas that respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

33 Introduction ([cbd.int](https://www.cbd.int))

34 <https://iifb-indigenous.org/>

35 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework ([cbd.int](https://www.cbd.int))

36 See section on KMGBF below

37 Briske, D. D., Cromsigt, P. G. M., Davies, J., Fernández-Giménez, M. E., Luizza, M. W., Manzano, P., & Singh, R. (2026). Pastoralism can mitigate biodiversity loss on global rangelands. *BioScience*, 76(1), 78-89.

38 <https://iyrp.info/events/un-convention-biological-diversity-uncbd>

39 During CBD COP 7 in 2004 a comprehensive Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PAs) was adopted urging countries to recognize diverse governance types including Community Conserved Areas (CCAs), use conservation benefits to reduce poverty, involve communities in PA planning and management, ensure legislative support, and prevent forced relocations. For more information see: Kothari, A. (2008). Protected areas and people: the future of the past. *Parks*, 17(2), 23-34. 17_2 ([parksjournal.com](https://www.parksjournal.com))

Later, during COP10, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets⁴⁰, part of the CBD's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020⁴¹, made important references to Indigenous Peoples' rights. Nevertheless, adopted decisions at that time did not explicitly mention land rights yet.

KEY INSTRUMENTS AND DECISIONS

THE CONVENTION



The long-standing sensibility for and experience in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and local communities is reflected in the incorporation of language across several articles of the Convention⁴² that acknowledge *Indigenous and local knowledge, technologies, and sustainable practices*. While these articles do not explicitly address securing customary and collective land rights, Indigenous embedded and experiential ecological knowledge is intrinsically bound to land rights. This interconnectedness presents an opportunity to advocate for securing land rights as a means to safeguard the stewardship (traditional ecological knowledge and sustainable practices) of communities that live on and from the land. One of these articles is Article 10c of the Convention that calls for the protection and encouragement of “customary use of biological resources in accordance with traditional cultural practices that are compatible with conservation or sustainable use requirements.”⁴³ The framing of this article could also be used to advocate for stronger engagement of pastoralists in the CBD frameworks.

A milestone for Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' rights in the CBD Convention is represented by Article 8(j)⁴⁴ which states:

“Subject to its national legislation, respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilisation of such knowledge, innovations and practices.”

40 <https://www.cbd.int/sp/targets>

41 COP 10 Decision X/2, informed by the third Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO) Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, including Aichi Biodiversity Targets ([cbd.int](https://www.cbd.int))

42 Article 8, paragraph (j) ; Article 10, paragraph (c); Article 10, paragraph (d); Article 14(1a) ; Article 17, paragraph (2) ; Article 18, paragraph (4)

43 Convention Text ([cbd.int](https://www.cbd.int))

44 Convention Text ([cbd.int](https://www.cbd.int))

WORKING GROUP ON ARTICLE 8(J)



An Ad-Hoc Working Group on Article 8(j)⁴⁵ and its related provisions was established during COP 4 in 1998. The Working Group includes a program adopted during COP5 aimed at implementing commitments outlined in Article 8(j) to enhance the *role and involvement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities* in the achievement of the objectives of the Convention.

As part of the Work Programme on Article 8(j), Parties to the Convention have adopted several voluntary guidelines developed by the working group, with three out of four⁴⁶ *explicitly addressing land tenure rights*, most often in relation to respect for traditional knowledge, community protocols and customary law. The only exception is the Rutzolijirisaxik Voluntary Guidelines (Decision 12; COP14)⁴⁷. However, these guidelines take into account the principles of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*,⁴⁸ which directly references land rights.

In the latest COP16 in 2024, a New Programme of Work on Article 8(j) was adopted⁴⁹, which is a plan to ensure Parties' commitment to respect, preserve and maintain the knowledge, innovations and practices of Indigenous Peoples and local communities is carried out effectively and fairly. Task 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 7.2 refer directly to land rights:

- ➔ **Task 1.1** (for the Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j)) calls for the development of guidelines "with the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities, to strengthen the legal and policy framework for the implementation of Targets 2 and 3 of the Framework, *including on indigenous and traditional territories*, to support the protection and restoration practices led by Indigenous Peoples and local communities."
- ➔ **Task 1.2** (for the Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j) and the Parties) calls for the identification and promotion of "best practices *to secure land tenure and governance by indigenous peoples and local communities* and develop guidelines for the inclusion and consideration of traditional lands and of resource use in spatial planning processes and environmental impact assessments, in accordance with national legislation and international obligations."
- ➔ **Task 1.3** (for Parties) calls for the *promotion of "the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities* without formal access to land, including in urban areas, and partner with them in the conservation, protection and restoration of biodiversity and in creating and maintaining blue and green spaces."

⁴⁵ Working Group on Article 8(j) ([cbd.int](https://www.cbd.int))

⁴⁶ The Akwé: Kon Voluntary Guidelines; the Tkarihwaïé:ri Code of Ethical Conduct; and the Mo'otz Kuxtal Voluntary Guidelines. For more information see: Working Group on Article 8(j) ([cbd.int](https://www.cbd.int))

⁴⁷ 14/12. The Rutzolijirisaxik Voluntary Guidelines for the Repatriation of Traditional Knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Relevant for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity ([cbd.int](https://www.cbd.int))

⁴⁸ UNDRIP_E_web.pdf direct references to land rights: Article 8(b); Article 10; Article 25; Article 26; Article 27; Article 28; Article 29(1,2); Article 30; Article 32(1,2)

⁴⁹ Final decision 8(j) Programme of Work: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-16/cop-16-dec-04-en.pdf>

➔ **Task 7.2** (for Parties) calls for the support and promotion of “traditional land tenure and securing land tenure for indigenous peoples and local communities for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, in accordance with national legislation.”

It also established a new permanent **Subsidiary Body 8(j)**⁵⁰, which, among others, will see to the Programme’s implementation. This will strengthen Indigenous Peoples and local communities’ voices across the CBD’s work.

SB8J-1⁵¹ (Panama City, October 2025) considered the implementation of the new Programme of Work through 2030. Delegates addressed guidelines related to Tasks 1.1 and Task 1.2.⁵² In the final text SB8j recommends that COP17 encourages Parties and invites others to integrate and apply the guidelines to the relevant processes and to support the dissemination of the guidelines, with bracketed references on respecting Indigenous Peoples and local communities’ rights, and applying elements of the guidelines. The final recommendation also encourages Parties to identify and promote best practices to secure land tenure and governance by Indigenous Peoples and local communities, with bracketed references that this should be done in accordance with national legislation and circumstances, and international obligations.

NAGOYA PROTOCOL



The Nagoya Protocol⁵³ addresses the *fair and equitable sharing of monetary and non-monetary benefits*, which involves references to rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to genetic resources (if applicable under national law), and associated traditional knowledge, and *joint intellectual property rights*. Additionally, there are references to prior and informed consent in the document as well as Article 12 recognizing community protocols. It also notes the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* which includes direct references to land rights.

50 Final decision Subsidiary Body: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-16/cop-16-dec-05-en.pdf>

51 The first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j) and Other Provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity Related to Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (SB8J-1) was held from 27–30 October 2025. Find SB8j documents at: <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/SB8J-01>

52 <https://enb.iisd.org/sites/default/files/2025-11/enb09874e.pdf>

53 The Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing ([cbd.int](https://www.cbd.int/nagoya))

SCIENTIFIC INFORMED NEGOTIATIONS: IPBES REPORTS



The IPBES⁵⁴ reports provide scientific and technical advice to support the conventions' work, ensuring that decisions and frameworks are based on the best available science. In 2018, an Assessment Report on Land Degradation and Restoration⁵⁵ clearly confirms the importance of **"clear, uncontested land rights"** in the context of the CBD. The role of Indigenous and local knowledge and practices for sustainable land management are acknowledged in the report, emphasising the importance of land rights: "Alienation of indigenous peoples and local communities from the land often leads to the irreversible loss of accumulated knowledge on how to manage land."

In turn, a 2019 Global assessment report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services⁵⁶ names insecure land rights as an enabler for land-use change. This report is recognized during COP15 in decision 4⁵⁷ when the Conference of the Parties points to the IPBES global assessment report, which considers land use change as one of the top five direct drivers with the largest global impact on biodiversity. The report also mentions the **importance of traditional knowledge, and FPIC** is suggested as an inclusive policy for decision makers in conservation, energy and infrastructure projects. Land rights are directly acknowledged in the report, stating: "Without recognition of legal land rights, many Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities are vulnerable to direct disposessions [of rural land] and, thus, losses of livelihoods and culture."

AICHI BIODIVERSITY TARGETS



During COP10 in 2010, a revised and updated Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020⁵⁸ was adopted. The plan includes the Aichi Biodiversity Targets which do not mention land rights explicitly. Nevertheless, Indigenous Peoples and local communities' rights are represented in two targets:

- ➔ **Target 11** calls for the *needs of women, Indigenous and local communities, and the poor and vulnerable* being taken into account in restoration of ecosystems by 2020.
- ➔ **Target 18** calls for the *respect, integration and reflection of traditional knowledge, innovations, and practices of Indigenous Peoples and local communities* relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and their customary use of biological resources, with the full and effective participation of indigenous and local communities, at all relevant levels.

54 cop14-press-brief-ipbes.pdf (cbd.int)

55 Assessment Report on Land Degradation and Restoration | IPBES secretariat

56 <https://www.ipbes.net/global-assessment>

57 15/4. Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (cbd.int)

58 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, including Aichi Biodiversity Targets (cbd.int)

KUNMING MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK (KMGBF)



During COP15 in 2022, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF)⁵⁹ was adopted. This framework supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and builds on the Convention's previous Strategic Plans with the coming of a monitoring framework with clear targets. In general, the framework includes strong rights-based language on the *rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, including to their lands, territories, resources and traditional knowledge, and Free, Prior and Informed Consent; customary land use practices, effective participation* of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in decision-making and spatial planning, *gender equality and equal rights to land and resources of women*, access to justice and *protection of environmental land rights defenders*, and commitments to sustainable agricultural practices, including agroecology.

Several articles⁶⁰ of the KMGBF refer to the rights of Indigenous Peoples, traditional knowledge or human rights. Article 7(a) in section C specifically refers to the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which includes references to land tenure rights:

"The Framework acknowledges the important roles and contributions of indigenous peoples and local communities as custodians of biodiversity and as partners in its conservation, restoration and sustainable use. The Framework's implementation must ensure that the rights, knowledge, including traditional knowledge associated with biodiversity, innovations, worldviews, values and practices of indigenous peoples and local communities are respected, and documented and preserved with their free, prior and informed consent, including through their full and effective participation in decision-making, in accordance with relevant national legislation, international instruments, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and human rights law. In this regard, nothing in this framework may be construed as diminishing or extinguishing the rights that indigenous peoples currently have or may acquire in the future"

⁵⁹ Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework ([cbd.int](https://www.cbd.int/kmgbf))

⁶⁰ Article 6 ; Article 7 ; Article 8 ; Article 12 (Goal C) ; Article 13 ; Article 22

Among the KMGBF's key elements are 4 goals for 2050 and 23 targets for 2030. A number of targets include direct references to land rights (Target 3, 22 and 23), others refer to land rights indirectly by referring to participation and respecting Indigenous Peoples and local communities rights (Target 1); customary sustainable uses (Target 5, 9); equitable sharing of benefits (Target 13); community based natural resource management (Target 19); and Free Prior and Informed Consent (Target 21). This is how land rights are explicitly mentioned:

- ➔ **Target 3:** "[...] recognizing indigenous and traditional territories, [...] recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, including over their traditional territories."
- ➔ **Target 22:** "[...] respecting their [indigenous peoples and local communities] cultures and their rights over lands, territories, resources, and traditional knowledge, [...] and ensure the full protection of environmental human rights defenders."
- ➔ **Target 23:** "[...] recognizing their [all women and girls] equal rights and access to land and natural resources"

Target 3 of the KMGBF describes the "30x30" conservation target, calling for 30% of the earth's land and sea to be conserved through the establishment of protected areas and other area-based conservation measures. During the negotiations, concerns were flagged about how 30x30 will be implemented fairly and equitably and how "fortress conservation" can be avoided. Instead, the 30x30 target should be reached without expanding state protected areas, but by recognizing and strengthening Indigenous Peoples and local communities' territories and rights.⁶¹ Herein, the value of pastoralists for maintaining rangeland⁶² biodiversity should be specifically recognised in these territories.⁶³ Like other Indigenous Peoples and local communities, pastoralists have often been in conflict with conservation efforts, as protected areas have been established within their territories. The 30x30 framework provides an opportunity to talk about land rights in a post KMGBF CBD, and must ensure the alignment with the targets 22 and 23 of the KMGBF.

Additionally, for pastoralism, Target 22 presents an entry point for monitoring tenure in rangelands, but also Target 1 presents an advocacy entrypoint for pastoralists as rangelands should be recognised as crucial ecosystems integral to achieving Target 1 (land management to reduce biodiversity loss) of the KMGBF.^{64, 65} Further, Target 4 of the GBF on halting species extinction and protecting genetic diversity connects well with pastoralists work to preserve local and adapted breeds of livestock and justifies their inclusion.

61 Despite a last-minute and powerful intervention by the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity, calling for Indigenous territories to count towards the 30 percent target, this demand was rejected, principally by European countries, despite widespread evidence showing that Indigenous Peoples protect their lands better than anyone else and that their territories should be a key mechanism in biodiversity protection.

62 Rangelands themselves comprise a range of ecosystem types, mainly dryland grasslands, savannas, shrublands, and forests, alongside wetter and colder biomes such as tundra. Source: Rangelands Atlas, 2021. International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) with technical contribution from FAO, IUCN, WWF, UNEP and ILC Rangelands Initiative. https://www.rangelandsdata.org/atlas/sites/default/files/2021-06/Rangelands_web%20%28144%20dpi%29.pdf

63 https://iyrp.info/sites/default/files/2025-06/pastoralism-document-2_2.pdf

64 https://iyrp.info/sites/default/files/2025-06/pastoralism-document-2_2.pdf

65 <https://www.cbd.int/gbf/targets/1>

They are considered ‘invisible guardians’ of animal genetic resources, especially women.⁶⁶ This contribution of pastoralists is reported within the Sustainable Development Goals through an indicator for domestic animal diversity, which has which sparked engagement of pastoralists in the biodiversity space in the past. They play an important role in maintaining animal and plant diversity and heterogeneity.^{67,68} Pastoralism could therefore be included also in Target 4 on halting species extinction and protecting genetic diversity.

The recognition of land rights in the KMGBF indicates that there is a paradigm shift in the conservation sector in which rights of frontline communities are increasingly being recognized, resonating this narrative in all CBD’s instruments would continue this line.

KMGBF MONITORING FRAMEWORK



The KMGBF includes a forthcoming monitoring framework which was adopted at COP15, decision 5.⁶⁹ A compound land indicator – land use and land tenure – was first adopted in Decision XIII/28 as a traditional knowledge indicator and was retained in the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, as well as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.⁷⁰ The traditional knowledge indicator on land tenure and use measures:

Trends in land use change and **land tenure** in the traditional territories of indigenous and local communities

The land use and tenure indicator is one of *four traditional knowledge (TK) indicators*, together with trends in traditional occupations, trends in linguistic diversity, and trends related to the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the implementation of the Framework.

While Parties did not retain the land use and tenure indicator as a headline indicator during COP-15, support for the land use and tenure indicator grew substantially in the interim period, supported by a number of Parties, but also inter-governmental agencies, observer organizations and CBD caucuses. In November, 2023, the WG8J-12 requested the CBD Secretariat to carry out a technical and scientific review of the TK indicators,

⁶⁶ <https://www.fao.org/4/i3018e/i3018e00.htm>

⁶⁷ <https://www.fao.org/4/i3018e/i3018e00.htm>

⁶⁸ <https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/76/1/78/8326607>
<https://iyrp.info/events/un-convention-biological-diversity-uncbd>

⁶⁹ 15/5. Monitoring framework for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework ([cbd.int](https://www.cbd.int))

⁷⁰ The indicator was developed by ILC and other members of the Technical Working Group, including the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), as lead custodian for the indicator, Forest Peoples Program, World Resource Institute, the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), CIFOR-ICRAF, as well as Prindex, LandMark, the Indigenous Navigator and the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI), among others. For more information, see: A land use and tenure indicator to protect traditional knowledge–ILC (landcoalition.org) and the two-page brief prepared for Parties ahead of COP-16.

the results of which were published in SBSTTA/26/INF/11⁷¹ and determined that the land use and tenure indicator met the criteria for headline indicators. As a result, SBSTTA-26 recommended COP16 in Cali, Colombia to include the traditional knowledge indicator on land use and tenure to the list of headline indicators. At COP16 in 2024, Parties considered the traditional knowledge indicator on land (HI 22.1) for headline status under Target 22 of the KMGBF monitoring framework.⁷² Alongside other critical decisions that were carried over from CBD COP16 in Cali, the monitoring framework with this land indicator was officially adopted at the second resumed session of COP16 at FAO in Rome in February 2025.⁷³ This means that starting in 2026, countries will be required to monitor and report on the land and territorial rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in NBSAPs and National Reports (NRs), recognising secure land tenure as a crucial enabling factor for sustainable use and biodiversity outcomes.

On 29 January 2026, the 2nd Traditional Knowledge Indicators (TKI) Workshop in Cambridge, UK, was convened by UNEP-WCMC, Forest Peoples Programme, and the UN Biodiversity advancing rights-based monitoring under the KMGBF. The opportunities to include a land tenure indicator for headline reporting of Target 3 (“30x30” conservation target) was also discussed, as land tenure and governance by Indigenous Peoples and local communities are intertwined with this target. Indigenous Peoples and local communities governance is reflected in Target 3 indicators in the form of Protected Areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs), but there are also calls for the indicators to take account of Indigenous and Traditional Territories (ITTs) outside of the PA/OECM frameworks.⁷⁴ There are several things that would need to happen before ITTs could be incorporated into the Target 3 headline indicator, notably a recommendation from SB8j followed by a decision of CBD COP. In the meantime, national governments may choose to include ITTs in their national reports to CBD. And at the global level, there are several places where Indigenous Peoples and local communities can document their ITTs, for example through LandMark⁷⁵ or the ICCA Registry⁷⁶. *ICCAs can also provide a vehicle for strengthening pastoral governance of tenure*, bringing together conservation experts and pastoralists.⁷⁷

Besides the land tenure indicator, the optional disaggregation for *Indigenous and traditional territories (ITTs)* for multiple targets, was retained in the last COP decision on the monitoring framework⁷⁸, highlighting the need to ensure that Parties apply this disaggregation and account for land tenure when reporting on all area-based indicators and targets, such as Target 2 on restoration and indicator 10.2 sustainable forest

71 <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/283e/eb7c/6a953a1e098b6c46e0f3be8d/sbstta-26-inf-11-en.pdf>

72 <https://dev-chm.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-16/cop-16-dec-31-en.pdf>

73 The UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC). News 2025 <https://unep-wcmc.org/en/news/key-decisions-agreed-as-cbd-cop16-concludes-in-rome>

74 <https://iifb-indigenous.org/iifb-guidelines-on-indigenous-and-traditional-territories-itts/>

75 <https://landmarkmap.org/map>

76 <https://www.iccaregistry.org/>

77 <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/e3da5b48-920a-4b07-bfa7-0c62e9761511/content>

78 <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-16/cop-16-dec-31-en.pdf>

management.⁷⁹ However, the ITTs disaggregation would be appropriate in more targets and indicators, for example in Target 1 addressing land and sea use change, bringing the loss of areas of high biodiversity importance close to zero by 2030, “while respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities.”⁸⁰

GENDER PLAN OF ACTION (GPA)



The Gender Plan of Action (GPA) (2023–2030) was adopted during COP15, decision 11⁸¹ in 2022. The GPA includes a direct reference to women’s land rights in Part II(e) on page 3:

“Ensuring meaningful and effective engagement and empowerment of women and girls from indigenous peoples and local communities. Indigenous women and girls, and those from local communities, are integrally involved in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and yet continue to face discrimination and remain marginalised in decision-making processes, access and ownership over resources including land. As such, it is proposed that implementation of the Gender Plan of Action include a focus on empowering and supporting the meaningful, informed and effective engagement of women and girls from indigenous peoples and local communities to address their rights, needs and interests, and to recognize and value their traditional knowledge, innovations, practices, technologies and cultures and their related rights in support of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and in the fair and equitable sharing of benefits.”

This paragraph also mentions a paired dedicated objective (includes increasing women and girls’ rights to *ownership and control over land*) and indicative actions and possible deliverables to achieve this objective. These include: compile baseline data and research on the relationship between conservation interventions, sustainable use and all women and girls’ rights to ownership and control over land; take *measures to update national legislation* so that all women and girls have equitable access to ownership and control over land; and support women’s organisations and networks to have equal opportunities to lead or participate in decision-making of land tenure and property reforms. This is aimed to deliver data and research as well as updated legislation that provides equal rights of access, ownership and control of land and waters for women and men.

79 International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity, 2025. <https://iifb-indigenous.org/iifb-guidelines-on-indigenous-and-traditional-territories-itts/>

80 <https://www.cbd.int/gbf/targets/1>

81 15/11. Gender Plan of Action ([cbd.int](https://www.cbd.int/gpa/))

The 6th Meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation considered the findings of the midterm review of the implementation of the GPA 2023–2030,⁸² and wishes to adopt recommendations at COP17 on integrating gender-responsive approaches in line with Target 23 (includes women and girls equal rights and access to land); ensuring participation of women and girls in decision-making; enhancing efforts to generate, use and report gender disaggregated data.

KEY DECISIONS



Since the first COP, there has been increasing recognition of Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' rights, including land tenure. COP5 marked the first direct mention of land rights described in the Annex section of the draft programme of work on dry and humid land (activity 8c)⁸³ "Creating or strengthening appropriate institutions for land tenure and conflict resolution." A 2010 decision under the same programme (activity 10)⁸⁴ references pastoralists, calling for *management involving "pastoralists and other indigenous and local communities"* through "customary use systems", but stops short of land tenure. COP7's Programme of Work on Mountain Biodiversity likewise recognizes pastoralists without linking it to tenure security.⁸⁵

Subsequent COPs (COP6 onwards) continued to integrate land rights discussions, mainly in the Annex sections of decisions. The references to land rights are still mainly informative during these COPs, as it is part of annexes informing certain decisions or being part of advice and describing discussions.

COP10 (decision X/43)⁸⁶ adopted "trends in land-use change and *land tenure in the traditional territories of indigenous and local communities*" as one of four global indicators for traditional knowledge, under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

During COP11, further development of land tenure as a headline indicator for the Aichi Target 18 about traditional knowledge and practices, is suggested⁸⁷, also emphasising on the full and *effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and local community representatives*. The discussion about the Aichi Target 18 indicator using land tenure is back at COP13, decision 28⁸⁸, specifically describing land tenure as both a generic indicator and a specific indicator of Target 18, referencing the SDG indicator for Target 5a and

⁸² <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/e/132/a046/514eff0746e527c9748acf84/sbi-06-05-en.pdf>

⁸³ COP Decision ([cbd.int](https://www.cbd.int))

⁸⁴ <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-10/cop-10-dec-35-en.pdf>

⁸⁵ <https://www.cbd.int/mountain/pow.shtml>

⁸⁶ COP Decision ([cbd.int](https://www.cbd.int))

⁸⁷ [cop-11-dec-en.pdf](#) ([cbd.int](https://www.cbd.int)) Page 105

⁸⁸ <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-13/cop-13-dec-28-en.pdf> p.22

Target 1.4. Decision 4, COP15 marked the adoption of the KMGBF.⁸⁹ Decision 5⁹⁰ during this same year, proposed component and complementary indicators of land tenure for Targets 22 and 23 of the KMGBF.

In May 2024, Decision 2⁹¹ of the SBSTTA 26th meeting fully adopted new recommendations on traditional knowledge indicators (amongst which land tenure indicators), integrating them into the monitoring framework of the KMGBF. These recommendations address a previously recognized gap in the framework. At COP16, Parties endorsed the traditional knowledge indicator on land (HI 22.1) for headline status under Target 22 of the KMGBF monitoring framework.

NATIONAL LEVEL IMPLEMENTATION

National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs)⁹² are the primary tools for implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at the national level. Each country that is a party to the CBD is required to develop, adopt, and periodically update its own NBSAPs and mainstream them into national policies and plans across sectors such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries and planning. NBSAPs are typically developed through a *participatory process* involving multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organisations, Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

On 30 April 2024, ILC held a Dialogue⁹³ for advancing land rights through the implementation of the CBD on the national level, discussing the experiences of people's centred organisations, National Land Coalitions (NLCs), and civil society organisations (CSOs) in participating in NBSAPs processes.⁹⁴ During this session, members expressed a strong motivation to participate in the creation of NBSAPs in their respective countries. However, they also highlighted significant barriers to meaningful participation and difficulties in accessing negotiations. On a more positive note, some members shared successful experiences where their involvement in NBSAP development led to the establishment of important commitments and policies, demonstrating the potential impact of inclusive participation in this process⁹⁵.

The targets of the KMGBF that contain language on land rights provide entry points for land rights on a national level. The NBSAPs were due by COP16,⁹⁶ where countries set national targets and indicators that needed to comply with the indicators and targets set out in the

89 15/4. Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework ([cbd.int](https://www.cbd.int/kmgbf))

90 15/5. Monitoring framework for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework ([cbd.int](https://www.cbd.int/kmgbf)) p.23

91 Approaches to identifying scientific and technical needs to support the implementation of the Framework, including its implication for the work under the Convention ([cbd.int](https://www.cbd.int/kmgbf))

92 National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) ([cbd.int](https://www.cbd.int/nbsaps))

93 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmipaBotcXw>

94 <https://learn.landcoalition.org/en/learning-labs/advancing-land-rights-through-the-rio-conventions-opportunities-at-national-level/>

95 See for example the case of the Philippines: <https://asia.landcoalition.org/en/press-release-harnessing-biodiversity-through-community-land-rights-a-learning-exchange-for-csos-and-indigenous-peoples/>

96 Revised and updated NBSAPs due by COP16 ([cbd.int](https://www.cbd.int/nbsaps))

KMGBF.⁹⁷ However, more than 85% of countries have missed the deadline to submit their NBSAPs due to technical difficulties, structural barriers or struggles to access funding to develop the NBSAPs accordingly.⁹⁸

Then, the deadline to actually report on progress of these national targets and indicators was through the 7th National Reports (7NRs) by the February 2026 deadline. A record 125 countries, nearly two-thirds of CBD Parties, submitted their 7NRs, which will form the basis of a global review of collective progress to be presented at COP17 in Yerevan, Armenia in October 2026. Yet, the first draft of the Global Review of the KMGBF shows that out of 125 7NR submissions, only 7% have reported on indicator 22.1 with only one Party submitting the indicator fully as described in the metadata. Parties reported methodological challenges, underdeveloped data collection systems, fragmented land tenure information and legal difficulties in defining traditional territories as some of the constraints. The late endorsement of the indicator's headline status likely also affected Parties' ability to report on it, raising the reporting expectations for the next reporting round in 2029. The reported data cannot be considered representative of all Parties.

MAIN TAKEAWAYS COP16

CBD COP16, held from 21 October to 1 November 2024 in Cali, Colombia, was the “COP of implementation”,⁹⁹ with a focus on taking stock of the implementation of the KMGBF, aligning NBSAPs with the framework, and further developing the monitoring framework and resource mobilization. With calls to involve all of society in achieving the CBD objectives, COP16 was also labeled as the “People’s COP,” with Indigenous participation reaching an all-time high.¹⁰⁰

COP16 included some important decisions that directly or indirectly recognize land rights in CBD instruments. In the landmark decision 4¹⁰¹, Parties adopted a new Programme of Work on Art. 8(j) that sets out specific tasks to ensure the meaningful *contribution of Indigenous Peoples and local communities towards the conservation of biodiversity and the implementation of the KMGBF*. The program of work contains nine general principles and eight elements focusing on issues such as direct access to funding for biodiversity conservation, restoration, and sustainable use, full and effective participation by Indigenous Peoples and local communities while persisting a human rights-based approach. It also includes the establishment of the Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j), which will become a dedicated platform for addressing Indigenous Peoples and local communities concerns, effectively ensuring their participation in global biodiversity governance under the CBD. It underscores the importance of recognizing land rights to maintain these practices and preserve important traditional knowledge on biodiversity conservation.

97 15/6. Mechanisms for planning, monitoring, reporting and review ([cbd.int](https://www.cbd.int))

98 <https://www.carbonbrief.org/cop16-countries-miss-un-deadline-to-submit-nature-pledges/>

99 <https://www.iisd.org/inside-cop-16>

100 <https://www.carbonbrief.org/cop16-key-outcomes-agreed-at-the-un-biodiversity-conference-in-cali-colombia/>

101 <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-16/cop-16-dec-04-en.pdf>

Through this decision, rights, contributions and traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities are further embedded in the global agenda, which provides opportunities to strengthen land rights advocacy as their voices weigh more in discussions on decisions.

Furthermore, COP16 marked the unbracketed inclusion of a *headline indicator on land tenure* and use is confirmed under Target 22 in the decision of the KMGBF monitoring framework. Starting in 2026, countries will be required to monitor and report on the land and territorial rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in NBSAPs, recognizing secure land tenure as a crucial enabling factor for customary sustainable use and biodiversity outcomes.

Recognizing the *contributions of Afro-descendent peoples* in the goals of the CBD and KMGBF is another significant milestone at COP16, bringing visibility to communities historically overlooked in biodiversity policies. A dedicated decision¹⁰² called on parties to incorporate the contributions of Afrodescendent peoples and integrate their knowledge and connection to their lands into implementing the CBD and KMGBF. It encouraged their full and effective participation, financial support, and capacity-building on a voluntary basis, as well as the inclusion of their contributions in national biodiversity strategies (NBSAPs). This decision underscores the importance of protecting biodiversity conservation practices and the connection to their lands, which could be an initial step to strengthening their land rights in the Convention and its instruments as well.

Another decision that includes direct or indirect references to land rights is the decision on Sustainable Wildlife Management (Item 19) addressing challenges relating to land tenure, resource use rights, and the inequitable distribution of costs and benefits derived from the sustainable use of wild species for the achievement of the objectives of the CBD.¹⁰³

The creation of the “Cali Fund”¹⁰⁴ further highlighted the global commitment to *fair and equitable benefit-sharing* from the use of genetic resources, promoting biodiversity finance mechanisms that prioritize Indigenous Peoples and local communities’ needs. This initiative sets a precedent for addressing historical injustices and providing the resources necessary to sustain community-led conservation efforts.

Despite deliberations on implementation, equity, and justice, COP16 failed to finalize its full agenda. While USD 163 million in pledges were made to expand the GBF Fund, significant gaps remain in resource mobilization. A draft decision on a global biodiversity financing instrument, backed by developing countries under CBD Article 21 and opposed by developed countries arguing financial fragmentation, sparked an intense debate. In the early hours of 2 November 2024, the session ended abruptly without quorum, leaving critical decisions unresolved.¹⁰⁵

102 <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-16/cop-16-dec-06-en.pdf>

103 <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-16/cop-16-dec-15-en.pdf>

104 <https://enb.iisd.org/un-biodiversity-conference-cbd-cop16-summary>

105 <https://enb.iisd.org/un-biodiversity-conference-cbd-cop16-summary>

THE ROAD TO COP17

The lead-up to COP17, scheduled for Yerevan, Armenia (19–30 October 2026), is shaped by a series of preparatory meetings across 2025 and early 2026.

SBSTTA-27¹⁰⁶ (Panama City, October 2025) reached agreement on the scope and structure of the *Global Report on Collective Progress*, which will serve as the primary basis for the first review of KMGBF implementation at COP17. Parties highlighted the importance of timely national reporting and agreed on a *mechanism to collect information from non-state actors*, including Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, youth, and others. Concerns were noted regarding the *low proportion of countries that had updated their NBSAPs*. Parties also agreed to request the Executive Secretaries of the three Rio Conventions to develop a *multilevel roadmap to enhance policy coherence and reduce duplication* across monitoring and reporting frameworks. Another outcome of SBSTTA-27 was the decision supporting the growing *recognition of soil biodiversity* and the encouragement of Parties to integrate soil biodiversity in their NBSAPs and in climate and land policy instruments,¹⁰⁷ which provides an entry point for land rights advocacy as secure land access is seen as essential for long-term soil protection because it enables land users to implement practices that enhance soil health and maintain its productivity over time, as recommended in the Soil Atlas 2024.¹⁰⁸

SB8J-1¹⁰⁹ (Panama City, October 2025) considered the implementation of the new Programme of Work through 2030. Delegates addressed guidelines related to Tasks 1.1 on the strengthening of legal and policy frameworks for the implementation of GBF Targets 2 and 3; and to Task 1.2 on the inclusion of traditional lands and resource use in spatial planning processes and environmental impact assessments of the Programme of Work.¹¹⁰ In the final text SB8J recommends that COP17 encourages Parties and invites others to integrate and apply the guidelines to the relevant processes and to support the dissemination of the guidelines, with bracketed references on respecting Indigenous Peoples and local communities' rights, and applying elements of the guidelines. The final recommendation also encourages Parties to identify and promote *best practices to secure land tenure and governance by Indigenous Peoples and local communities*, with bracketed references that this should be done in accordance with national legislation and circumstances, and international obligations.

SBI-6¹¹¹ (Rome, February 2026) addressed a wide range of items related to implementation, from encouraging the required national actions to ensuring the necessary means to bridge data gaps and build capacities, such as scientific and technological collaboration and financial resources.

106 The twenty-seventh meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-27) was held in Panama City, from 20 to 24 October 2025. Find SBSTTA27 documents at: <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/SBSTTA-27>

107 <https://www.cbd.int/doc/recommendations/sbstta-27/sbstta-27-rec-09-en.pdf>

108 <https://eu.boell.org/en/SoilAtlas-PDF>

109 The first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j) and Other Provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity Related to Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (SB8J-1) was held from 27–30 October 2025. Find SB8J documents at: <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/SB8J-01>

110 <https://enb.iisd.org/sites/default/files/2025-11/enb09874e.pdf>

111 SBI 6 convened from 16–19 February 2026 at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) in Rome, Italy.

Participants reviewed the finalization and submission of national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) and national targets towards GBF implementation, and noted the 28 February 2026 deadline for submission of Parties' seventh national reports. With only four national reports submitted by the time the meeting closed, by the EU, Lesotho, Uganda, and Switzerland, delegates underscored the urgency of reporting requirements while also highlighting the late disbursement of relevant funding and other constraints to timely submission. The session also considered the findings of the midterm review of the implementation of the Gender Plan of Action 2023–2030. Time limitations and opposing views resulted in the adoption of largely bracketed recommendations on many agenda items, including resource mobilization, the financial mechanism, scientific and technical cooperation, and cooperation with other conventions.

The Cambridge Traditional Knowledge Indicators Workshop¹¹² (Cambridge, January 2026) discussions covered the full suite of Traditional Knowledge Indicators (TKIs), including land-use change and land tenure (HI22.1). The opportunities to include a land tenure indicator for headline reporting of Target 3 was discussed. The overall takeaway was that biodiversity monitoring is increasingly less about generating new data and more about connecting existing knowledge systems respectfully, credibly, and at scale. Encouragingly, that collaboration is accelerating, though much more targeted effort is still needed. The goal is to bridge community-led monitoring, national systems, and global reporting frameworks to make sure the KMGBF translates into effective impact.

Collectively, these meetings reflect both advancing momentum and significant unresolved challenges that will require resolution at COP17.

GAPS, CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The long standing commitment and experience of collaborating with Indigenous Peoples and local communities of the CBD has translated to many frameworks and instruments that contribute directly or indirectly to more representation of securing land rights for such communities in the CBD. However, there remain gaps and opportunities for more and direct representation of land rights in these frameworks, and significant barriers on the implementation level that are addressed in this section.

Many lower and middle income countries have limited capacity and political will to implement land tenure reforms at the national level.¹¹³ The KMGBF land tenure targets and the updating of NBSAPs to comply with them are a great step in the right direction. However, ensuring that national biodiversity strategies incorporate and enforce land rights remains incomplete, and strengthening the global policy instruments initiated by the CBD to ensure land tenure rights are crucial in moving forward.

¹¹² The 2nd Traditional Knowledge Indicators (TKI) Workshop in Cambridge, UK, on 29 January 2026, was convened by UNEP-WCMC, Forest Peoples Programme, and the UN Biodiversity advancing rights-based monitoring under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF).

¹¹³ Landscape programme (rvo.nl)

The inclusion of land tenure as a headline indicator for the KMGBF represents an important step to achieve this, adopted during COP16 in 2024. This means that starting in 2026, countries will be required to monitor and report on the land and territorial rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in NBSAPs, recognising secure land tenure as a crucial enabling factor for sustainable use and biodiversity outcomes. Moreover, the support for national efforts to implement and enforce land rights through capacity-building initiatives as well as providing technical assistance and resources to strengthen land tenure systems are necessary steps to support implementation on the national level.

Furthermore, although the Gender Plan of Action (GPA) includes strong language on women's land rights, many parties have not given adequate attention to the GPA's content. It is important to create momentum for the GPA and crucial to include it in the agenda for COP17 to ensure continued progress and focus on gender equality and women's land rights.

In every level of the CBD, it is important to foster the participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in policy development and implementation processes. This promotes inclusive decision-making processes that recognize and respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. The translation of commitments to the CBD to participatory NBSAP processes remains to be seen.

COP16 was not finalised in Cali, Colombia, but instead concluded on 25–27 February 2025 in Rome, Italy, at the FAO headquarters, to address agenda items left unresolved after the Cali meeting was suspended due to a loss of quorum in the early hours of 2 November.¹¹⁴

The next CBD COP (17) will take place in Yerevan, Armenia¹¹⁵ in 2026, and continues to present an important opportunity for land rights advocacy in CBD policies and instruments.

¹¹⁴ <https://www.cbd.int/article/reconvene-cop16-rome-2024#:~:text=Riccardo%20De%20Luca-,Countries%20to%20Resume%20Crucial%20Biodiversity,Rome%2C%2025%2D27%20February%202025&text=UN%20CBD%20COP%2016%20to,and%20KMGBF%20monitoring%20and%20planning>

¹¹⁵ <https://enb.iisd.org/un-biodiversity-conference-cbd-cop16-31Oct2024>

REPRESENTATION OF LAND RIGHTS IN THE UNCCD AND ITS INSTRUMENTS

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)¹¹⁶ was established in 1994 to address desertification, land degradation, and drought. Land degradation is estimated to impact 20–40% of the Earth's total land area, directly affecting nearly half of the global population and encompassing a variety of ecosystems including croplands, drylands, wetlands, forests, and grasslands worldwide.¹¹⁷ The planet continues to lose 100 million hectares of healthy and productive land each year, with worsening droughts resulting in scarce fertile lands, disproportionately affecting rural women and girls.¹¹⁸ Land tenure rights are central to achieving the UNCCD convention's objectives, as it is critical for sustainable land management.¹¹⁹ At the same time, the lack of land tenure security is frequently identified as a major constraint for achieving the Conventions' objectives.¹²⁰

Within UNCCD, the formal recognition and conceptualization of the importance of secure land tenure has advanced considerably. Land rights have been recognised as critical towards achieving the goal of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)¹²¹ in an effective and equitable way, as confirmed by decisions adopted from 2019 to 2023 during the COPs of the UNCCD.¹²² Subsequently, UNCCD and FAO produced a technical guide for the integration of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) into the implementation of the Convention and LDN.¹²³

The UNCCD has adopted successful decisions regarding land rights, created space for CSOs to advocate for it, and adopted a Gender Action Plan that includes women's land rights.¹²⁴ Initiatives such as the National Multi-Stakeholder Consultations on Land Tenure

116 Convention | UNCCD

117 FAO, 2021. The State of the World's Land and Water Resources for Food and Agriculture – Systems at breaking point. Synthesis report. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb7654en>

118 IISD 2024 <https://enb.iisd.org/convention-combat-desertification-unccd-cop16>

119 FAO & UNCCD, 2024 https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2024-04/UNCCD-FAO_Synergy%20Brief_May%202024.pdf

120 The technical guide on the integration between the VGGTS and UNCCD clearly identifies the importance of land tenure in land degradation neutrality–Technical guide on the integration of the voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests | UNCCD

121 The UNCCD defines LDN as: “a state whereby the amount and quality of land resources necessary to support ecosystem functions and services to enhance food security remain stable, or increase, within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems.” LDN provides a framework for support, for example through the Changwon Initiative, which supports national voluntary target setting. See: <https://www.unccd.int/land-and-life/land-degradation-neutrality/overview>

122 COP decisions | UNCCD

123 UNCCD & FAO, 2022 Technical Guide on the Integration of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security into the Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Land Degradation Neutrality ([unccd.int](https://www.unccd.int))

124 P234033_UNCCD_30th-Anniversary-Book_WEB_compressed.pdf

and the #HerLand campaign resulted in raising awareness on the subject in line with the State Party decision 26/14 on land tenure. An especially important area of work under the UNCCD is with pastoralists and within rangeland environments, emphasized through Decision COP.16/29 on Rangelands and Pastoralists where countries pledged to improve pastoralists' land rights along the VGGT.¹²⁵ This is important, because 54% of the earth's land surface is considered rangelands, with about 500 million pastoralists stewarding about 80% of these.¹²⁶ Nevertheless, LDN as a global commitment and tool must increase attention to rangelands and pastoralists through stronger targets, action, and funding,¹²⁷ particularly given every USD 1 invested in rangeland restoration yields benefits worth USD 35.¹²⁸

KEY INSTRUMENTS AND DECISIONS

THE CONVENTION



The recognition of land rights during negotiations as described above, is reflected in the incorporation of direct and indirect language on land rights across several articles of the Convention.¹²⁹

The importance of land tenure is indirectly mentioned in a number of articles in the Convention:

- ➔ **Article 2, paragraph 2**, calling for “conservation and sustainable management of land and water resources, leading to improved living conditions, in particular at the community level”
- ➔ **Article 3, paragraph a**, calling for the participation of populations and local communities in decisions on the design and implementation of programmes and the creation of an enabling environment at higher levels to facilitate action at national and local levels.
- ➔ **Article 4, paragraph 2(b)**, calling for strengthening reforms currently in progress toward resource tenure as well as reinforcing participation of local populations and communities.
- ➔ **Article 5, paragraph d and e**, calling for awareness and facilitating the participation of local populations, particularly women and youth, and providing an enabling legal environment.

¹²⁵ <https://www.unccd.int/news-stories/stories/unccd-cop16-ushers-new-era-rangelands-and-pastoralists>

¹²⁶ <https://www.unccd.int/resources/global-land-outlook/glo-rangelands-report> and <https://www.unccd.int/news-stories/press-releases/silent-demise-vast-rangelands-threatens-climate-food-wellbeing-billions>

¹²⁷ https://wocat.net/documents/1249/IYRP_LDN_Policy_Brief_low-res.pdf

¹²⁸ <https://www.unccd.int/resources/publications/economics-rangeland-restoration-discussion-paper>

¹²⁹ Article 4 (2b) ; Article 10(2) ; Article 16(1b & 1g) ; Article 17(1b & 1d) ; Article 18(2) ; Article 8(3c Annex I) Convention text | UNCCD

- ➔ **Article 10, paragraph 2**, calling for national action programmes to specify the respective roles of government, local communities and land users and the resources available and needed.
- ➔ **Article 10, paragraph 2(e)**, calling for strengthening institutional frameworks for partnerships between the donor community, governments at all levels, local populations and community groups.
- ➔ **Article 10, paragraph 2(f)**, calling for effective participation at all levels particularly resource users, including farmers and pastoralists and their representative organisations, in policy planning, decision-making, and implementation and review of NAPs.
- ➔ **Article 16, paragraph 1b**, calling for the collection, analysis and exchange of information to address the needs of local communities and those of decision makers, with a view to resolving specific problems, and that local communities are involved in these activities;
- ➔ **Article 16, paragraph 1g**, calling for the exchange of information on local and traditional knowledge, ensuring adequate protection for it and providing appropriate return from the benefits derived from it, on an equitable basis and on mutually agreed terms, to the local populations concerned.
- ➔ **Article 17, paragraph 1b**, calling for addressing the specific needs of local populations and lead to the identification and implementation of solutions that improve the living standards of people in affected areas;
- ➔ **Article 17, paragraph 1c**, calling for protecting, integrating, enhancing and validating traditional and local knowledge, know-how and practices, ensuring, subject to their respective national legislation and/or policies, that the owners of that knowledge will directly benefit on an equitable basis and on mutually agreed terms from any commercial utilization of it or from any technological development derived from that knowledge;
- ➔ **Article 18, paragraph 2**, calling for The Parties shall, according to their respective capabilities, and subject to their respective national legislation and/or policies, protect, promote and use in particular relevant traditional and local technology, knowledge, know-how and practices.

Of the articles listed above, Article 4, paragraph 2(b) and Article 10, paragraph (2) make indirect though significant references to land rights, by respectively naming resource tenure and specifying the role of land users.

The regional implementation annexes for Africa¹³⁰, Asia¹³¹, Latin America and the Caribbean¹³², the Northern Mediterranean¹³³ and for Central and Eastern Europe¹³⁴ find similar language in their articles to the articles listed above.

130 See Annex I: Article 4(2b); Article 6(2); Article 8(1, 2c, 3b, 3c); Article 9(1a, 1b, 1c); Article 11(1g) UNCCD_Convention_ENG_0_0.pdf p.28-39.

131 See Annex II: Article 2(1b); Article 4(1b, 1d, 2) UNCCD_Convention_ENG_0_0.pdf p.39-43.

132 See Annex III: Article 4(1i) UNCCD_Convention_ENG_0_0.pdf p.44-47.

133 See Annex IV: Article 3(2); Article 5(1b, 1d) UNCCD_Convention_ENG_0_0.pdf p.47-50.

134 See Annex V: Article 3(2); Article 4(1b, 1d) UNCCD_Convention_ENG_0_0.pdf p.50-54.

Though, in Article 8, paragraph 3(c) of the first annex about the regional implementation of the Convention in Africa with respect to the measures to improve institutional organisation, a direct reference is made as the following is stated: "...adjusting, as appropriate, the institutional and regulatory framework of natural resource management to provide security of land tenure for local populations."

KEY DECISIONS



Up to COP 14, there is no explicit reference to land rights. Nevertheless, traditional knowledge has received recognition from the first COP held in Rome in 1998, with each year (except for COP9 and COP13) afterwards having a separate decision designated to it. The language around traditional knowledge has grown stronger throughout the years, incorporating more benefit sharing and acknowledgement structures.

During COP13 in 2017, Decision 27¹³⁵ (the Ordos Declaration), land rights are explicitly mentioned:

"Acknowledging the importance of effective, accountable and inclusive institutions, sound policies and incentives, good governance and the rule of law to improving land governance for sustainable land management and access to ownership and control over land, and encouraging countries to give due consideration to the dissemination, promotion and implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the context of National Food Security."

During that same COP, in Decision 5(2)¹³⁶ Parties were invited to consider the recommendations made by the Civil Society Organization Panel, regarding land rights, and Decision 7¹³⁷ specifically notes the VGGTs.

COP13 also marked the first decision (30)¹³⁸ dedicated to gender that emphasises how "... women's rights and access to, inter alia, economic and natural resources, ownership and control of land and other forms of property may foster more effective and efficient implementation of the Convention", also emphasising on the benefits of their participation on all levels. This also marked the adoption of the Gender Action Plan (GAP) to support gender-responsive implementation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework.

135 cop13decision.pdf (unccd.int) p.79

136 cop13decision.pdf (unccd.int) p.14

137 cop13decision.pdf (unccd.int) p.17

138 cop13decision.pdf (unccd.int)

COP14¹³⁹ and 15¹⁴⁰ continue to call for reinforcement of the Gender Action Plan (GAP) and the forming of the Gender Caucus to accelerate the implementation of the GAP. A Roadmap to support implementation of the Gender Action Plan was presented to Parties and to the Gender Caucus at COP15.

Decision 26¹⁴¹ at COP14 was a landmark decision in the land tenure space of environmental global policy frameworks. In this decision, the UNCCD made a clear statement "... noting the importance of land tenure within the framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification." Also, in this decision, Parties are amongst others "encouraged" to follow the VGGTs; to recognize legitimate tenure rights, including customary rights; to adopt national land governance legislation; to support sustainable land use; and recognize women's ownership and their rights of land. Decision 26 also included three requests from Parties for the Secretariat: to explore options for integrating land governance-related into UNCCD reporting processes; to work with FAO to produce the technical guide on integration of the VGGT into implementation of the Convention and LDN; and to produce an awareness-raising options paper on promoting responsible land governance to support LDN, with special attention to vulnerable populations, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities. The VGGTs present an opportunity to enhance reporting on land tenure issues within the UNCCD. However, they remain voluntary and unenforceable, placing the responsibility solely on states. This also means there are no formal accountability mechanisms or grievance redress systems. This means calling for the implementation of the VGGTs carried limited weight, especially in comparison to references to land tenure in other instruments such as the KMGBF where countries are required to report.

At COP15 in 2022, Decision 27¹⁴² presents a follow-up on policy frameworks and the thematic issue of land tenure. This decision includes a request to the secretariat to both present a report on the implementation efforts relevant to this decision at the 21st session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC)¹⁴³; and present a report on policy issues relevant to this decision to the COP16 in 2024.

At COP16 in 2024, a number of decisions include important references to land rights. Following previous years (decisions 16/COP14, 26/COP14 and 27/COP15), COP16 adopted a **new land tenure decision**.¹⁴⁴ This decision encourages policy alignment with the VGGTs, invites and urges Parties and other stakeholders to collect land tenure data, invites Parties to consider nominating national focal points on land tenure, and encourages inclusive and participatory national-level dialogue. Also building on previous years, COP16 adopted a **new gender decision** that explicitly mentions women's land rights, recognising their importance for the Convention's effective implementation.¹⁴⁵

139 ICCD/COP(14)/23/Add.1 ([unccd.int](https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2014-03/23-add-1.pdf)) Decision 24/COP.14

140 ICCD/COP(15)/23/Add.1 ([unccd.int](https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2023-03/23-add-1.pdf)) Decision 24/COP.15 ; and ICCD/COP(15)/23/Add.1 ([unccd.int](https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2023-03/23-add-1.pdf)) Decision 25/COP.15

141 ICCD/COP(14)/23/Add.1 ([unccd.int](https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2014-03/23-add-1.pdf))

142 ICCD/COP(15)/23/Add.1 ([unccd.int](https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2023-03/23-add-1.pdf))

143 Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention | UNCCD

144 Decision 28/COP.16 <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2025-03/28-cop16.pdf>

145 Decision 25/COP.16 <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2025-03/25-cop16.pdf>

This includes inviting Parties to collect sex-disaggregated data through national statistics offices and systems on land ownership, and requests the secretariat to continue collaborating with the other Rio Conventions and relevant international organizations on women's land rights advocacy, in particular for Indigenous Peoples, and local communities. The decision further recognises the vital role women play in agriculture, food production, and land-based livelihoods.

Another important decision for COP16 is the *decision on rangelands and pastoralists*, including mentions of land tenure for pastoralists in line with the VGGT.¹⁴⁶ With this decision, the importance of rangelands is further recognised, however, gaps remain and pastoralists' contributions as well as their mobility, shared land use and collective tenure should be more explicitly recognised. Furthermore, the decision on rangelands and pastoralists also does not have any mention of specific/special attention to women and youth. Beyond that, COP16 marks the creation of both a Caucus for Indigenous Peoples and a Caucus for Local Communities, being the first Rio Convention to establish two separate caucuses for Indigenous Peoples and local communities.¹⁴⁷ This enhances the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in combating desertification and land degradation through UNCCD instruments.

SCIENTIFIC INFORMED NEGOTIATIONS: SPI REPORTS



The UNCCD related research body, the Science Policy Interface (SPI),¹⁴⁸ identifies *land tenure security as a crucial part of the “enabling environment” for achieving the objectives of the convention*. Particularly through its 2022 report titled “The Contribution of Integrated Land Use Planning and Integrated Landscape Management to Implementing Land Degradation Neutrality: Entry Points and Support Tools”.¹⁴⁹

Similarly, the Global Land Outlook (GLO),¹⁵⁰ UNCCD's flagship publication, highlights the role of secure land tenure in sustainable land management and land restoration. More specifically, the GLO in 2022, commissioned by the UNCCD, explored how land tenure systems in different ecosystems and bio-cultural regions around the world are linked to land degradation or sustainable land management.

146 Decision 29/COP.16 <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2025-03/29-cop16.pdf>

147 <https://www.unccd.int/news-stories/press-releases/united-nations-conference-riyadh-charts-path-global-action-land-drought>. For more information, see also the Indigenous Peoples' Declaration, Our Sacred Land and <https://rightsandresources.org/blog/indigenous-voices-rise-in-the-desert-achievements-at-unccd-cop16/#:~:text=The%20UNCCD%20is%20the%20first,Indigenous%20Peoples%20and%20local%20communities>.

148 Science | UNCCD

149 The contribution of integrated land use planning and integrated landscape management to implementing Land Degradation Neutrality: Entry points and support tools | UNCCD

150 Global Land Outlook | UNCCD

The GLO thematic report released in May 2024 on Rangelands and Pastoralists¹⁵¹ offers case studies and good practices to inspire governments, donors and other stakeholders to prioritise rangeland health in cooperation with local communities. The 2024 report marks that rangeland management has undergone a paradigm shift away from outdated colonial perceptions toward approaches centred on cooperation, improved land governance, and tenure security. Land tenure is explicitly recognised as an enabling condition for sustainable rangeland management, while tenure insecurity is identified as a direct driver of rangeland degradation. The report further notes that degradation reduces mobility, with consequent negative impacts on pastoralist livelihoods, and that conventional land-use planning frameworks can inadvertently hinder mobility and restrict traditional access to resources. Among its key recommended actions, the report calls for the recognition and enforcement of “legitimate land rights, respect the unique circumstances and needs of rangeland communities (e.g., mobility, transhumance, communal governance), and nurture their participatory role in the conservation, sustainable management, and restoration of rangelands.”

Additionally, an Options Paper developed by Landesa and UNCCD in 2022¹⁵² in response to Parties’ request under Decision 26 is now available to support awareness-raising by various stakeholders on land rights for responsible land governance for combating desertification, land degradation and drought.

GENDER ACTION PLAN (GAP)



The Gender Action Plan (GAP)¹⁵³ was adopted during COP13 in 2017.¹⁵⁴ It makes several explicit references to women’s land rights, including naming “strengthening women’s land rights and access to natural resources” as one of four key areas of focus for the GAP. The GAP also recognizes the link between women’s extreme poverty and insecure land rights. It also emphasises women’s empowerment and women’s full and equal participation and leadership.

The GAP highlights that women in developing country regions affected by desertification, land degradation and drought are estimated to produce up to 60–80 per cent of the food in developing countries. But in these regions, most women lack critical land rights considering they often are allocated the less fertile family land; they are often not the main decision makers regarding the land they use; and in most cases they do not own the land they use. The GAP calls for Parties to aim to increase women’s land rights by 2030 through diverse and innovative approaches, accompanying the implementation of the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework.

¹⁵¹ GLO rangelands report | UNCCD

¹⁵² UNCCD Awareness-raising Options Paper on Responsible Land Governance.pdf

¹⁵³ GAP ENG low res_0.pdf (unccd.int)

¹⁵⁴ cop13decision.pdf (unccd.int)

THE TECHNICAL GUIDE ON THE INTEGRATION OF THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES ON THE RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE OF TENURE OF LAND, FISHERIES AND FORESTS IN THE CONTEXT OF NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY (VGGT)



The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests (VGGT)¹⁵⁵ are a set of internationally agreed principles and standards adopted by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in 2012. This included FAO Governance of Tenure Technical Guides (TGs) to help develop capacities to apply the VGGTs. One of these guides is specifically about improving governance of pastoral lands.¹⁵⁶ In Decision 26/COP14,¹⁵⁷ the secretariat was requested to produce a technical guide on how to integrate the VGGT into the UNCCD processes. This resulted in 2022 in the UNCCD and FAO collaborating to develop a technical guide for the integration of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) into the implementation of the Convention and Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN).¹⁵⁸

The ultimate objective is to integrate *activities to improve land tenure security* into the implementation of LDN initiatives by informing policy and decision makers. This creates the conditions for a continuum of legitimate tenure rights in a people-centred, participatory, and gender-responsive manner. It describes nine pathways to increase tenure security in LDN initiatives that focus on aligning policy legal frameworks, information sharing, women's land rights, grievance mechanisms, participatory land use planning, land administration, sustainable use of public lands, governance of commons and private lands. The VGGT acknowledges formal and informal land rights, including land use rights, FPIC and meaningful participation. Although the original VGGTs have a specific Technical Guide on pastoral land governance, *the LDN version falls short of explicitly addressing the distinct land rights needs of pastoralist communities* that rely on the right to mobility, and the collective access and use of shared lands, which differ fundamentally from conventional land-use planning frameworks and are key to LDN initiatives.

155 Voluntary Guidelines on Tenure | Governance of Tenure | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (fao.org)

156 <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/e3da5b48-920a-4b07-bfa7-0c62e9761511/content>
Other guides include the following titles: Governing Land for Women and Men; Improving Governance of Forest Tenure; Respecting Free, Prior and Informed Consent; Safeguarding Land Tenure Rights in the Context of Agricultural Investment; Responsible Governance of Tenure and the Law; Responsible Governance of Tenure: A Technical Guide for Investors; Governing Tenure Rights to Common; Creating a System to Record Tenure Rights and First Registration; Improving Ways to Record Tenure Rights; Valuing Land Tenure Rights; Strengthening Civic Spaces in Spatial Planning Processes; and Responsible Governance of Tenure and Preventive Justice.

157 ICCD/COP(14)/23/Add.1 (unccd.int)

158 Technical Guide on the Integration of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security into the Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Land Degradation Neutrality (unccd.int)

#HerLand CAMPAIGN



On the International Women's Day on the 8 March 2023, the UNCCD launched the #HerLand campaign.¹⁵⁹ It aims to promote inspiring examples of women and girls' leadership in sustainable land management, mobilising support to secure land rights for women and girls across the world. This included an event under the theme "Her Land. Her Rights" on 17 June 2023. The campaign has resulted in varied materials for the promotion of secure and gender-equitable land tenure, and has held several events to draw high-level attention and action on women's land rights, including an event at UNFCCC COP28 in the UAE in 2023.

MONITORING FRAMEWORK

The monitoring framework of the UNCCD is designed to assess progress in combating desertification, mitigating the effects of drought, and achieving sustainable land management. Specifically, it monitors LDN under the UNCCD. The UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework comes with a specific monitoring, reporting and evaluation section that describes implementation will be done through national reporting and sharing of national experiences, best practices and lessons learned from Parties to the COP and a review and evaluation by the CRIC for consideration by the COP.¹⁶⁰

The indicators for monitoring progress under the UNCCD were discussed before COP16. While including SDG Indicator 15.3.1, which focuses on Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN), within the UNCCD framework is beneficial, there is no specific indicator on land rights.¹⁶¹ SDG 1.4.2 is gender disaggregated to capture data related specifically to women's land tenure rights, and SDG 5.a.1 and 5.a.2 are specific to women's ownership rights over agricultural land, and women's equal legal rights to land, respectively. There are limitations to these indicators, though they might be considered in future iterations of the UNCCD monitoring framework, streamlining efforts across major monitoring frameworks. In the shorter-term, there are hopes that 15.3.1 could incorporate disaggregation by tenure type that would allow for a more nuanced appreciation of where land degradation is concentrated and its relation to land tenure and use.

The monitoring framework should also recognise pastoralist land tenure security, which is not robustly captured within any global monitoring framework. ILC developed jointly with Prindex, ODI and SPARC indicators to monitor and assess land tenure security for pastoralists that reflect their complex, diverse and specific land tenure needs.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Women, Girls and Land campaign #HerLand | UNCCD

¹⁶⁰ 1716078 (unccd.int)

¹⁶¹ THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development (un.org) Indicator 1.4.2. / 5.a.1. / 5.a.2.

¹⁶² <https://learn.landcoalition.org/en/resources/understanding-and-monitoring-the-tenure-security-of-pastoralists/>

While global indicators acknowledge that secure land rights are central to many development goals, the way they measure tenure security does not align with how pastoralists tend to use and manage land. Existing indicators, such as SDG 1.4.2., tend to focus on individual or household rights to bounded and fixed parcels of land evidenced through legally recognised documentation.

NATIONAL LEVEL IMPLEMENTATION

The UNCCD is engaged in flagship initiatives¹⁶³ on the regional or national level to promote sustainable practices and shared knowledge that help improve land productivity and resilience.

Nevertheless, National Action Programmes (NAPs)¹⁶⁴ are the primary tools for implementing the UNCCD at the national level. Each country that is a party to the UNCCD is required to develop, adopt, and periodically update its own NAPs, integrating them into national policies and plans across sectors such as agriculture, forestry, water management, and land use planning. NAPs are typically developed through a participatory process involving multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organisations, Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

The UNCCD enables civil society to engage in NAPs to advocate for appropriate recognition of land rights on the national level. CSOs are working on more binding guidelines and how to implement the VGGT on all levels, but it is a challenge to bridge the gap between local realities and global policies.

UNCCD and FAO organised a series of regional webinars on “Integrating Tenure Security into Land Restoration Initiatives” with three of these webinars targeting National Focal Points. National Focal Points designated officials or entities within each country responsible for coordinating and facilitating the implementation of the convention at the national level. However, the strength and political position of National Focal Points is varying from country to country. National partners might not be aware of the potential of land tenure on the national level in the way it is recognized in the UNCCD.

On 21 March 2024, ILC held a National Dialogue for advancing land rights within the context of the UNCCD to discuss the experiences of people-centred organisations, National Land Coalitions (NLCs), and civil society organisations (CSOs) in participating at the national level in NAPs. During this session, members expressed strong motivation to engage in the creation and implementation of NAPs in their respective countries. However, they also highlighted significant barriers to meaningful participation and difficulties in accessing decision-making processes. For example, some NLCs mentioned attempting to engage through standard national level channels with little success. However, their application to UNCCD/FAO consultation, though unsuccessful, opened a valuable channel they hope to leverage in the future.

163 Flagship initiatives | UNCCD

164 Action programmes | UNCCD

The participation opportunities made members realise that the Rio Convention consultation processes should be higher on their strategic priorities for the next few years. Some members shared successful experiences where their involvement in NAP development led to the establishment of important commitments and policies, demonstrating the potential impact of inclusive participation. Nevertheless, the National Dialogues concluded with the notion that there remains a gap between good policy formulation and implementation.

MAIN TAKEAWAYS COP16

The UNCCD COP16 took place in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia from 2 to 13 December, 2024. With the theme Our Land, Our Future, COP16 entailed a heavy emphasis on land, emphasizing on accelerated restoration of degraded land and the scaling of nature-positive agricultural practices to enhance biodiversity and food security. It was the 30th anniversary of the Convention, taking this moment to reflect on past achievements and shape a future vision.¹⁶⁵ This includes a midterm evaluation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework which includes assessing progress and guiding future actions and policies, as well as aims to adopt the UNCCD's biennial budget.

With a specific Land Day on 4 December, a Governance Day on 6 December on inclusive land governance and a People's Day on 7 December that centered on the role of youth, women and civil society in decision-making for land's future, the hope was that there was specific recognition brought to land rights. This together with the yearly Land Tenure Decisions 16/COP14, 26/COP14 and 27/COP15 and any further decision to be adopted by the parties to the UNCCD at the COP16 should enhance land tenure security of people who live in land degraded areas and their capacity and role in decision-making (for themselves) to achieve land degradation neutrality.

At COP16 in 2024, several important decisions were made regarding land rights, building on previous years. A new land tenure decision¹⁶⁶ aligned with the VGGTs, emphasizing the need for land tenure data, national focal points, and inclusive dialogue. COP16 also adopted a gender decision¹⁶⁷ highlighting women's land rights, calling for sex-disaggregated data on land ownership and advocating for recognizing women's role and rights in agriculture and land-based livelihoods. COP16 also established two Caucuses for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, ensuring their greater participation in the UNCCD.^{168, 169} All these decisions have their own trajectories and politics involved in the negotiations up to finalizing these decisions.

¹⁶⁵ https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2024-10/2415624E_0.pdf

¹⁶⁶ <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2024-12/2423533E.pdf>

¹⁶⁷ <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2024-12/2423670E.pdf>

¹⁶⁸ <https://www.unccd.int/news-stories/press-releases/united-nations-conference-riyadh-charts-path-global-action-land-drought>

¹⁶⁹ For more information, see the Indigenous Peoples' Declaration, Our Sacred Land

Another key decision addressed rangelands and pastoralists,¹⁷⁰ recognizing land tenure for pastoralists in line with the VGGTs, aligning with the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists in 2026. The important role of pastoralists was also highlighted during the COP presidency event on rangelands, where the COP presidents of COP15, 16, and 17 joined forces for grasslands and rangelands, together setting the agenda for COP16. Botswana led discussions in the negotiations on rangelands, tying this to the EU deforestation regulation, presenting an opportunity for promoting open-grazed livestock systems. Civil society continued to advocate for pastoralist inclusion. However, despite the emphasis on rangelands, gaps remain in acknowledging pastoralists' contributions, mobility, and collective tenure.

ROAD TO COP17

COP17 will be held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia from 17 to 28 August 2026 under the theme "Restoring Land. Restoring Hope." The location will shape the agenda by a specific focus on land restoration priorities, including approaches that safeguard livelihoods, food security and ecosystems in dryland regions. COP17 is taking place during the United Nations International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP),¹⁷¹ and Mongolia leads both, it is the COP17 host and the country championing the IYRP.¹⁷² This convergence is no coincidence, the UNCCD began building toward it in 2024, when COP16 in Riyadh adopted the Convention's first-ever decision on rangelands. Together, this presents a major opportunity to accelerate action on pastoralist land rights and the restoration of rangelands.

In the lead up to COP17, CRIC23¹⁷³ reviewed implementation of voluntary LDN targets and followed up on policy frameworks from COP16, covering land tenure, gender, and sand and dust storms. The Gender Caucus spotlighted Indigenous women's contributions to sustainable land management and governance. Parties welcomed the progress on the Land Tenure Toolbox, the UNCCD-FAO joint tenure-restoration initiative,¹⁷⁴ and reaffirmed land tenure security for Indigenous Peoples, local communities, people of African descent, women, and youth to be a key enabling condition for LDN and the broader UNCCD mandate, calling for stronger Secretariat and Global Mechanism financial and technical support. There was a push for global land governance indicators to be explored for inclusion in future UNCCD reporting and an acknowledgement that land tenure systems are often complex, and stressing that this complexity must be reflected in governance frameworks. All CRIC23 recommendations feed into COP17.

A dedicated highlight at COP17 will be the launch of the Rangelands Flagship Initiative, led jointly by Mongolia and the UNCCD's Global Mechanism. It aims to mobilize an initial \$1 billion investment pipeline for rangeland restoration and LDN, building on

170 <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2024-12/2423646E.pdf>

171 <https://iyrp.info/>

172 <https://www.unccd.int/land-and-life/rangelands-and-pastoralists/overview>

173 CRIC23 was held from 1-5 December 2025 in Panama City, Panama. <https://www.unccd.int/cric23>

174 <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/31525e64-cf90-42e8-85d1-21d46f7825e1/content>

the rangelands commitments 196 countries made at COP16 in Riyadh.^{175, 176, 177} Other investment opportunities as Business4Land¹⁷⁸ and the Drought Resilience Investment Platforms¹⁷⁹, most of which will be presented at the Finance Day at COP17.¹⁸⁰

The Riyadh Action Agenda, a voluntary track of the UNCCD introduced alongside COP16's formal decisions to mobilize commitments from governments, businesses and civil society, touched on land governance and tenure alongside its core focus on land restoration and drought finance.¹⁸¹ It continues at COP17 as the Riyadh–Ulaanbaatar Action Agenda, a platform for finance, policy and partnership solutions that could serve as an avenue for advancing tenure follow-through.¹⁸² Mongolia's Steppe Action Agenda, a national legacy framework for COP17, offers a complementary avenue through which pastoralist land rights and tenure security commitments could be carried forward.¹⁸³

COP17's expected decisions relevant to land rights include decisions on land tenure, gender, rangelands and pastoralists, and drought resilience. The 2026 COP coinciding with the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, adds extra political visibility for pastoral land rights and tenure issues on the global stage.¹⁸⁴

GAPS, CHALLENGES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The designated land tenure decisions during the COPs, the Gender Action Plan (GAP) and the technical guide of the VGGT in the context of LDN provide important steps in the representation of land tenure rights in the UNCCD and its instruments. However, there are still gaps and challenges to overcome and achieve better support for the land rights of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, and others dependent on land.

The global pastoralist constituency highlights both opportunities and threats in relation to initiatives against land degradation and desertification; on the one hand, there is an opportunity to gain recognition for their knowledge systems and practices as a way to achieve restoration and land degradation neutrality, and on the other hand, there is a threat of afforestation and conversion of rangelands under the guise of restoration.¹⁸⁵

175 <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2024-12/2423646E.pdf>

176 <https://www.unccd.int/land-and-life/rangelands-and-pastoralists/flagship-initiative>

177 <https://www.topafricanews.com/2026/02/24/african-nations-and-global-partners-call-for-urgent-investment-in-rangeland-restoration/>

178 <https://www.unccd.int/our-work/business4land>

179 <https://www.thegef.org/projects-operations/projects/11941>

180 <https://www.unccd.int/cop17/programme>

181 <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/riyadh-action-agenda-gathers-steam-as-land-governance-takes-center-stage-at-unccd-cop16-302325535.html>

182 <https://www.unccd.int/cop17/programme>

183 <https://iucn.org/news/202606/washington-dc-mongolia-and-iucn-elevate-opportunities-support-land-restoration>

184 <https://iyrp.info/events/un-convention-combat-desertification-unccd>

185 See <https://iyrp.info/sites/iyrp.org/files/Notes%20IYRP%20WG%20Rangeland%20Degradation%20meeting%207jul2022.pdf>; and <https://iyrp.info/working-groups>; and https://catalogue.unccd.int/688_end_of_Desertification_10.1007_978-3-642-16014-1.pdf

Often land users are considered land degraders. Instead, the structural forces that lead to degradation such as land loss and conversion, adverse market and infrastructure arrangements and climate change need to be addressed. While the VGGT indirectly does this, a mechanism that explicitly values local knowledge and land governance systems needs to be developed and the concepts of rights and restoration need to be embedded and emerge from them.

One of the challenges is translating these global policies into national and local level implementation. There are varying levels of awareness and political will at the national level to implement land tenure policies. This is paired with limited capacity and challenges in mobilising resources for implementing land tenure reforms within the context of desertification and land degradation projects.

In 2015, UNCCD Parties were invited to formulate voluntary targets to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) in accordance with their specific national circumstances and development priorities. The LDN Target Setting Programme (LDN-TSP) is the mechanism by which UNCCD supports countries to define baselines and targets, and the measures for achieving them.¹⁸⁶ COP15¹⁸⁷ encouraged Parties to reconsider their set targets to make them spatially explicit and gender-responsive, COP16 further supported this mandate. The LDN-TSP 2.0 launched in 2023 specifically guides 18 countries in this process, while the UNCCD is documenting various good practices and lessons learned that will support the future scale up of LDN TSP 2.0 activities beyond these 18 countries. In the LDN Target Setting Technical Guide, land tenure is mentioned as an indirect driver of land degradation.¹⁸⁸ Specific targets set by Parties on land rights would support the implementation of land tenure security efforts on the national level.

Additionally, it is important to establish comprehensive monitoring frameworks to track the impact of land degradation and restoration projects on land rights. This comes with the development of indicators to assess the implementation of land tenure reforms within UNCCD projects. Data and indicators on land governance are currently limited in scope but essential for tracking progress and identifying gaps.¹⁸⁹

The COP17 in Mongolia in 2026 presents an important opportunity for land rights advocacy in the UNCCD policies and instruments.

186 <https://www.unccd.int/land-and-life/land-degradation-neutrality/projects-programmes/ldn-target-setting>

187 notably decisions 3, 11, 12 and 13/COP.15,

188 <https://www.unccd.int/resources/publications/ldn-target-setting-technical-guide>

189 Technical Guide on the Integration of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security into the Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Land Degradation Neutrality ([unccd.int](https://www.unccd.int)) p.71

LAND RIGHTS AND THE UNFCCC

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), established in 1992, addresses the growing threat of climate change.¹⁹⁰ It obliges Parties to promote and develop technologies, practices, and processes to control and reduce emissions across all sectors, including agriculture and forestry.¹⁹¹ Land use and land-use changes significantly influence global carbon cycles, underscoring the critical role of land in climate action and emphasising the importance of integrating land rights into climate policies. A few key UNFCCC themes highlight this importance, including nature-based carbon market projects, energy transition infrastructure (e.g., solar and wind farms), energy transition mineral (ETM) mining, and land use change impacts.

In recent years, there has been increasing recognition of the links between land rights and the protection of carbon sinks. Reports indicate that forests managed and protected by Indigenous Peoples store about 300,000 metric tons of carbon, equivalent to approximately 33 times the emissions of 2017.¹⁹² Further, beyond forest management, more than 74% of Indigenous territories contain high carbon stocks or potential to sequester it.¹⁹³ These forests and territories are often in better condition than protected areas, especially when communities have secure land tenure rights. Similar results are seen in other landscapes, for example in traditional pastoralist systems which often maintain ecological balance by managing livestock movement, fire regimes, and seasonal grazing patterns^{194, 195} or smallholder and family farmers conserving more biodiversity than larger farms.¹⁹⁶ Yet this recognition remains heavily forest-centric: 54% of the world's terrestrial surface consists of rangelands, but only 10% of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement reference them, compared to 70% that reference forests.¹⁹⁷ In all cases, secure tenure and inclusive governance are critical to enabling long-term stewardship.¹⁹⁸ Despite this well-established role that these rural communities have played for centuries, many carbon-offsetting projects still fail to consult them or, worse, violate their rights and cause harm.¹⁹⁹

190 <https://unfccc.int/about-us/about-the-secretariat>

191 Article 4.1 (c) UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (unfccc.int)

192 A Global Baseline of Carbon Storage in Collective Lands–Rights + Resources–Supporting Forest Tenure, Policy, and Market Reforms (rightsandresources.org)

193 Dinerstein, E., Joshi, A. R., Vynne, C., Lee, A. T. L., Pharand-Deschênes, F., França, M., Fernando, S., Birch, T., Burkart, K., Asner, G. P., & Olson, D. (2020). A “Global Safety Net” to reverse biodiversity loss and stabilize Earth’s climate. *Science Advances*, 6(36), eabb2824. <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.abb2824>

194 IPBES, 2018: The IPBES assessment report on land degradation and restoration. Montanarella, L., Scholes, R., and Brainich, A. (eds.). Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, Bonn, Germany. 744 pages. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3237392>

195 https://iyrp.info/sites/default/files/2025-11/Policy-brief-Pastoralists-and-Climate-change_Final0112025_0.pdf

196 Ricciardi, V., Mehrabi, Z., Wittman, H., James, D. and Ramankutty, N., 2021. Higher yields and more biodiversity on smaller farms. *Nature Sustainability*, pp.1-7. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41893-021-00699-2>

197 <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/new-atlas-reveals-rangelands-cover-half-worlds-land-surface-yet>

198 GLO 2022. <https://www.unccd.int/resources/global-land-outlook/glo2>

199 Carbon Brief (2022) <https://interactive.carbonbrief.org/carbon-offsets-2023/mapped.html>

Renewable energy development presents another pressure on land, as it is estimated to be ten times more land-intensive than fossil fuels.²⁰⁰ Infrastructure needed for the energy transition puts pressure on 42% of Indigenous Peoples' lands, driven by solar power, wind power, and other sectors.²⁰¹ In addition to the necessary infrastructure for the energy transition, green energy production relies heavily on ETMs like lithium, cobalt, nickel, copper essential for producing components such as electric car batteries. The growing demand and the decrease in the number of easily exploitable deposits will lead to an ever-increasing footprint induced on land.²⁰² An estimated 54% of transition mineral mining projects are located in Indigenous Peoples territories.²⁰³ Inevitably, Indigenous Peoples are thus poised to experience the most significant impact from the escalating demand.

In turn, adaptation to the climate crisis requires huge land change impact considering both new infrastructure that needs to be built but also the land changes required because of flooding or droughts. The IPCC (2019) recognizes that large scale land-related responses that contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation options can increase demand for land conversion and create competition for land and result in adverse side effects.²⁰⁴ IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) notes that securing land tenure supports the effectiveness and fairness of climate responses. The IPCC also highlighted the adverse impacts of mitigation and adaptation measures that do not consider the rights and participation of Indigenous Peoples.

This data and similar research²⁰⁵ has led to a growing acknowledgment of land rights within climate negotiations. For example, during COP26 in 2021, 22 bilateral and philanthropic donors announced a collective Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Forest Tenure Pledge of \$1.7 billion in financing to support the advancement of Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' forest tenure rights.²⁰⁶ This pledge was renewed during COP30 in 2025 and covers all land-based ecosystems,²⁰⁷ together with the Intergovernmental Land Tenure Commitment (ILTC) to recognise at least 160 million hectares of Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendant and local communities' lands by 2030.²⁰⁸ Additionally, the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) that was released in March 2023, mentioned that the protection of land tenure favours the success of more relevant and fairer responses.²⁰⁹

200 https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/FP_20200113_renewables_land_use_local_opposition_gross.pdf

201 Kennedy et al., One Earth, 2023 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590332223003408>

202 UNEP, 2016. United Nations Environment Programme. Green energy choices: The benefits, risks and trade-offs of low-carbon technologies for electricity production. Technical report, Report of the International Resource Panel, 2016. <https://www.resourcepanel.org/reports/green-energy-choices-benefits-risks-and-trade-offs-low-carbon-technologies-electricity>

203 Owen et al., 2023 <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41893-022-00994-6>

204 IPCC 2019 https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2019/11/Headline-statements_Final.pdf

205 For example the 2019 Global assessment report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services naming insecure land rights as an enabler for land-use change. <https://www.ipbes.net/global-assessment>

206 <https://web.archive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20230106145205/https://ukcop26.org/cop26-iplc-forest-tenure-joint-donor-statement/>

207 <https://www.tenurepledge.org/cop-30-pledge>

208 https://forestclimateleaders.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Intergovernmental-Land-Tenure-Commitment_COP30-1.pdf

209 <https://www.nature.com/articles/s44168-023-00048-3>

Despite the pivotal role of land and the reflection of land rights issues in various climate action contexts—such as carbon justice, transition minerals, renewable energy land use, land use changes with adaptation, and gendered implications of climate change—these discussions are not yet reflected on most of the negotiating texts of the UNFCCC COPs, including the Paris Agreement. This gap contrasts with advancements in other international frameworks like the CBD, the UNCCD, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is particularly striking, given that the same governments are involved in negotiating these agreements, yet they are failing to address these issues consistently across the UNFCCC negotiations, demonstrating a lack of policy coherence. Explicit references to the right to land have rarely been addressed in UNFCCC COPs, though, references to inclusive participation and traditional knowledge are showing improvement over time. Nevertheless, land rights are recognized in safeguard policies related to initiatives like REDD+ and mentioned in negotiations of the Global Stocktake under the Paris Agreement, which includes a clear reference to a human rights-based approach in its preamble.

KEY INSTRUMENTS AND DECISIONS

THE CONVENTION

In the 1992 Convention, land tenure rights are not explicitly mentioned, nor are they addressed through other entry points, such as the significant role played by Indigenous Peoples in the context of their territorial rights.²¹⁰

KEY DECISIONS



The Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UNFCCC has made several significant decisions over the years.²¹¹ Besides the COP, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA)²¹² specifically focuses on the implementation and progress of the Paris Agreement, also making decisions during their annual meetings in conjunction with the COP.

The sensitivities and rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities were not considered up until COP 11 in 2005 in Montreal, where they were mentioned only twice, both in relation to adaptation and the importance of local and Indigenous knowledge.²¹³

210 UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (unfccc.int)

211 Decisions | UNFCCC

212 Decisions | UNFCCC

213 See Decision 2 and the five-year program of the SBSTA on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change in the ANNEX <https://unfccc.int/documents/4249>

While adaptation was the first area to recognize their rights, the IPCC later highlighted the negative impacts of mitigation and adaptation measures that lack participation and the safeguarding rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.²¹⁴ This has led to increased focus on possible trade-offs of large-scale adaptation and mitigation measures and equity and rights-based approaches, especially for women, Indigenous Peoples and local communities (Kaleb, John & Humphrey, 2020). Notably, the only article in the Paris Agreement that mentions Indigenous Peoples does so with respect to adaptation and knowledge.²¹⁵

In general, mentions of Indigenous Peoples and local communities' rights have become more common since COP23 in Bonn in 2017. For example through the specific mentioning in Decision 16²¹⁶, COP26 in Glasgow about the participation of Indigenous Peoples, which acknowledges how:

"Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity."

As well as noting "... the importance of 'climate justice', when taking action to address climate change." This kind of specific mention is repeated in subsequent COPs after Glasgow, but direct references to land rights remain absent.

A key development in the UNFCCC decisions is the creation of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP) and the Facilitative Working Group (FWG).²¹⁷ In 2015, during COP21, the Paris Agreement was formally adopted under Decision 1, which explicitly recognizes the rights of Indigenous Peoples²¹⁸ and established LCIPP along with the call for the creation of FWG to implement its goals through two-year work plans.²¹⁹ As a result, rights of Indigenous Peoples are reflected in the preamble of the Paris Agreement²²⁰ and both the LCIPP and the FWG have led to an increase in references to Indigenous rights in later decisions and instruments, representing a significant step towards Indigenous Peoples' recognition within the UNFCCC.²²¹ Decision 2²²² at COP 23 in 2017 and Decision 2²²³ at COP 24 in 2018 further

214 The IPCC has highlighted these concerns across multiple reports, particularly in its more recent assessment cycles (AR5, AR6) and the IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land (2019). See: <https://www.ipcc.ch/assessment-report/ar6/>

215 Article 7, para. 5 of the Paris Agreement https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf

216 Report of the Conference of the Parties on its twenty-seventh session, held in Sharm el-Sheikh from 6 to 20 November 2022. Addendum. Part two: Action taken by the Conference of the Parties at its twenty-seventh session | UNFCCC

217 More information about LCIPP on: <https://lcipp.unfccc.int/>

218 <https://unfccc.int/documents/9097>

219 <https://lcipp.unfccc.int/facilitative-working-group-fwg/facilitative-working-group>

220 ADOPTION OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT–Paris Agreement text English (unfccc.int)

221 <https://www.iwgia.org/en/resources/publications/5309-consolidating-rights-indigenous-peoples-climate-governance-local-communities-indigenous-peoples-platform.html>

222 Report of the Conference of the Parties on its twenty-third session, held in Bonn from 6 to 18 November 2017. Addendum. Part two: Action taken by the Conference of the Parties at its twenty-third session | UNFCCC

223 <https://unfccc.int/documents/193360>

strengthened the LCIPP's and FWG's mandate, aligning with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, encompassing land tenure rights. Furthermore, at COP26, decision 16 outlined the FWG's second three-year plan, which focused on capacity building, participation, and fair Indigenous knowledge sharing. The third draft work plan for 2025–2027²²⁴, has been reviewed at SBSTA 60 in June 2024, and highlights the vital role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in shaping transformative climate policies.²²⁵ During COP29, the Baku Workplan for 2025–2027 by the Facilitative Working Group (FWG) of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP) was adopted.²²⁶

Besides human rights concerns related to adaptation and mitigation, growing attention has been given to the widespread adverse impacts of carbon reduction mechanisms on Indigenous Peoples' land rights since the Kyoto Protocol. While Decision 1²²⁷ at COP 3 in 1997 laid the groundwork for carbon market-based mechanisms, leading to the Kyoto Protocol's eventual entry into force in 2005 (see following section), subsequent UNFCCC agreements have introduced additional carbon reduction approaches such as REDD+ and Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. Since then, some carbon reduction mechanisms have been linked to ongoing dispossession and rights violations affecting Indigenous Peoples and local communities, with numerous conflicts particularly arising in relation to REDD+ initiatives. For land rights, there is a pressing need to operationalize the Cancun Agreement, Decision 1 of COP 16 in 2010²²⁸, about the safeguards of REDD+ initiatives concerning the rights of Indigenous Peoples.²²⁹ As part of this decision, policy approaches of forest degradation and sustainable forest management as included in which land tenure is directly mentioned, requesting:

“... developing country Parties, when developing and implementing their national strategies or action plans, to address, inter alia, the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, land tenure issues, forest governance issues, gender considerations and the safeguards identified in paragraph 2 of appendix I to this decision, ensuring the full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, inter alia indigenous peoples and local communities.”

Decision 12²³⁰ at COP17 in 2011 requested Parties to inform on how the safeguards are addressed and respected throughout the implementation of the activities and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) to provide guidance.

224 Draft work plan:

https://lcipp.unfccc.int/sites/default/files/2024-12/Baku_Workplan_of_the_Local_Communities_and_Indigenous_Peoples_Platform.pdf

225 https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/sbsta2024_01E.pdf

226 Draft decision: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/COP%2029_AUV_COP_Agenda_Item_3a_LCIPP.pdf

227 <https://unfccc.int/documents/1304>

228 Report of the Conference of the Parties on its sixteenth session, held in Cancun from 29 November to 10 December 2010. Addendum. Part two: Action taken by the Conference of the Parties at its sixteenth session. | UNFCCC

229 Kaleb, M. A., John, O., & Humphrey, A. (2020). Climate Justice Within the UNFCCC Negotiations: The Case of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples from Copenhagen Accord to Paris Agreement. *International Journal of Natural Resource Ecology and Management*, 5(4), 160. 10.11648/j.jnrem.20200504.13-libre.pdf (d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net)

230 Report of the Conference of the Parties on its seventeenth session, held in Durban from 28 November to 11 December 2011. Addendum. Part two: Action taken by the Conference of the Parties at its seventeenth session. | UNFCCC

Since the Kyoto Protocol, carbon markets and UNFCCC policy around them have evolved, with a new generation of carbon markets emerging under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. In 2021, during the third session of the CMA, Decision 3 was adopted,²³¹ containing the rules, modalities and procedures for the Article 6.4 carbon crediting mechanism, intended to replace Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). In May 2024, the Article 6.4 Supervisory Body adopted an Appeals and Grievances Procedure,²³² ensuring affected communities can challenge decisions and hold projects accountable, safeguarding environmental and social rights while enhancing the integrity of carbon credits.²³³ This together with the development of an Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool, though flawed, marks a huge evolution from the CDM under the Kyoto protocol that had no safeguards.

COP29 in November 2024 marked the adoption of the Article 6 carbon market mechanisms after crucial negotiations about safeguards for Article 6.4. The presidency pushed through a day-one deal endorsing Article 6.4 documents on methodologies, removals and the Sustainable Development Tool (A6.4 SD Tool²³⁴). Although the Sustainable Development Tool includes language on FPIC, (mitigating risks of displacement and loss of land and including an impact analysis on Indigenous Peoples' rights to lands), safeguards focus exclusively on protecting the rights of people who are recognized as Indigenous Peoples by their national governments, excluding other communities and Indigenous People who are not recognized. The 6.4 SD Tool has a provision to be a living document, meaning that it is not fixed and can be updated and improved over time, with a formal review set for every 18 months .

For the Article 6.4 market mechanisms, additional key tools for “nature-based” removals and rights safeguards were still being developed after COP29. Since then, the Supervisory Body has adopted standards for addressing non-permanence/reversals²³⁵; setting the baseline in mechanism methodologies; addressing leakage in mechanism methodologies and has published a tool for reversal risk assessment. The standards have been the subject of debate. Some organisations argued that excluding nature-based projects from the Article 6.4 carbon market mechanism would lead to exclusion of climate finance.²³⁶ Other organisations raise serious concerns about permanence, over-crediting, and the risk of allowing high emitters to offset rather than reduce, and excluding nature-based solutions would avoid remuneration of nature-based carbon projects that should benefit rather from public funding. In the current set of standards, the cumulative burden of the integrity requirements (buffer pool contributions, remediation liability, leakage deductions, and potential downward baseline adjustments) appears to fall almost entirely on the activity participant, and not on the buyer of the credit. For community-led or Indigenous land-based activities, this could mean long-term monitoring obligations and financial liability with no ongoing revenue, and exposure to risks largely outside their control.

231 Decision 3/CMA.3, annex, as contained in document FCCC/PA/CMA/2021/10/Add.1. Available at https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2021_10a01E.pdf#page_29.

232 <https://unfccc.int/news/un-body-adopts-historic-human-rights-protections-for-carbon-market-mechanism>

233 <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/a64-sb011-a03.pdf>

234 <https://unfccc.int/documents/641246> uploaded 11 Feb 2025, version 01.1.

235 <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/A6.4-SBM018-A13.pdf>

236 <https://cdn.sanity.io/media-libraries/mlmEWUxEY7eQ/files/bf1b0c4b5f44949e393dd1fadd7df0e8aad951cc.pdf>

Some carbon market advocates recommended amending the rules around reversal risk to give more scope to include nature-based projects, which were opposed by some scientists and other NGOs, but were picked up and reflected in an early draft text at COP30. This text, published on 14 November, asked the market's supervisory body to "consider carbon market forecasts" and revise its standards so as not to "discourage the development" of nature-based solutions.

It is recommended that the CMA carefully considers the adopted standards by the Supervisory Body and to provide additional guidance to the Supervisory Body on the following issues that are left unanswered in the current standards. Parties will undertake a review of the rules in 2028.

Article 6.2 enables countries to trade Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes (ITMOs) to help meet national climate targets through cooperation of bilateral carbon trading. To prevent double counting, transparency and accounting rules are required. At COP29, new rules introduced safeguards without required protections and limited transparency.^{237, 238} Countries are "requested" to provide more upfront reporting on decision-making processes and stakeholder consultations with Indigenous Peoples and local communities.²³⁹ Furthermore countries are required to agree on any changes to already transferred credits to prevent double counting. A dual-layer registry system was formalized for nations without national registries, but tracking registries remain unclear.²⁴⁰ This leaves a pressing need for external scrutiny to ensure accountability in Article 6.2 credit transfers. For land rights advocacy, this means that safeguards need to happen within the host or buying country regulations.

In general, Article 6 carbon market mechanisms lack clear land tenure protections and binding consequences for carbon project developers, raising concerns about risks related to carbon markets.

237 <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/article-6/article-6-decisions-and-documentation#Article-62-cma-decisions>

238 Carbon Brief 2024 <https://www.carbonbrief.org/cop29-key-outcomes-agreed-at-the-un-climate-talks-in-baku/>

239 Carbon Brief 2024 <https://www.carbonbrief.org/cop29-key-outcomes-agreed-at-the-un-climate-talks-in-baku/>

240 Carbon Brief 2024 <https://www.carbonbrief.org/cop29-key-outcomes-agreed-at-the-un-climate-talks-in-baku/>

THE KYOTO PROTOCOL AND ITS THREE FLEXIBLE MARKET-BASED MECHANISMS

The Kyoto Protocol (KP), adopted by the UNFCCC in 1997 and effective from 2005, commits industrialised countries to binding emission reduction targets by 2012.²⁴¹ It introduced market-based mechanisms, including the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), Joint Implementation (JI), and International Emissions Trading (ET), that feed the carbon market through facilitating project-based emissions trading to meet these targets.²⁴² The largest emission trading systems set up to facilitate this process is the EU Emission Trading Scheme (EU ETS) which allows trading between EU member states via the above mechanisms.²⁴³

While the CDM was set up to support sustainable development in developing countries through creating investment for emission reduction projects, it has faced criticism for prioritising cost-effective mitigation over genuine sustainable and just benefits. Case studies reveal that some CDM projects have exacerbated existing land ownership disputes and violated Indigenous Peoples' rights, as human rights regulations and adequate stakeholder consultations are left to each host country individually and absent from the CDM's framework.²⁴⁴ This results in many countries maintaining vague sustainable development criteria, creating opportunities for exploitation of local populations' lands and violating human rights.²⁴⁵

In response to public criticism, the UNFCCC Secretariat proposed a comprehensive draft for a voluntary tool to assess sustainable development impacts, including a human rights-based "do no harm" assessment and stricter consultation requirements. However, these proposals were largely rejected by developing country representatives who viewed them as infringing on sovereignty. The resulting tool was cut down and focused only on positive impacts.

Carbon markets have changed a lot since 1997, and so did UNFCCC policy around them. There is a new generation of carbon markets under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement through Cooperative approaches and the Mechanism under Article 6.4 which is supposed to replace the CDM. This means all the projects under the CDM, including afforestation and reforestation, are eligible to transfer to 6.4 projects over the next year with approval from the host government. This will put these projects under the purview of the Article 6.4 protections, such as the grievance mechanism and Sustainable Development Tool, providing new pathways available for consultation, grievance, and monitoring.

241 https://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol#:~:text=In%20short%2C%20the%20Kyoto%20Protocol,accordance%20with%20agreed%20individual%20targets.

242 <https://unfccc.int/process/the-kyoto-protocol/mechanisms>

243 Asadnabizadeh, M., & Moe, E. (2024). A Review of Global Carbon Markets from Kyoto to Paris and beyond: The persistent failure of implementation. *Frontiers in Environmental Science*, 12, 1368105.

244 Schade, J., & Obergassel, W. (2014). Human rights and the Clean Development Mechanism. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 27(4), 717–735. https://epub.wupperinst.org/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/5732/file/5732_Schade.pdf

245 Ibid.

REDD+ SAFEGUARDS



REDD+, which surfaced in the 2000s amid ongoing discussions about integrating forests into carbon trading and accounting,^{246, 247} REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation)²⁴⁸ is a mechanism created by the UNFCCC to support the protection of forests in developing countries. It is based on the remuneration of climate protection efforts, including forest-based projects, in the form of result-based payments and carbon credits.

Research shows that REDD+ initiatives depend heavily on secure land tenure systems, as these are crucial for incentivizing local communities to engage in forest conservation and sustainable management practices.²⁴⁹ The lack of clear land rights can lead to conflicts and undermine the effectiveness of REDD+ programs, emphasising the need for addressing land tenure issues to achieve successful outcomes.²⁵⁰

For REDD+ activities to be verified REDD+ results, parties have to comply to REDD+ safeguards.²⁵¹ The following safeguards indirectly relate to land rights and should be promoted and supported when implementing REDD+ activities:

- ➔ “That actions complement or are consistent with the objectives of national forest programmes and relevant international conventions and agreements”
- ➔ “Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities, by taking into account relevant international obligations, national circumstances and laws, and noting that the United Nations General Assembly has adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”.
- ➔ “The full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities.”
- ➔ “... taking into account the need for sustainable livelihoods of indigenous peoples and local communities and their interdependence on forests in most countries, reflected in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as the International Mother Earth Day.

246 Cames, M., Harthan, R. O., Füssler, J., Lazarus, M., Lee, C. M., Erickson, P., & Spalding-Fecher, R. (2016). How additional is the clean development mechanism. Analysis of the application of current tools and proposed alternatives, 2017-04. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Randall-Spalding-Fecher/publication/316216473_How_additional_is_the_Clean_Development_Mechanism_Analysis_of_the_application_of_current_tools_and_proposed_alternatives_Study_prepared_for_DG_CLIMA/links/58f64eacaca2723d16a97b22/How-additional-is-the-Clean-Development-Mechanism-Analysis-of-the-application-of-current-tools-and-proposed-alternatives-Study-prepared-for-DG-CLIMA.pdf

247 <https://gh.copernicus.org/articles/78/255/2023/>

248 What is REDD+? | UNFCCC

249 Larson, A. M., Brockhaus, M., Sunderlin, W. D., Duchelle, A., Babon, A., Dokken, T., ... & Huynh, T. B. (2013). Land tenure and REDD+: The good, the bad and the ugly. *Global environmental change*, 23(3), 678-689. <https://www.sciencedirect.com.ezproxy.library.wur.nl/science/article/abs/pii/S0959378013000447?via%3Dihub>

250 Larson, A. M., Brockhaus, M., Sunderlin, W. D., Duchelle, A., Babon, A., Dokken, T., ... & Huynh, T. B. (2013). Land tenure and REDD+: The good, the bad and the ugly. *Global environmental change*, 23(3), 678-689. <https://www.sciencedirect.com.ezproxy.library.wur.nl/science/article/abs/pii/S0959378013000447?via%3Dihub>

251 For more information, see: Safeguards / REDD+ (unfccc.int)

Developing country Parties implementing REDD+ activities are required to periodically provide a summary of information on how the safeguards are being addressed and respected.

THE PARIS AGREEMENT



The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change adopted by 196 Parties at COP21 in Paris, France, on 12 December 2015.²⁵²

In the preamble of the Paris Agreement,²⁵³ acknowledgements are made to recognize human rights and rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities as well as notions about the importance of climate justice in climate actions. Concerning the Articles²⁵⁴ of the Paris Agreement, there is no direct reference to land rights, however:

- ➔ **Article 7(2):** calls for recognition of the *local dimension of adaptation* and how the global response should respond to this by protecting people, livelihoods and ecosystems.
- ➔ **Article 7(5):** calls for acknowledgement of *gender-responsive, participatory and transparent adaptation action* taking into consideration traditional, Indigenous and local knowledge systems.
- ➔ **Article 8(4g, 4g):** calls for *loss and damage, including non-economic losses* and resilience of communities, livelihoods and ecosystems.
- ➔ **Article 11(2):** calls for effective, participatory, cross-cutting and gender-responsive *capacity building at national, subnational and local levels*.

The only article in the Paris Agreement that mentions Indigenous Peoples does so with respect to adaptation and knowledge.

252 The Paris Agreement | UNFCCC

253 ADOPTION OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT–Paris Agreement text English (unfccc.int)

254 ADOPTION OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT–Paris Agreement text English (unfccc.int)

THE ARTICLE 6.4 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TOOL



The Article 6.4 Appeals and Grievances Procedure^{255, 256} and required stakeholder consultations throughout the lifecycle of a project are important guidelines for project developers. The UNFCCC Article 6.4 Supervisory Body also introduced a specific Sustainable Development Tool (A6.4 SD Tool²⁵⁷) that was defined during COP29.²⁵⁸ This tool instructs participants to minimise social and environmental impacts and risks as much as possible and, when impacts are unavoidable, to mitigate them through environmental and social indicators at the activity level.²⁵⁹ The SD Tool uses an applicable law standard of human rights, requiring operators to adhere to international human rights law or national law, whichever is stronger.²⁶⁰ Additionally, the SD tool is the one of the few UN tools to explicitly mention the importance of protecting environmental rights defenders and avoiding any retaliation.²⁶¹

The social safeguards in this SD Tool aim to protect impacted communities, for example by addressing the importance of health regulations, as well as education and labour opportunities. Notably, specific social safeguards include: Element 4 – *Human rights*; Element 8 – *Land acquisition and involuntary resettlement*; and Element 9 – *Indigenous Peoples*. In relation to land rights, these elements include specifically addressing FPIC, mitigating risks of displacement and loss of land and including an impact analysis on Indigenous Peoples' rights to lands. Element E9.4 for example specifically addresses:

“Activity participants of the A6.4 activity are to recognize and respect the Indigenous Peoples’ collective rights to own, use, develop and control the lands, resources, and territories that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired.”

Notably, the A6.4 SD Tool mentions displacement and FPIC but does not mandate recognizing or documenting land tenure rights, and measures are absent for non-Indigenous groups. FPIC rights apply only to those recognized as Indigenous by their national government. The land acquisition section lacks tenure clarity and defines stakeholders ambiguously due to the absence of tenure requirements. Compensation through the appeal and grievance mechanism is only required when people are forcibly being removed from their land.

255 <https://unfccc.int/news/un-body-adopts-historic-human-rights-protections-for-carbon-market-mechanism>

256 <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/a64-sb011-a03.pdf>

257 <https://unfccc.int/documents/641246> uploaded 11 Feb 2025, version 01.1.

258 <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/article-6/article-6-decisions-and-documentation#Article-64-cma-decisions>

259 <https://unfccc.int/event/Supervisory-Body-14>

260 See section 6.4.1., available at: <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/A6.4-SBM014-A04.pdf>

261 See section 6.4.1., available at: <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/A6.4-SBM014-A04.pdf>

This means the SD Tool includes only limited safeguards for communities affected by land-intensive projects. A geospatial assessment of land-intensive projects in the Article 6 pipeline by Carbon Watch and the Land Matrix²⁶² indicates substantial potential overlap with the lands of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Of 663 geolocated projects that submitted a prior consideration notification (PCN) for inclusion in the mechanism, 117 show a high risk of direct overlap, with a further 48 located nearby. Among 1,319 Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects in transition, 309 show potential overlap with such lands, while 271 are in close proximity. A review of documented cases of land conflicts further shows that such overlaps have already translated into real-world harm in many instances. Existing projects in the Article 6 pipeline are associated with deficient consultation, involuntary resettlement, inadequate compensation, and complex and unresolved land conflicts.

The report calls for establishing a clear hierarchy of legal standards so that international human rights norms prevail where national law is weak or exclusionary, expanding safeguards beyond formally recognised Indigenous Peoples to include local communities and other customary rights-holders, and making consent-based safeguards a universal and ongoing requirement for all land-related impacts. It further recommends requiring robust clarification of land tenure before project approval, broadening compensation frameworks beyond a narrow “no worse off” standard to reflect the social, cultural, ecological, and spiritual value of land, and shifting from consultative to participatory governance by strengthening community agency and prioritising shared decision-making mechanisms.

LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES PLATFORM (LCIPP) AND THE FACILITATIVE WORKING GROUP (FWG)



The Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP) was established to strengthen the knowledge, technologies, practices, and efforts of local communities and Indigenous Peoples in addressing climate change. It aims to facilitate the exchange of experiences, best practices and lessons learned on mitigation and adaptation in a holistic and integrated manner, while enhancing the engagement of local communities and Indigenous Peoples in the UNFCCC process.²⁶³ The Facilitative Working Group (FWG) of LCIPP, established at COP24 in 2018, was created to further operationalize the LCIPP and implement its three core functions related to knowledge, engagement, and climate change policies and actions. Decisions leading to the establishment of the LCIPP and FWG specifically referenced Indigenous Peoples, particularly in relation to *FPIC* for sharing traditional knowledge, participation, and adherence to the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*, which includes land tenure rights.

262 https://carbonmarketwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/CMW_Trading-carbon-credits_Report_29.04.26_V02.pdf

263 <https://lcipp.unfccc.int/lcipp-background/overview>

The FWG's 2024 report²⁶⁴ identified several barriers to full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the UNFCCC process, including language barriers and lack of strategic alignment of FWG membership transitions with work plan development and activity review timelines. At COP24, Decision 2²⁶⁵ granted the LCIPP the right to appoint its representatives, following successful advocacy in alignment with Article 18 of UNDRIP. This decision marks a significant victory in the international advocacy for Indigenous Peoples, in terms of securing their right to select their representatives.²⁶⁶ While local communities were not represented initially, Decision 2 at COP24 and Decision 16 at COP26 requested that SBSTA at COP27 should consider three seats for them. This proposal has sparked significant discussion within the FWG regarding potential impacts on Indigenous representation.²⁶⁷ Efforts to add local community representatives to the FWG have been repeatedly delayed. A COP30 decision²⁶⁸ on the LCIPP notes the efforts to strengthen engagement of local communities and requests the Secretariat to prepare an informal report thereon, which will serve as an input to the 2027 review of the FWG. But concrete action on expanding representation of local communities remains deferred.

At COP26, decision 16 outlined the FWG's second three-year plan, which focused on capacity building, participation, and fair Indigenous knowledge sharing. The third draft work plan for 2025–2027²⁶⁹, was reviewed at SBSTA 60 in June 2024, and highlights the vital role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in shaping transformative climate policies.²⁷⁰ During COP29, the Baku Workplan for 2025–2027 by the Facilitative Working Group (FWG) of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP) was adopted.²⁷¹

SCIENTIFICALLY INFORMED NEGOTIATIONS: IPCC REPORTS



The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)²⁷² special report on Climate Change and Land in 2019,²⁷³ makes several references to land tenure rights in their summary for policymakers in Section C²⁷⁴ about enabling response options.

264 https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/sbsta2024_01E.pdf

265 <https://unfccc.int/documents/193360>

266 <https://www.iwgia.org/en/resources/publications/5309-consolidating-rights-indigenous-peoples-climate-governance-local-communities-indigenous-peoples-platform.html>

267 <https://www.iwgia.org/en/resources/publications/5309-consolidating-rights-indigenous-peoples-climate-governance-local-communities-indigenous-peoples-platform.html>

268 Decision 16/CP.30 Enhanced engagement of local communities in the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform: <https://unfccc.int/documents/655268>

269 Draft work plan: https://lcipp.unfccc.int/sites/default/files/2024-12/Baku_Workplan_of_the_Local_Communities_and_Indigenous_Peoples_Platform.pdf

270 https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/sbsta2024_01E.pdf

271 Draft decision: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/COP%2029_AUV_COP_Agenda_Item_3a_LCIPP.pdf

272 Reports — IPCC

273 Special Report on Climate Change and Land — IPCC site

274 https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/4/2022/11/SRCCL_SPM.pdf Paragraphs C.1.2, C.2, C.3.2, C.4.4

In these paragraphs, the importance of securing land rights for the adoption of sustainable land management practices and women's land rights is mentioned. In the technical summary of this report, the IPCC acknowledges that fair and effective funding for forest protection must recognise the central role of forest communities and therefore prioritise their rights.²⁷⁵

The mentioning of Indigenous Peoples in reports of the IPCC, while limited, has been progressively increasing (Ford et al., 2016; Carmona et al. 2023).^{276, 277} The references to Indigenous Peoples and land tenure in the latest IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) increased significantly,²⁷⁸ with the report noting that securing land tenure supports the effectiveness and fairness of climate responses.²⁷⁹ The IPCC also highlighted the adverse impacts of mitigation and adaptation measures that do not consider the rights and participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Despite this progress, Indigenous knowledge systems were largely sidelined in AR6, with limited Indigenous authorship and minimal acknowledgment to the contributions of Indigenous Peoples.²⁸⁰

THE GLOBAL FOREST FINANCE PLEDGE (GFFP) AND THE IPLC FOREST TENURE PLEDGE



During COP26 in 2021 in Glasgow, governments recognized the crucial role of forests in achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. This acknowledgment led to the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forest and Land Use,²⁸¹ an agreement signed by over 140 leaders committing to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030 while promoting sustainable development. As part of this initiative, the Global Forest Finance Pledge (GFFP)²⁸² was established in 2021. Under this pledge, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, the European Commission (on behalf of the EU), Germany, France, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, South Korea, the UK, and the US collectively committed USD 12 billion in climate finance for 2021-2025. This funding aims to protect, restore, and sustainably manage forests, recognizing the *land tenure and forest rights and roles of Indigenous Peoples and local communities* in these efforts.

275 IPCC Working Group II (2022), Technical Summary (Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability), Sixth Assessment Report, p.53; www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGII_TechnicalSummary.pdf.

276 Ford, J. D., Cameron, L., Rubis, J., Maillet, M., Nakashima, D., Willox, A. C., & Pearce, T. (2016). Including indigenous knowledge and experience in IPCC assessment reports. *Nature Climate Change*, 6(4), 349-353. Including indigenous knowledge and experience in IPCC assessment reports | Request PDF ([researchgate.net](https://www.researchgate.net))

277 <https://www.nature.com.ezproxy.library.wur.nl/articles/s44168-023-00048-3>

278 <https://www.iwgia.org/en/resources/publications/4845-iwgia-briefing-analysing-a-new-paradigm-of-climate-partnership-with-indigenous-peoples-ipcc-report.html>

279 <https://www.nature.com/articles/s44168-023-00048-3>

280 <https://www.nature.com/articles/s44168-023-00048-3>

281 [ARCHIVED CONTENT] The Global Forest Finance Pledge–UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) at the SEC – Glasgow 2021 (nationalarchives.gov.uk)

282 [ARCHIVED CONTENT] The Global Forest Finance Pledge–UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) at the SEC – Glasgow 2021 (nationalarchives.gov.uk)

In that same year, 22 bilateral and philanthropic donors announced a collective IPLC Forest Tenure Joint Donor Statement, pledging a combined \$1.7 billion to support Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' forest tenure rights.²⁸³ According to the most recent analysis of spending by the Forest Tenure Funders Group (FTFG) the original pledge was surpassed with \$1.86 billion spent by the end of 2024.²⁸⁴ The same report shows that said funding to Indigenous Peoples and local communities has grown —from 2.9% in 2021 to 7.6% in 2024, totaling over \$39 million. Philanthropic funders are leading this shift, with their direct funding jumping from less than 4% in 2021 to 34% in 2024. Bilateral donors, however, remain at just 1.6%. The overall trend is clear: direct support to communities is increasing, but remains insufficient. Generally, large projects in this sector disburse tens to hundreds of millions of dollars, span multiple years and countries, and tend to focus on large-scale land titling, territorial development, or landscape-level conservation. In contrast, national and local NGOs, including those representing Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and Afro-descendant Peoples, are more likely to receive direct funding through small grant schemes that provide funding for thousands of small-scale projects.²⁸⁵

COP30, held in Belém, Brazil in November 2025, was marked by three substantial financial commitments to land rights:

- ➔ A **US\$1.8 billion Forest & Land Tenure Pledge (2025-2030)** to support Indigenous Peoples', local communities', and Afro-descendant communities' tenure rights.²⁸⁶ This new pledge expands its scope beyond forests to all land-based ecosystems. While new research has shown that this funding is increasing, funding is still not sufficient to meet the needs of communities and must be sustained over time.²⁸⁷ The COP30 Pledge aims to continue the vital work of the COP26 Pledge while expanding its ecosystem scope and working to increase the share of direct, long-term, and flexible financing to ensure communities have power and influence over how funds are used.
- ➔ An **Intergovernmental Land Tenure Commitment (ILTC)** by 36 governments and partners (led by Peru, Norway and Brazil) to recognise and strengthen at least 160 million hectares of Indigenous Peoples and local communities' lands by 2030.²⁸⁸
- ➔ An **aim for a US\$125 billion blended endowment** by Brazil's Tropical Forest Forever Facility (TFFF); with so far, Norway, Germany, Indonesia and others have pledged a little over US\$6 billion, with at least 20% of funds earmarked for Indigenous Peoples and local communities, presenting the biggest source of international finance for Indigenous Peoples and local communities. However critics argue that financial compensation without formal land tenure recognition and inclusive decision-making in the TFFF governance structure, risks rewarding governments and investors for forests that communities have long stewarded without legal protection.^{289, 290}

283 <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20230106145205/https://ukcop26.org/cop26-iplc-forest-tenure-joint-donor-statement/>

284 See <https://www.tenurepledge.org/ftfg-annual-report-2024-full.pdf>

285 https://rightsandresources.org/wp-content/uploads/2023-State-of-Funding_Brief-EN.pdf

286 <https://www.tenurepledge.org/cop-30-pledge>

287 <https://dashboard.pathtoscale.org/blog/state-of-report>

288 https://forestclimateleaders.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Intergovernmental-Land-Tenure-Commitment_COP30-1.pdf

289 <https://www.wri.org/insights/financing-nature-conservation-tropical-forest-forever-facility>

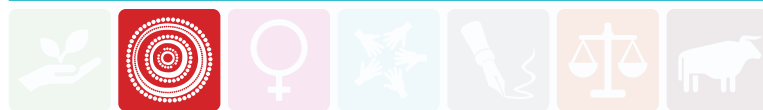
290 <https://globalforestcoalition.org/no-to-tfff-yes-to-forest-rights/>

Together, these commitments will deliver just over US\$9 billion on paper, in new forest and land related finance commitments. Implicit in each of these is the importance of robust and transparent land governance systems, from accurate land maps and record-keeping to sustainably-funded land agencies and policies that recognise equitable tenure rights and community stewardship.²⁹¹

GLOBAL STOCKTAKE (GST)

Text related to land issues has been approved by the COP28 plenary in the negotiations of the Global Stocktake,²⁹² specifically in Paragraph 32, Paragraph 33 and Paragraph 55. Paragraph 33 of the Global Stocktake of the UNFCCC establishes a clear reference to the social and environmental safeguards of the KMGBF (containing direct land rights references in Target 3, 22 and 23) and the 2030 target to halt deforestation of the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use. During the Joint Opening Plenary at COP27 in 2022, the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC) emphasised how the Global Stocktake should focus on the implementation of the Paris Agreement's commitments to Indigenous Peoples rights.²⁹³ The first Global Stocktake (GST) was launched at COP26 in Glasgow and concluded at COP28 in the United Arab Emirates. The second global stocktake will be launched at COP30 in 2026 and concluded at COP32 in 2028.²⁹⁴ The GST is about collecting the information, doing the technical assessment, and the implications of these outcomes. The outcome of GST2 will inform Parties in updating and enhancing their national level actions.

GLOBAL GOAL ON ADAPTATION (GGA)



The new UAE framework for the Global Climate Resilience (UAE GFCR) was introduced at CMA.5 during COP28.^{295, 296} The framework is the outcome of years of slow progress since the introduction of the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) in 2015. The GGA is included under article 7.1 of the Paris Agreement. In the overarching statement details a long-term vision for achieving the “collective well-being of all people, the protection of livelihoods and economies, and the preservation and regeneration of nature.” A vision in which land rights should be key. Nevertheless, in the 11 targets and 59 indicators, there is no direct reference to land rights.

291 <https://landportal.org/blog-post/2026/01/why-good-land-governance-matters-global-climate-policy>

292 <https://unfccc.int/documents/637073> 1/CMA.5 Outcome of the first global stocktake

293 <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/cop27-international-indigenous-peoples-forum-on-climate-change-urges-states-to-respect-and-promote-rights-of-indigenous-peoples-in-climate-action/>

294 <https://unfccc.int/topics/global-stocktake>

295 https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2023_16a01E.pdf#page=22

296 <https://unfccc.int/topics/adaptation-and-resilience/workstreams/gga>

Seven thematic targets highlight global priorities for adaptation, namely in the sectors of water, food and agriculture, health, ecosystems and biodiversity, poverty and livelihoods, infrastructure, and cultural heritage. However, while these sectors are important globally, their relevance varies across the world. Countries need to contextualize if and how these themes apply in their geographies. This is why the four process targets are critical. These targets reflect the four dimensions of the iterative adaptation cycle, which themselves are aligned with the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) process.²⁹⁷

The final list of 100 proposed indicators that was published before COP30,^{298, 299} included multiple indicators with references to traditional knowledge, participation, and even a proposed disaggregation by type of tenure and tenure security (secure or not) for indicator 9(b)01³⁰⁰ under the climate-resilient food systems target 9(b). At COP30, this list of potential indicators was taken down to a final set of 59 GGA indicators and adopted together with a two-year work programme that is “aimed at developing guidance for operationalising the Belém adaptation indicators”. In terms of land rights representation, there is no direct mention of land rights or tenure in the final list of indicators, nor in the disaggregation options.³⁰¹ The references to Indigenous Peoples are framed around traditional knowledge systems and consultation (target 9(g)).

Nevertheless, Parties “may determine the categories for and extent of such disaggregation in accordance with their national circumstances and contexts.”³⁰² So even though land tenure disaggregation is not mandatory on the global level, Parties need to consider land tenure disaggregation for the GGAs to account for the enabling and just environment that land rights provide. Within this broader argument, pastoralists’ adaptation strategies depend on tenure security, making pastoral land tenure one of the categories Parties would need to consider under this logic. Seen this way, the pastoral land tenure indicators proposed by ILC, ODI and SPARC could be an illustration of what tenure-sensitive disaggregation for pastoral land tenure security could look like in practice.³⁰³ During COP30, observers noted that the indicators were heavily caveated, with the introductory text of the agreement emphasising their voluntary nature.

In the COP30 decision, there is a decision that recalls previous decisions and: “emphasizes the importance of cross-cutting considerations, including by acknowledging the contributions of children, youth, people with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, people of African descent and migrants to adaptation, and the importance of consideration of gender, human rights, intergenerational equity and social justice, and participatory and fully transparent approaches.”³⁰⁴

297 https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/AC_TP_GlobalGoalOnAdaptation.pdf

298 <https://unfccc.int/documents/649629>

299 <https://www.carbonbrief.org/qa-cop30-could-finally-agree-how-to-track-the-global-goal-on-adaptation/>

300 Target 9(b)01: Proportion of area under management for food and agricultural production utilising practices and technologies relevant to climate change adaptation

301 <https://unfccc.int/documents/655273> Decision 12/CMA.7 Global goal on adaptation

302 https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/gga_cop30_5.pdf

303 <https://learn.landcoalition.org/en/resources/understanding-and-monitoring-the-tenure-security-of-pastoralists/>

304 https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/gga_cop30_5.pdf

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES JUST TRANSITION WORK PROGRAMME



During COP27 the work programme on just transition pathways was established and one year later, at COP28 in Dubai, parties defined and adopted the programme's objectives.³⁰⁵ The Work Programme includes language on Indigenous Peoples rights but does not refer to the UN Declaration nor mention land tenure rights specifically. Paragraph 10 of the Work Programme³⁰⁶ highlights the importance of: "... broad stakeholder engagement, including with affected workers, vulnerable communities, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, migrants and internally displaced people, children, youth and persons with disabilities, as important enablers of effective, inclusive and participatory just transition pathways." As a reaction, the Non-State Actors Call to Action, endorsed by over 200 entities at COP28 and aligned with the Emirates Declaration, underscores the necessity to "Respect the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, including their rights to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent, land, and self-determination."³⁰⁷ The informal summary of the second dialogue under the United Arab Emirates just transition work programme during COP29 shows no direct mentions of the importance of land rights by Parties, nevertheless, the importance of labour rights and rights for Indigenous Peoples, local communities, youth and women were mentioned, as well as the importance of their full participation in decision making and acknowledging traditional knowledge and Fair and equitable sharing of benefits for developing countries in particular in the context of the extraction of critical minerals for the energy transition.³⁰⁸

During COP30, a new Global Just Transition Mechanism (JTM)³⁰⁹ was developed under the Just Transition Work Programme. The JTM is framed in the strongest-ever language around Indigenous and worker rights and biodiversity protection.³¹⁰ It commits countries to just transition pathways that respect Indigenous Peoples' collective and individual rights, including self-determination and affirming the need of FPIC.³¹¹ It specifically names Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation and initial contacts as rightsholders who must be protected. The JTM asks the UNFCCC Secretariat to map relevant instruments, such as the UNDRIP that specifically mentions land rights, that can support the JTWP implementation and nationally determined just transition pathways.³¹² However, draft language on the social and environmental risks of critical mineral extraction (lithium, cobalt, etc.) were stripped from the final text, and transitioning away from fossil fuels was not mentioned explicitly, though it is core to the transition. The mandate for a rights based transition is stronger than ever, but steps for implementation remain lacking.

305 United Arab Emirates Just Transition Work Programme | UNFCCC

306 United Arab Emirates just transition work programme (unfccc.int) p.3

307 Non-State Actor Call to Action-FINAL VERSION-SIGNED OFF (unfccc.int) p.3

308 <https://unfccc.int/documents/642594>

309 Decision 2/CMA.7 United Arab Emirates just transition work programme <https://unfccc.int/documents/655270>

310 <https://biologicaldiversity.org/w/news/press-releases/cop30-establishes-landmark-just-transition-plan-flames-out-on-fossil-fuel-phaseout-2025-11-22/>

311 <https://biologicaldiversity.org/w/news/press-releases/cop30-establishes-landmark-just-transition-plan-flames-out-on-fossil-fuel-phaseout-2025-11-22/>

312 <https://www.jetknowledge.org/news/just-transition-work-programme-cop-30-mechanism-unpacking-key-outcomes/>

Parties and observers are invited to submit their views on the operationalisation of the Just Transition Mechanism by 15 March 2026 so that a decision can be drafted at the Bonn Climate Change Conference in June and adopted at COP31 in November 2026. In parallel, the JTWP will undergo its first effectiveness and efficiency review, which will help to shape its next phase of work.

GENDER ACTION PLAN (GAP)



Gender considerations have been integrated into UNFCCC processes since its first reference to gender in 2001,³¹³ with the first Lima work programme on gender (LWPG) established in 2014 to advance gender balance and integrate gender considerations into the work of Parties and the secretariat.³¹⁴ COP22 in 2016 decided on a three-year extension of the LWPG, and the first Gender Action Plan (GAP) under the UNFCCC was established at COP 23 in 2017.³¹⁵ At COP 25 in 2019, Parties agreed a 5-year enhanced Lima work programme on gender (LWPG) and its gender action plan.³¹⁶ These were reviewed at COP29.^{317, 318}

Ultimately, there is a growing understanding of gender considerations of the effectiveness of climate action and policy, in quantity of references of gender, but also in quality and depth. However, progress on including land tenure security in the GAP is lacking. The GAP includes language on traditional knowledge and participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, but no reference to (women's) land rights.

At COP 28 Parties agreed that the final review of the implementation of the enhanced Lima work programme and its GAP is initiated at SBI16, in June 2024.³¹⁹ In the synthetic report, the progress, challenges, gaps and priorities in implementing the gender action plan, and further work to be undertaken is discussed.³²⁰ In part III of this synthesis report, submissions are discussed that identified areas for improvement aimed at enhancing the integration of gender considerations into climate policies, these include land tenure rights and land governance.

313 PowerPoint Presentation (unfccc.int) p.11

314 COP20 UNFCCC 2014 <https://unfccc.int/documents/8613>

315 The Gender Action Plan | UNFCCC

316 Decision 3, COP 25 Report of the Conference of the Parties on its twenty-fifth session, held in Madrid from 2 to 15 December 2019. Addendum. Part two: Action taken by the Conference of the Parties at its twenty-fifth session | UNFCCC

317 <https://unfccc.int/gender/final-review#:~:text=The%20final%20review%20of%20the,%2C%20challenges%2C%20gaps%20and%20priorities.>

318 <https://unfccc.int/documents/644433>

319 The Gender Action Plan | UNFCCC

320 Progress, challenges, gaps and priorities in implementing the gender action plan, and future work to be undertaken on gender and climate change. Synthesis report by the secretariat | UNFCCC

At COP29, Parties completed the final review of the enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender and agreed to extend it for an additional 10 years.³²¹ But the negotiations were contentious. References to the Paris Agreement were removed, and terms such as “intersectionality” and “in all their diversity” were absent, though one reference to acknowledging human rights and rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities was retained.³²² Notably, there is no mention of land or land rights. The Parties also decided to develop a new Gender Action Plan, with the process set to begin at SBI62 in June 2025.³²³ During COP30 in November 2025, the new GAP for 2026–2034 was adopted.³²⁴ The GAP recognises the contribution of women and girls of African descent to climate action and calls into action the collection of disaggregated data by gender and age, and the enhancement of protection mechanisms to support women environmental defenders. However, significant work remains to ensure that women’s rights, particularly in relation to land and resource governance, are meaningfully integrated into the UNFCCC framework. Strengthening these commitments will be essential to advancing climate justice and gender equity in future negotiations. Both the LWPG and the GAP will be reviewed in 2029.

NATIONAL LEVEL IMPLEMENTATION

In the context of the UNFCCC and specifically the Paris Agreement, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)³²⁵ and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)³²⁶ have created opportunities for CSOs and communities to engage. The CMA encouraged Parties to provide information on the planning and, if available, the implementation plans in their NDCs, Decision 4/CMA.1³²⁷ states: “including, as appropriate: Domestic Institutional arrangements, public participation and engagement with local communities and indigenous peoples.” Also, Decision 9/CMA.1³²⁸ mentions to include: “traditional knowledge, knowledge of indigenous peoples and local knowledge systems related to adaptation, where appropriate.” Similar words are used in decisions applicable to the NAP process and technical guidelines.^{329, 330}

321 <https://unfccc.int/documents/644433>

322 Carbon Brief 2024 <https://www.carbonbrief.org/cop29-key-outcomes-agreed-at-the-un-climate-talks-in-baku/>

323 <https://unfccc.int/gender/final-review>

324 Decision 7/CP.30 Belém gender action plan <https://unfccc.int/documents/655276>

325 Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) | UNFCCC

326 <https://unfccc.int/documents/641839> See part VI, Section D, Figure 8

327 https://unfccc.int/documents/267463?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAjwjsi4BhB5EiwAFAL0YDdEkc_D3lc291WQ7w6yiHK5nYAyEU1PfkQF-H0Kma6_QCKQhJP38RoCQ4UQAyD_BwE

328 https://unfccc.int/documents/267464?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAjwjsi4BhB5EiwAFAL0YMSzG_36fbsGuUHKWBmZdj607c9nED8EZw_RaCuySsWR_sPQ1FuhxoCoLUQAyD_BwE

329 Decision 5/CP.17 <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2011/cop17/eng/09a01.pdf#page=80>

330 The NAP Technical Guidelines, LDC expert group, UNFCCC (2025) https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/250828_UCC_LEG_NAP_NEW_NAP_TG.pdf

Moreover, a report of the International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) from 2022 shows how the number of NDCs referencing Indigenous Peoples' land rights has increased considerably between the first and second round of submissions, but the mentioning of Indigenous land claims remains marginal.³³¹

However, while some countries have included references to land rights in NDCs³³², the inclusion of land rights in national implementation varies significantly, as it often depends upon political will and the commitment of National Focal Points (NFPs). Efforts to strengthen land rights and combat associated corruption in land-based national mitigation responses often fall short.³³³ For example, while tenure security has been identified as crucial for the success of REDD+ initiatives in most countries, few readiness strategies have included specific measures to address this issue.³³⁴

As of 2024, the focus has intensified on climate finance and transparency, with most countries having submitted their initial reports under the Paris Agreement's Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF) through Biennial Transparency Reports (BTRs). However, the absence of global targets on land rights means these transparency reports may lack crucial information on land tenure rights crucial for effective climate action planning. Climate finance, in general, has faced criticism over its effectiveness. For example, Oxfam's 2022 analysis indicates that developed countries significantly overstated their climate finance contributions, with the true value estimated at just \$21-24.5 billion compared to a reported \$68.3 billion. Much of this discrepancy stems from counting loans (dominating over 70 percent provision of public climate finance) at full face value and including projects with minimal climate focus, resulting in inflated figures that place heavy debt burdens on developing nations.³³⁵

At COP27, the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC)³³⁶ presented ten principles and guidelines at COP27, which advocate for Indigenous-led climate initiatives and emphasise respect for Indigenous rights, transparency in funding, and accountability in project implementation. These guidelines, which include FPIC, aim to ensure that Indigenous Peoples are active participants in climate action processes while protecting their traditional knowledge and land rights in line with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

331 IWGIA, 2022 Recognition of Indigenous Peoples in Nationally Determined Contributions–IWGIA–International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs; see also RRI 2016: https://rightsandresources.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Indigenous-Peoples-and-Local-Community-Tenure-in-the-INDCs-Status-and-Recommendations_RRI_April-2016.pdf and Forest Declaration Assessment (2022). "Sink or swim: How Indigenous and community lands can make or break nationally determined contributions". <https://forestdeclaration.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Sink-or-swim-IPLC-lands-and-NDCs.pdf>

332 See for example Liberia: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/2025-09/Liberias_2035_NDC_3.0_Final.pdf

333 Transparency 2023. Addressing land corruption for climate justice (transparencycdn.org)

334 Transparency 2023. Addressing land corruption for climate justice (transparencycdn.org)

335 <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/climate-finance-short-changed-the-real-value-of-the-100-billion-commitment-in-2-621426/>

336 The IIPFCC advocates for Indigenous rights and priorities in climate discussions, pressing for recognition of principles such as free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) and respect for land tenure and self-determination. While not formally part of the UNFCCC, the IIPFCC actively influences climate policy through statements, lobbying, and the development of principles for Indigenous-inclusive climate action. <http://www.iipfcc.org/blog/2022/11/7/statement-of-the-iipfcc-at-the-joint-opening-plenary-at-cop27>

On 8 April 2024, ILC held a National Dialogue for advancing land rights within the context of the UNFCCC to discuss the experiences of people-centred organisations, National Land Coalitions (NLCs), and civil society organisations (CSOs) in participating at the national level in NDCs. During this session, members expressed strong motivation to engage in the creation and implementation of NDCs in their respective countries. In some cases this translated to successful experiences, for example, one member organised national farmers consultations on NDCs to identify key action points which provided them a strategic position to be included in negotiations for NDCs. Or in the case of AFRA / NLC South Africa, their efforts led to the votation to pass the The Climate Change Bill in South Africa, which is an overarching legislation that will require each national ministry and government structure to develop and revise their mitigation and adaptation plans. On the other hand, others experienced challenges, highlighting the lack of knowledge of negotiation processes and lack of access to decision making processes.

MAIN TAKEAWAYS COP30

COP30, held in Belém, Brazil in November 2025, marked the clearest recognition yet of land governance's role in climate action. For the first time in a UNFCCC cover decision, the Global Mutirão acknowledged in its opening paragraph that Parties should respect, promote and consider their obligations on land rights, and *explicitly recognized Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' traditional knowledge as integral to climate action*.³³⁷

This political signal was backed by finance and new mechanisms across several fronts, covered in more detail in their respective sections above. The COP30 financial commitments included a US\$1.8 billion Forest & Land Tenure Pledge (2025-2030)³³⁸ to Indigenous Peoples', local communities', and Afro-descendant communities' expanding beyond forests to all land-based ecosystems; a 36-government Intergovernmental Land Tenure Commitment (ILTC)³³⁹ targeting to recognise and strengthen at least 160 million hectares of Indigenous Peoples and local communities' lands by 2030; and Brazil's Tropical Forest Forever Facility, aiming for a US\$125 billion endowment with at least 20% earmarked for Indigenous Peoples and local communities.^{340, 341}

COP30 also adopted multiple decisions on policy mechanisms relevant to land rights. It established a new Just Transition Mechanism (JTM)³⁴² with the strongest rights-based language to date on Indigenous Peoples, including FPIC and explicit protection for peoples in voluntary isolation.³⁴³

337 Decision 1/CMA.7 Global Mutirão: Uniting humanity in a global mobilization against climate change <https://unfccc.int/documents/655270>

338 <https://www.tenurepledge.org/cop-30-pledge>

339 https://forestclimateleaders.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Intergovernmental-Land-Tenure-Commitment_COP30-1.pdf

340 <https://www.wri.org/insights/financing-nature-conservation-tropical-forest-forever-facility>

341 <https://globalforestcoalition.org/no-to-tfff-yes-to-forest-rights/>

342 Decision 2/CMA.7 United Arab Emirates just transition work programme <https://unfccc.int/documents/655270>

343 <https://biologicaldiversity.org/w/news/press-releases/cop30-establishes-landmark-just-transition-plan-flames-out-on-fossil-fuel-phaseout-2025-11-22/>

Parties agreed on the final set of 59 GGA indicators to track adaptation, though land tenure remains unaddressed in the final set.³⁴⁴ A COP30 decision³⁴⁵ on the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP) requests the Secretariat to prepare a report on the efforts to strengthen engagement of local communities in the LCIPP. Additionally, COP30 adopted a new Gender Action Plan (2026–2034)³⁴⁶ that still under-integrates land and resource governance rights. Progress also continued on Article 6 carbon market safeguards, but many issues remain unsolved.

Two notable pushes were the fossil fuel phase-out and deforestation-halt roadmaps, that were stripped from the final Mutirão text after opposition from petrostates and will instead proceed as voluntary, non-UNFCCC processes led by Brazil, Colombia and the Netherlands. Brazil also used its home COP to announce the demarcation of 10 new Indigenous lands. However, the formal agenda failed to answer the push from Indigenous leaders to explicitly recognize Indigenous land demarcation as climate policy. And while this COP was promoted People's COP, and attended the summit in larger numbers than ever before, many advocates were not included in the official spaces, leading to clashes in the conference venue.³⁴⁷

The land tenure initiatives announced at COP30 represent a step forward for land rights representation at the UNFCCC, but they are only a starting point.

THE ROAD TO COP31

The UNFCCC Bonn Climate Change Conference (SB64 and SBSTA64), took place from June 8 to 18, 2026 and represents an important lead-up to COP31.^{348, 349} Negotiations on the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) failed to reach agreement on the composition of the technical taskforce on metadata and methodologies for the newly adopted adaptation indicators. Parties were split between a party-driven and an expert-driven approach, where Indigenous Peoples Organizations specifically called for a seat on the taskforce to ensure the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge systems and governance practices. Ensuring this seat creates an opportunity for land tenure security advocacy in relation to the GGA indicators. However, negotiations were pushed to COP31 and references dedicated on adaptation finance left stuck in bracketed, unresolved paragraph.

At COP30, the decision on the Just Transition Mechanism (also called the Belém-Antalya Mechanism for global just transitions (BAM)) was one of the more substantial outcomes of SB64.

344 Decision 12/CMA.7 Global goal on adaptation <https://unfccc.int/documents/655273>

345 Decision 16/CP.30 Enhanced engagement of local communities in the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform: <https://unfccc.int/documents/655268>

346 Decision 7/CP.30 Belém gender action plan <https://unfccc.int/documents/655276>

347 <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c0l7yjgn050o>

348 <https://enb.iisd.org/bonn-climate-change-conference-sb64-sbi64-sbsta64-summary>

349 <https://www.carbonbrief.org/ Bonn-climate-talks-key-outcomes-from-the-june-2026-un-climate-conference/>

Delegates laid groundwork for its work programme and operationalization and agreed terms of reference for the review of the JTM.³⁵⁰ Indigenous Peoples and gender constituencies pushed for the mechanism to reflect rights-based, community-level implementation. However, details remain questioned and land rights are not mentioned in the mechanism meanwhile they are key for just transitions. Further meetings on the mechanism, ahead of COP31, are key to allowing it to be adopted in November.

During the Bonn meetings, synergizing the Rio Conventions was discussed further. The push traces to a 2024 CBD COP16 call for stronger coordination, followed by a Brazilian COP30 Presidency panel on Rio Convention synergies at SB62 (Bonn, June 2025). At COP30, Parties laid groundwork for ambitious decisions on synergies. At SBSTA 64, developed countries pushed for enhanced coherence while Russia, China, and the Arab Group warned of mandate creep and duplication, and the item was carried forward unresolved. A cross-convention land rights framing is important to leverage further negotiations. Meanwhile, the COP31 Turkish Presidency is looking to align efforts on rangelands across the Rio Conventions. A symbolic gesture came in the form of the Silk Route caravan, a symbolic journey promoting rangelands and pastoralists ahead of the UNCCD COP17, began in Turkey and will end in Mongolia for the UNCCD COP17.

350 <https://docs.unfccc.int/documents/10000184>

GAPS, CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This comparison reveals a notable gap in the UNFCCC's approach to land tenure. Unlike the CBD and UNCCD, the Paris Agreement and other UNFCCC instruments contain no explicit references to land rights. This absence extends beyond language to monitoring: there are currently no mechanisms to track how climate actions impact tenure security, nor how secure land rights might enhance resilience for communities on the frontlines of climate change.

However, political importance cannot be reduced to treaty text alone. Despite its weak language, the UNFCCC has become an essential political forum for land tenure discussions. The fact that two new tenure pledges are now being negotiated within this space reflects the growing impossibility of separating climate action from land rights questions. With more than trillions of dollars in climate finance at stake and land-based solutions central to mitigation and adaptation strategies, the UNFCCC represents a critical, if underdeveloped, opportunity for advancing tenure security.

The path forward requires deliberate action. Countries should be encouraged to embed explicit land rights provisions in their NDCs and NAPs. Comprehensive monitoring frameworks must be developed to assess climate action impacts on tenure. Perhaps most importantly, there is significant potential to build synergies across the three Rio Conventions, developing cross-cutting commitments and aligned indicators on land tenure, drawing on the stronger frameworks already established in the CBD and UNCCD. Creating such indicators to evaluate tenure implementation within climate projects would represent an important evolution, bringing the climate framework closer to the standards set by its sister conventions.

NATIONAL REPORTING

The three Rio Conventions, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), require countries to develop national plans and strategies per convention, and each offers national entry points for civil society to influence policy on land rights.

Global agreements only have impact when they are translated into national policy

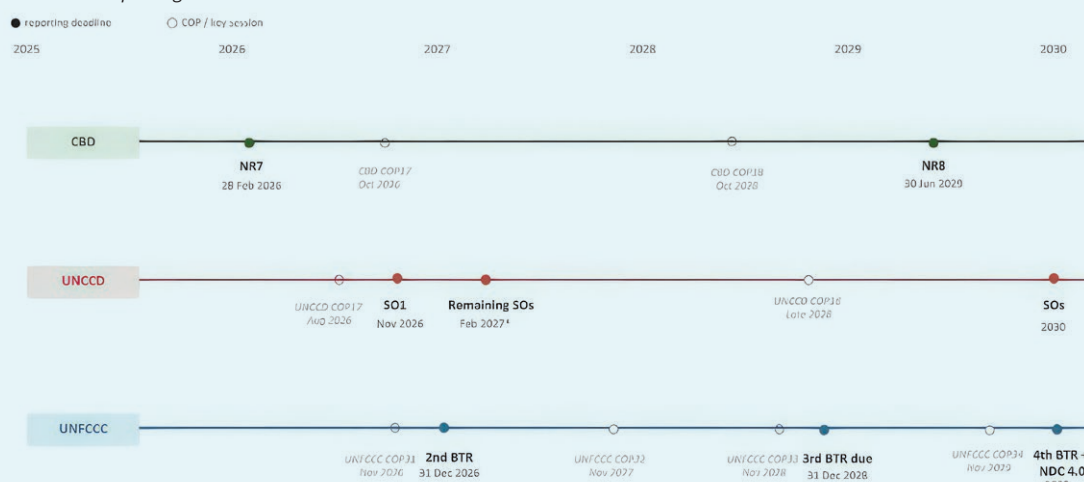
Grassroots organisations and CSOs can make a real difference by shaping how national plans are written and implemented. This matters for land rights because:

- ➔ *National plans* (NBSAPs, NAPs, NDCs) directly shape policies on land use, tenure security, and nature.
- ➔ *National reporting cycles* create recurring moments for advocacy and accountability.
- ➔ Participation in national processes creates *opportunities to embed land rights language into binding commitments*, which in turn strengthen the case for implementation at the local level

- ➔ Community and *civil society voices are increasingly recognised*, active and strategic participation in national processes is key to leveraging this

Effective engagement with the Rio Conventions rests on identifying your National Focal Point early, participating during the drafting phase before plans are finalised, and framing land rights arguments in each Convention instruments's own language (KMGBF targets, Land Degradation Neutrality goals, Paris Agreement adaptation commitments). This impact is strengthened by building coalitions with other CSOs, Indigenous Peoples' organisations, and women's groups, and by monitoring implementation and engaging in national reporting cycles to hold governments accountable.

National reporting timeline across the Rio Conventions 2025 - 2030



CBD

Since the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) at COP15, national implementation has centred on two instruments: the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAP), which sets out a country's biodiversity strategy, and the National Report (NR), which tracks progress against it.

- ➔ NBSAPs (National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans): A country's principal planning instrument under the CBD, translating the KMGBF's goals and targets into national policy and priorities.³⁵¹ Because it is meant to be mainstreamed into broader land use and development plans, it is often the most consequential entry point for embedding land rights into a country's biodiversity agenda. The deadline was originally set for COP16 in 2024, Parties yet to submit their revised NBSAP are urged to do so as soon as possible, and if they have not reported by COP17, will be expected to at minimum communicate their national targets in the interim.

351 <https://www.cbd.int/nbsap>

- ➔ NR (National Report): The formal mechanism by which Parties report progress on KMGBF implementation, providing the evidence base for global stocktakes.³⁵² The deadline for the 7th National Report is set for 28 February 2026; Parties that have not reported by then will not feed into the first global review of KMGBF progress at COP17 (Yerevan, Armenia, 19–30 October 2026). The following reporting cycle falls due 30 June 2029.

EXAMPLE

THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN (IPBSAP), PHILIPPINES

When the Philippine government began updating its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (PBSAP) in 2023, Indigenous Peoples' organisations saw both an opportunity and a problem. Despite strong national laws recognising Indigenous rights, the process lacked dedicated consultation with Indigenous communities; at one national consultation of over 200 participants, only around 10 were Indigenous representatives.

Rather than wait to be invited in, Indigenous advocates acted on their own initiative. A coalition of over 30 organisations ran a year-long parallel consultation process, including national roundtables, regional workshops, and a writeshop to consolidate community voices. The result was the IPBSAP: the first Indigenous-led biodiversity strategy and action plan of its kind in the Philippines, formally submitted to government at the national PBSAP consultation in August 2024.³⁵³

The IPBSAP offers three transferable lessons for grassroots engagement with NBSAP processes. Building a coalition early gave Indigenous organisations a stronger, more unified voice than fragmented individual input would have. Preparatory meetings ahead of government consultations helped community representatives navigate technical language and contribute meaningfully rather than being sidelined by jargon. Submitting contributions directly to the CBD Secretariat, alongside national channels, ensured Indigenous Peoples' input was formally documented and credited, while also opening new working relationships with government agencies previously closed to Indigenous input.

352 <https://www.cbd.int/reports>

353 https://aippnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Philippines-NBSAP-paper_280126.pdf

UNCCD

The UNCCD's national-level reporting architecture rests on the National Action Programmes (NAPs) and Strategic Objectives (SOs). The NAP are country-owned implementation instruments that are complemented by a five-part reporting framework based on the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework. These five SOs track progress against the Convention's broader goals.

- ➔ **National Action Programmes (NAPs):** The primary instrument for implementing the UNCCD at national level, integrating land degradation and sustainable land management commitments into sectors such as agriculture, forestry, and water management.³⁵⁴ NAPs are developed through participatory processes involving government, NGOs, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities, making them a natural avenue for land rights advocacy. No fixed deadline was ever set; Parties are instead expected to revise and align their NAP.
- ➔ **Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Targets:** In 2015, UNCCD Parties were invited to formulate voluntary targets to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) in accordance with their specific national circumstances and development priorities. The LDN Target Setting Programme (LDN-TSP) is the mechanism by which UNCCD supports countries to define baselines and targets, and the measures for achieving to achieve land degradation neutrality by 2030.³⁵⁵ COP15³⁵⁶ encouraged Parties to reconsider their set targets to make them spatially explicit and gender-responsive, COP16 further supported this mandate. In the LDN Target Setting Technical Guide, land tenure is mentioned as an indirect driver of land degradation.³⁵⁷ Specific targets set by Parties on land rights would support the implementation of land tenure security efforts on the national level. There is no fixed deadline, it is voluntary and ongoing.
- ➔ **Strategic Objectives (SOs):** The framework against which Parties report national progress toward the Convention's five core goals. The deadline is tentatively set for November 2026 for Strategic Objective 1, and February 2027 for the remaining objectives; Parties that have not reported by these dates will be reviewed as outstanding. The reports will be reviewed at CRIC's 25th session, with submissions made via the newly launched Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System (PRAIS4) system.^{358, 359, 360} The COP approved a four-year frequency for national reporting.³⁶¹ The five objectives are:
 - ➔ SO1: To improve the condition of affected ecosystems, combat desertification/ land degradation, promote sustainable land management and contribute to land degradation neutrality

354 Action programmes | UNCCD

355 <https://www.unccd.int/land-and-life/land-degradation-neutrality/projects-programmes/ldn-target-setting>

356 notably decisions 3, 11, 12 and 13/COP.15,

357 <https://www.unccd.int/resources/publications/ldn-target-setting-technical-guide>

358 <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2025-10/2514955E.pdf>

359 <https://www.unccd.int/data-knowledge/unccd-national-reporting-process>

360 https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-02/ICCD_COP%2813%29_L.18-1716078E_0.pdf

361 <https://prais4-reporting-manual.unccd.int/en/latest/introduction.html>

- ➔ SO2: To improve the living conditions of affected populations
- ➔ SO3: To mitigate, adapt to, and manage the effects of drought in order to enhance resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems
- ➔ SO4: To generate global environmental benefits through effective implementation of the UNCCD
- ➔ SO5: To mobilize substantial and additional financial and non-financial resources to support the implementation of the Convention by building effective partnerships at global and national level

UNFCCC

Three national level instruments to report plans and progress to the UNFCCC are the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), which set out its adaptation strategy; and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which state mitigation commitments; and the Biennial Transparency Reports (BTRs), which disclose a country's emissions and finance data.

- ➔ **Biennial Transparency Reports (BTRs):** The core accountability instrument under the Paris Agreement's Enhanced Transparency Framework, disclosing emissions, finance flows, and progress on climate commitments.³⁶² The first BTRs were due by 31 December 2024; just over half of Parties (around 105 of roughly 195) met that deadline, with submissions continuing on a rolling basis since. The second BTR cycle (BTR2) is due by 31 December 2026.
- ➔ **National Adaptation Plans (NAPs):** A country's roadmap for reducing vulnerability to climate impacts, with direct relevance to land use, tenure security, and community resilience.³⁶³ Under the Global Goal on Adaptation, the deadline was set for Parties to have their first NAP in place by 2025; those yet to do so are expected to show progress toward implementation by 2030.
- ➔ **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs):** The binding statement of a country's mitigation targets under the Paris Agreement,³⁶⁴ increasingly used to house land-based climate solutions such as forest protection and land restoration. The deadline for third-round NDCs, covering targets through 2035, was originally set for 10 February 2025; Parties yet to submit were given an informal extension to September 2025 so late submissions could still be captured in the NDC synthesis report ahead of COP30. Uptake has remained slow, and submissions continue on a rolling basis.

Of the national planning instruments across the Rio Conventions, only the NDC has a legally fixed five-year cycle (Article 4.9 of the Paris Agreement, next round due 2030 for 2040 targets); the NAP (UNFCCC), NAP (UNCCD), and NBSAP (CBD) have no equivalent fixed resubmission schedule and are instead revised on an open-ended, country-driven basis or whenever a new global framework triggers an update. For progress reporting, deadlines are set more formally.

³⁶² <https://unfccc.int/first-biennial-transparency-reports>

³⁶³ Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) | UNFCCC

³⁶⁴ <https://unfccc.int/documents/641839> See part VI, Section D, Figure 8

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We hope to regularly update the report as negotiations continue under the three frameworks. It's currently updated until June 2026, not including SBSTTA-28 and SBI-7.

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THE OVERALL KEY MESSAGE OF THE LAND RIGHTS GUIDE TO THE RIO CONVENTIONS

Land rights are a cornerstone for achieving effective and equitable solutions to climate change, biodiversity loss, desertification and land degradation. While the Rio Conventions acknowledge the importance of land tenure, there remains a critical need for a more robust and explicit integration of land rights into their frameworks and subsequent implementation. By strengthening policy coherence, improving monitoring systems, fostering deeper community engagement, increasing investment and creating stronger synergies between the Conventions, we can better safeguard land rights and promote sustainable land management. Secure land tenure is not just a fundamental element but a catalyst for realizing the objectives of the UNFCCC, the CBD, and the UNCCD. It must be prioritized in both policy development and implementation to ensure lasting, transformative and just environmental progress.

INTERNATIONAL LAND COALITION SECRETARIAT C/O IFAD



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