

Submission on SBSTA62 agenda item 14: Cooperation with other international organizations

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This submission is in response to the invitation to Parties and observers, contained in SBSTA62 conclusions on agenda item 14: "Cooperation with other international organizations", to provide further views to inform the SBSTA's consideration of this matter¹.

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Summary:

- Strengthening and advancing international cooperation between the three Rio Conventions –the UNFCCC, CBD, and UNCCD– is vital to accelerating collective progress and ensuring the effectiveness of global action on climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation.
- Enhanced cooperation and policy coherence among the Conventions should be viewed not as an added obligation or burden, but instead as an opportunity to ensure Parties maximize synergies and minimize trade-offs in their national plans and strategies, avoid the duplication of efforts, harmonize expectations, optimize resource use, and prioritize action where it is most needed.
- SBSTA63 presents a unique opportunity to achieve concrete progress on operationalizing Rio Convention synergies under its agenda item "Cooperation with Other International Organisations".
- Given the packed agenda and limited time available at SBSTA63, it is critical to ensure that this session allows for dedicated, inclusive and substantive discussions to progress synergies across the Rio Conventions and other relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements.
- Meaningful progress can be achieved if SBSTA can recommend concrete next steps and elements of a draft COP30 decision on enhancing cooperation and synergies across the UNFCCC, CBD and UNCCD.

¹ https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/sbsta2025_04_adv_0.pdf

- **A bold COP30 decision is needed that sets out key areas of potential joint work for enhanced cooperation between the Rio Conventions including cooperation between Executive Secretaries, enhancing the mandate of the Joint Liaison Group and establishing an expert group to support the technical work needed to guide synergistic implementation. This could address longstanding gaps in the UNFCCC, such as the need to bring activities on mitigation and adaptation to climate change close together, and support synergistic implementation of the Paris Agreement, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and Land Degradation Neutrality goals.**
- Continued discussions beyond COP30 will be critical to enable more substantive work on increasing synergistic implementation of the Rio Conventions and other MEAs in subsequent sessions, to deliver on the 2030 implementation timeline of the KM-GBF and UNFCCC decision 1.CMA/5 and the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Framework.

Introduction

At SBSTA 62, under Agenda Item 14 on “Cooperation with Other International Organisations”, a significant number of Parties including from major negotiating groups spoke about the importance of synergies between the three Rio Conventions (UNFCCC, CBD, and UNCCD). They concluded that further discussions should take place in SBSTA 63 in Belem, Brazil, and Parties and Observers were invited to submit further views ahead of SB63 to frame and inform the discussions.

This submission is from NGO and academic Observers with a deep knowledge of the climate, biodiversity and land degradation nexus at the scientific, political and implementation levels, who have had long-standing engagement with the UNFCCC, CBD and UNCCD.

Below we set out the **scientific and political imperatives for Rio Convention synergies being a core focus of the “Cooperation with other international organizations” agenda Item negotiating sessions at SBSTA63 and from then onwards**. We highlight the significant benefits to the UNFCCC from supporting synergistic approaches to delivering the goals of the Paris Agreement and therefore why this topic needs to be given adequate time, be included in a draft COP30 decision, and have greater longevity than just SBSTA63. Furthermore we outline the key elements of a COP30 decision that could drive forward the synergies agenda to achieve real world benefits over the short, medium and long-term.

1. The case for a dedicated discussion on strengthening international cooperation among the Rio Conventions at SBSTA63

a. Scientific imperative:

The world's most authoritative scientific assessments – including by the IPCC and IPBES² – underline the vital need to address the interconnected crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation in a coordinated, coherent and integrated manner. The use of an internationally integrated approach to decision making and implementation will both maximise opportunities for effective and synergistic outcomes and help avoid unintended consequences.

Not embracing a synergistic approach can prove highly damaging. For example:

- Narrowly focused climate action that does not consider the importance of retaining and restoring ecological integrity³ for all the ecosystem services on which humanity relies – including stable carbon storage – entails a high risk of failure⁴.
- Ignoring the social and ecological impacts of measures narrowly focused on climate change mitigation and adaptation can accelerate biodiversity loss, jeopardise local livelihoods and human rights, and ultimately undermine climate goals themselves. For example, large-scale use of woody biomass energy as a climate mitigation strategy can result in net increases in GHG emissions by reducing forest's long-term carbon stocks and sinks, while also contributing to ecosystem degradation, loss of habitat for biodiversity and negatively affect community health and fuel social conflict.
- Efforts to protect biodiversity that disregard escalating climate risks and human rights can increase the vulnerability of ecosystems, livelihoods and communities, particularly those most marginalized such as Indigenous Peoples, small-holder farmers and local communities.

The science underlines the need to focus synergistic action on ecological integrity: while almost all climate action in land, forests and other ecosystems is dependent to some extent on biodiversity, very few actions explicitly align with the goals and targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. This is needed as biodiversity plays a functional role within ecosystems to to retain and recover the ecological integrity that helps ecosystems resist and adapt to climate change. Doing this reduces the risks to carbon dense ecosystems whose large

² <https://www.ipcc.ch/assessment-report/ar6/>;
https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2021/07/IPBES_IPCC_WR_12_2020.pdf;
<https://www.ipbes.net/nexus-assessment>;

³ Ecological integrity, or ecosystem integrity, refers to the system's capacity to maintain composition, structure, autonomous functioning and self-organisation over time using processes and elements characteristic of the ecoregion and within a natural range of variability.

⁴ For example, from a carbon perspective, "risk of loss" of ecosystem carbon stocks is of central importance. The ecological integrity of ecosystems is directly linked to a lower risk of forest and carbon loss reversal. See Rogers et al. (2022):
<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/forests-and-global-change/articles/10.3389/ffgc.2022.929281/full>

carbon stocks are critically important to keep out of the atmosphere if we are to have any chance of limiting warming to well under 2 degrees.

b. Political imperative:

Tackling climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation in siloes has proven to be an inefficient use of time and resources. **The current siloed approach costs the world US\$10-25 trillion/year** according to the 2024 [IPBES Nexus Assessment](#). Whereas aligning action across multiple sectors can lead to significant cost savings at the national level.

For example, a [recent study](#) of land restoration activities in Rwanda found that coordinated action saves an estimated US\$45.6 million/year compared to undertaking separate activities under each Rio Convention. This change in approach is urgent: waiting 10 years to apply a “nexus approach” would double the costs of addressing biodiversity loss and add around US\$500 billion/year for addressing climate change and likely be too late to avoid severe loss of biodiversity and carbon stocks.

A coordinated approach among the three Rio Conventions is essential for Parties to meet the objectives of the UNFCCC, and fully realize the ambition of the Paris Agreement. **Enhanced cooperation and policy coherence among the Conventions should be viewed not as an added obligation or burden, but instead an opportunity to support Parties to maximize synergies between their national plans and strategies and harmonise monitoring and reporting to align implementation action at the global level and prioritize action where it is most needed. This avoids the duplication of efforts and facilitates a more efficient use of resources.** (see Box 1).

Box 1. Key areas for enhanced cooperation between the UNFCCC, CBD and UNCCD to support international policy coherence and synergistic implementation of national plans and strategies.

- **Supporting integrated national planning and implementation:** developing guidelines on synergies and examples of best practice can support countries to develop their NDCs, NAPs, NBSAPs and Land Degradation Neutrality Targets in a consistent and mutually supportive manner. Jointly developed guidelines can:
 - Highlight the range of activities that are effective in retaining and recovering ecological integrity
 - Support the legal recognition of the tenorial and collective rights and governance of the Indigenous Peoples and local communities over their territories
 - Support ecological protection, improved conservation management and restoration activities, as cross-cutting priorities of the UNFCCC, CBD and UNCCD, to be aligned with the conventions’ objectives. These can focus on strengthening ecological integrity, protecting biodiversity, respecting human rights, and supporting sustainable development.
 - Achieve multiple benefits for biodiversity conservation, land restoration, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

- **Improving efficiency and cost savings in national implementation:** Identifying opportunities for integrated, equitable and human-rights based approaches – particularly in land, ocean, and agrifood systems – that allow countries to advance multiple conventions and national objectives simultaneously and save costs. This would also help countries identify the key areas where action should be prioritised to maximize mutual benefits and minimize trade-offs.
- **Reducing risks to ecosystems and people:** Supporting carefully planned integrated action for climate, biodiversity, land and sea reduces the risk of ecosystem degradation and of losing ecosystem resilience, adaptive capacity and stability of the services they provide – including carbon storage. As global warming approaches 1.5 °C, protecting and restoring Earth’s ecosystems becomes paramount, particularly protecting the most stable and resilient, carbon dense ecosystems to safeguard their resilience and benefits to people. This is also crucial not just to maintain their role as carbon sinks but to also prevent ecosystem carbon reservoirs being prematurely released to the atmosphere⁵. Each of the Rio Conventions has a crucial role to play.
- **Enhancing technical exchange and collaboration where processes under one convention intersect with the mandates or workstreams of another:** Collaboration between the subsidiary bodies of the Rio Conventions becomes particularly relevant during the development of reporting and monitoring frameworks, guidelines, and safeguards, as well as the operationalization of funding mechanisms and arrangements, to help ensure policy coherence from the outset. For example, the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) indicator development process could have greatly benefited from stronger collaboration with the CBD and UNCCD, and other relevant frameworks, to strengthen the work of identifying and utilizing existing indicators from their monitoring frameworks, and reduce reporting burden. As Parties move to finalise the GGA indicators at COP30, greater collaboration cross-Rio conventions systems can still play an important role in strengthening implementation and supporting reporting across the GGA, as many of its aims are shared and reinforced by the other Rio conventions.
- **Driving alignment and harmonization of monitoring and reporting systems:** Where possible, aligning reporting requirements and fostering shared approaches and standards to tracking progress to ease the administrative burden on countries, enable clearer identification of gaps, and facilitate the transparent reporting of co-benefits and synergies across the conventions.

2. Why COP30 provides a critical window of opportunity to address this gap

Strengthening institutionalized cooperation between the Rio Conventions – whether through existing and/or new potential institutional arrangements – is critical, as historical efforts to

⁵ Weiskopf et al., 2024. “Biodiversity loss reduces global terrestrial carbon storage.” *Nature Communications* 15, no. 47872 (2024). <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-024-47872-7>;
Rogers et al., 2022. “Using ecosystem integrity to maximize climate mitigation and minimize risk in international forest policy.” *Frontiers in Forests and Global Change* 5 (2022): 929281. <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/forests-and-global-change/articles/10.3389/ffgc.2022.929281/full>.

progress synergies solely through national implementation have proven insufficient⁶. Currently, a significant policy gap prevails in the UNFCCC to respond and cross-convention implementation and policy coherence has not advanced meaningfully over the last two decades.

However, in recent years, there has been significant progress in the other Rio Conventions in advancing synergies: The CBD has seen [COP16 political decisions](#) on biodiversity-climate synergies; a [formal call for submissions](#) on enhancing policy coherence across the Rio Conventions; and a “[Technical Information Exchange](#)” on enhancing cooperation and policy coherence that took place the day before SB62, in Bonn, Germany. The UNCCD’s [COP16 cooperation decisions](#) also supported cross-Convention action.

From the UNFCCC side, the [Global Stocktake](#) outcome contains critical paragraphs on ecosystems, deforestation and forest degradation and alignment with the other Rio Conventions (paras 33, 34, 35, 55, 63(d) and 163) which are yet to be implemented. The COP30 Presidency has also committed to place nature, biodiversity protection, Indigenous Peoples, local and Traditional Communities at the forefront of global climate efforts and the COP30 President recognised Parties raising the importance of synergies at SB62⁷. While this was predominantly under SBSTA Item 14 on Cooperation with International Organisations, the negotiations on a Just Transition, Capacity Building and Arrangements for International Meetings (AIM) draft texts at SB 62 also all underlined the importance of synergies.

The UNFCCC SBSTA agenda item on ‘Cooperation with Other International Organisations’ was historically (2002-2006) used as a space to progress synergies but a decision⁸ in 2006 to focus on progressing synergetic outcomes at national implementation level resulted in two decades of inaction in the absence of Convention-level signal and coordinated support for this to happen.

- **What is needed:** Closing the policy gap within the UNFCCC requires a dedicated space that has the explicit aim of recognising the importance of biodiversity, climate change mitigation and adaptation, land degradation neutrality, and land and ocean synergies, and establishing a UNFCCC mechanism to engage with the other Rio Conventions to ensure all three align climate action in the land and ocean sector and foster the protection and recovery of ecological integrity to help deliver their respective goals including of the Paris Agreement.
- **The opportunity:** SBSTA’s agenda item on ‘Cooperation with other International Organisations’ provides a formal space at SB63 to discuss and negotiate a COP30 decision on synergies. At SB62 many Parties spoke in support of progressing work on synergies across the Rio Conventions under this agenda item.

There are a number of potential ways that the UNFCCC could drive forward progress on synergies building from discussions under SBSTA agenda item on cooperation with

⁶ [250227 Policy Brief Sinergias Clima-Biodiversidad.pdf](#) in English

⁷ https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/COP30_6thletter.pdf

⁸ [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/docs/2006/sbsta/eng/05.pdf para 130](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/docs/2006/sbsta/eng/05.pdf_para_130)

other international organizations. It is clear that relying on bottom up, ad-hoc action has proven ineffective as implementation of the Rio Conventions is often led out of different Ministries and national plans often fail to cross-reference each other. Convention-level mechanisms are therefore required to drive synergetic action to support international and domestic action, and these will require light-touch institutional support. This will ensure:

- There is political accountability in the delivery of action on synergies.
- All Parties can engage and have access to support.
- That the Rio Conventions have oversight of the process.

3. Recommendations for SBSTA63 discussions under the agenda item on Cooperation with other International Organisations

- Given the limited time available for negotiation, clarity is needed, ahead of the meeting, regarding how submissions will be considered, and how the SBSTA63 negotiations under the agenda item on Cooperation with other international organizations will be run, in order for Parties to prepare in advance of SBSTA 63.
- **We recommend the SBSTA Chair designates a pair of co-facilitators to conduct informal consultations on this matter between the close of the submissions process and ahead of the SBSTA 63 negotiating sessions on this agenda item and allocates sufficient time at SBSTA63 for in depth discussion among Parties that goes beyond sharing pre-prepared statements. The informal consultations should prioritize discussion on cooperation between the Rio Conventions given the momentum from SB 62 and the other Rio Convention COPs (as elaborated above).**

Such consultations could provide a space for Parties to share views on the following topics:

- Challenges and opportunities for improved alignment and synergistic implementation of national plans and strategies across the three Rio Conventions.
- Opportunities and options for deeper collaboration and policy coherence between the UNFCCC, CBD and UNCCD to maximize synergies and minimize trade-offs, recognising that protecting and restoring ecological integrity is a common imperative of the three Rio Conventions and that all three share a 2030 horizon for the implementation of goals and targets. This could include reflections on the current scope and mandate of the Joint Liaison Group, and other initiatives, while identifying options for potential new or strengthened institutional arrangements to fill identified gaps.
- Elements or key options for a draft COP30 decision on enhanced cooperation and synergies across the UNFCCC, CBD and UNCCD.

- The SBSTA Chair should give due consideration to the importance of facilitating transparent and open dialogue including with Observer organisations, for example by providing space for Observer interventions in the negotiating sessions.
- **SBSTA 63 should forward elements or key options for a draft COP30 decision on enhanced cooperation between the Rio Conventions**, including establishing a robust process to drive forward Rio Convention synergies within the UNFCCC and ensuring discussions can continue in subsequent sessions.

An ambitious COP30 decision on Rio Convention synergies should:

- **Recognize the urgency of advancing synergies across the Rio Conventions**, recall relevant previous decisions adopted under the UNFCCC, including the outcomes of the first Global Stocktake, and welcome relevant decisions under the CBD and UNCCD.
- **Request Parties to align their national plans and strategies under the UNFCCC with those under the CBD and UNCCD**, recognising that protecting and restoring ecological integrity is a common imperative of the three Rio Conventions and that all three share a 2030 horizon for the implementation of goals and targets.
- **Request Parties to maximize synergies and minimize trade-offs of climate action on biodiversity, ecosystem integrity, and human rights**, with special attention to vulnerable populations, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities, ensuring safeguards and rights are respected.
- **Request the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC to collaborate with the Executive Secretaries of the CBD and UNCCD on enhancing and strengthening the mandate of the Rio Conventions Joint Liaison Group (JLG)**, to allow it to deliver guidance on policy coherence and alignment of monitoring and reporting, including through holding exchanges amongst technical, scientific and implementation body chairs across the Rio Conventions. This would complement the existing JLG work supporting national-level synergistic implementation through the joint capacity building programme.
- **Decide to establish and maintain a permanent and dedicated space for discussions under the SBSTA agenda item on Cooperation with Other International Organizations at every SBSTA session (not only the mid-year session)**, with the aim of recommending actions to advance cooperation and synergies across the Rio Conventions, as well as other relevant MEAs, bearing in mind the 2030 implementation horizon of agreed goals and targets and the need to move forward with substantive action to maximise synergies and avoid trade-offs.
- **Decide to establish an Ad-Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) under the SBSTA agenda item on Cooperation with Other International Organizations**, to develop recommendations to the SBSTA and other relevant UNFCCC bodies on options to enhance international cooperation and policy coherence with the Rio Conventions, including through existing or potential new institutional arrangements. The AHTEG could be operational for a time-limited period (e.g. 1-2 years) to deliver on specific tasks to inform SBSTA's work in this area. This could include:

- (i) Reviewing existing cooperative arrangements and relevant UNFCCC processes related to Rio Convention collaboration and implementation, and other relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements.
- (ii) Identify barriers to effective coordination and implementation among the Rio Conventions, drawing on inputs and consultations with Parties and non-Party stakeholders, including through submissions; and
- (iii) Identifying and ideating additional opportunities to strengthen policy coherence and address identified barriers, both within existing frameworks and through potential new mechanisms or institutional arrangements, as appropriate.
- (iv) Facilitating regular exchange and collaboration with the Joint Liaison Group of the Rio Conventions to support its mandate and ensure that recommendations and findings from the AHTEG are shared and considered in the work of the JLG.

The elements above can provide political and technical support towards efforts to further align the UNFCCC with the other Rio Conventions and support progress towards more substantive institutional arrangements that will better embed the opportunities provided by cross-Conventions synergies. These include:

- **A dedicated Work Programme under the UNFCCC SBSTA/SBI⁹** to operationalize the GST commitments to conserve ecosystems and halt and reverse deforestation by 2030 and the alignment with the Global Biodiversity Framework, **with a focus on implementation including of national plans**. This workstream would also aim to connect those plans to the nature-related Action Agenda and Presidency pledges and initiatives.
- **A Joint Work Programme across the Rio Conventions:** More information about how a Joint Work Programme could work can be found [here](#), and potential areas that such a work programme could cover are outlined [here](#) (including for example improving alignment of monitoring and reporting).

For more information exploring the legal background for potential joint work between the UNFCCC and CBD, see this [report](#).

⁹ See

https://wwfint.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/updated-june-2025_-cop30-unfccc-workstream-v1b.pdf
and
<https://www.greenpeace.org/static/planet4-international-stateless/2025/06/4a3f1b85-cop30-forest-action-plan-proposal.pdf>

Signatories:

