VIEWS ON COOPERATION WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

FCCC/sbsta/2025/inf.1

SUMMARY

Enhanced cooperation between the UNFCCC and other international organisations can unlock major opportunities for climate action and coherence across the Rio Conventions.

1. **Priority areas:**
   - **Biodiversity**: Closer work with CBD, IPBES, CMS, and IWC can help Parties leverage natural climate solutions.
   - **Food systems**: Deeper cooperation with FAO, RFMOs, WOAH, and WHO can help Parties transform food systems with welfare-friendly farming and aquaculture, sustainable fisheries, and healthier diets, aligning food security with climate and biodiversity goals.
   - **One Health:** Embedding collaboration with the Quadripartite (FAO, WHO, WOAH, UNEP) will help tackle shared drivers of climate change and pandemics, while strengthening adaptation.
   - **Just transitions**: Partnerships with ILO, FAO, IFAD, UNDP, and UNEP can guide equitable shifts to sustainable food systems.

2. **Complementary setup** – A **Joint Work Programme** between UNFCCC, CBD, and UNCCD could provide the structure to:
   - Align biodiversity, climate, and land targets across NDCs, NAPs, NBSAPs, and LD targets.
   - Establish workstreams on wildlife and food systems, integrating One Health, just transition, and finance.
   - Strengthen coordination between the Conventions' scientific/technical bodies (SBSTA, SBSTTA and CST) and expert organisations such as IPCC, IPBES and ICES.

3. **Inclusiveness –** The Convention mandates COP to cooperate with non-governmental bodies. Expanding this agenda item to include NGOs' engagement would harness their technical expertise and implementation capacity to support Parties in delivering climate action.

INTRODUCTION

WFA, representing 70+ NGOs, welcomes SBSTA's **invitation** to submit views on cooperation with other international organisations. Our views and suggestions focus on priority areas where we believe the UNFCCC secretariat can strengthen cooperation to better leverage contributions to climate action within and outside the UN system.

This submission aligns with our earlier **input** to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) following their request for views on policy coherence among the Rio Conventions, including the potential establishment of a joint work programme. Our views are structured as follows:

1. **Priority areas where enhanced cooperation would add value,**
2. **Complementary setup for greater collaboration, and**
3. **Ensuring inclusiveness beyond international organisations.**

1. PRIORITY AREAS
FOR ENHANCED COOPERATION

In line with SBSTA's note that collaborations should be expanded beyond the existing ones for greater inclusiveness, this submission focuses on gaps in current cooperation and additional organisations whose expertise could add value.

The lists below are indicative and offered "as appropriate," without prejudice to existing arrangements. Our views are structured as follows:

BIODIVERSITY
(Wildlife)

FOOD SYSTEMS
(Terrestrial & aquatic)

ONE HEALTH

JUST TRANSITION

FINANCE

BIODIVERSITY

UNFCCC cooperation with biodiversity-focused bodies can be strengthened so that animal-mediated ecosystem functions are reflected in climate action. Organisations in this realm include the CBD Secretariat, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), and the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

- Wild animals actively shape ecosystem structure and functions critical to climate action. They disperse seeds, pollinate, cycle nutrients and sediments, and influence carbon storage. Please see the annexed infographic summarising climate-relevant functions across animal groups, with sources. This point is **reinforced** by the Expert Group on Climate and SDG Synergies, whose 2025 Thematic Report on Nature highlights that "the role of fauna in sustaining forests, and thus preserving vital carbon sinks, is also significant and should not be overlooked."

- UNFCCC collaboration heavily leverages IPCC; equivalent, regularised engagement with IPBES is not yet visible. IPBES provides the scientific basis for species interactions, trophic cascades, invasive species, and animal-mediated carbon (land and sea), all central to nature-based solutions. Strengthened cooperation and science–policy interfaces would help embed this evidence in guidance and practice across land, freshwater, wetlands, and ocean systems. This could include, for example, technical papers or workshops on animal-mediated carbon processes and their policy implications.

- Migratory species are not only vulnerable to climate change; they can also be powerful allies for mitigation and adaptation. Recent CMS work **highlighted** case studies of the role of migratory animals and their protection in maintaining and enhancing climate change mitigation and adaptation. Examples include elephants enhancing forest biomass and long-term carbon sequestration, and coastal "blue carbon" habitats (seagrass) that support dugongs while storing a substantial share of global blue carbon. Expanding collaboration with CMS would help the UNFCCC mainstream evidence-based, biodiversity-positive, nature-based solutions for Parties to leverage in their NDCs and NAPS.

- Cooperation with IWC would be beneficial for the UNFCCC ocean action dialogues and notes on policy-relevant measures that safeguard animal-mediated (specifically cetacean) ecosystem services, including their role in nutrient cycling, ecosystem resilience and carbon storage. We suggest inviting IWC as appropriate to share their expertise, including their workstreams on climate impacts on cetaceans and cetacean ecosystem service science and valuation.

FOOD SYSTEMS

Building on the Sharm el-Sheikh joint work on implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security, cooperation on food systems with the FAO, WHO, WOAH, and UNEP can be further strengthened.

- Food systems are associated with 23–42% of global GHG emissions, and realising their full mitigation potential requires changes at all stages from producer to consumer, according to the IPCC.

- Deeper work with FAO could support UNFCCC parties scaling up agroecological and high-animal-welfare practices in agriculture. These practices improve soil health, cut pollution, and enhance resilience, delivering co-benefits under all three Rio Conventions.

- Climate-resilient aquaculture requires high welfare standards that reduce disease outbreaks and reliance on antibiotics. Cooperation with FAO's COFI:AQ and WOAH's Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission would help Parties integrate these standards, protect biodiversity, and secure food supplies.

- Fish contribute significantly to carbon storage and sequestration. Mesopelagic fish, for **example**, just off the U.S. West Coast may store over 30 million tons of carbon per year in their faecal pellets. Understanding these processes can guide nature-based solutions that align fisheries management with climate goals. Closer collaboration between UNFCCC, FAO's Committee on Fisheries (COFI), and Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) would help integrate evidence on fish carbon functions into policy. This helps ensure fisheries governance supports food security, biodiversity, and climate mitigation and adaptation strategies.

- In parallel, cooperation with the WHO could support UNFCCC parties in the promotion of healthy, sustainable diets, including more plant-rich patterns where appropriate and reflecting national contexts and nutrition needs. Such demand-side measures can reduce pressure on land and seas, create space for nature-positive use and restoration, and help advance the objectives of the UNFCCC, CBD, and UNCCD. This is **echoed** by the UN Expert Group on Climate and SDG Synergies, whose 2025 report on climate–health linkages highlights the transition to healthy, sustainable diets as a key pathway. It notes that predominantly plant-based diets can simultaneously reduce non-communicable diseases and agricultural emissions. The report also cites the Pathfinder umbrella review, which found dietary interventions to have among the highest health co-benefits across sectors, and projects that such shifts could halve agricultural GHG emissions and reduce deforestation by 20% between 2030 and 2050.

ONE HEALTH

- Broader cooperation with the Quadripartite on One Health (WHO, WOAH, FAO, and UNEP) could be better embedded across UNFCCC workstreams. Following animal health and welfare standards in food production, for example, can reduce climate risk, such as heat stress, mortality, and disease. We would like to see the UNFCCC engaging more with the Quadripartite to systematically apply One Health principles across workstreams, such as the SSJW, the Nairobi work programme, UN4NAPs, and other areas where adaptation efforts can benefit from improved animal health and welfare.

- Closer cooperation with the CBD on the guidance to implement the Biodiversity and Health Global Action Plan would strengthen synergies between these two conventions. As per the Plan, CBD parties shall integrate climate change, biodiversity, and health interlinkages into national policy and planning instruments. They are also invited to raise awareness of potential co-benefits of nature-based solutions and/or ecosystem-based approaches and to explore indicators on linkages between climate, biodiversity, and health.

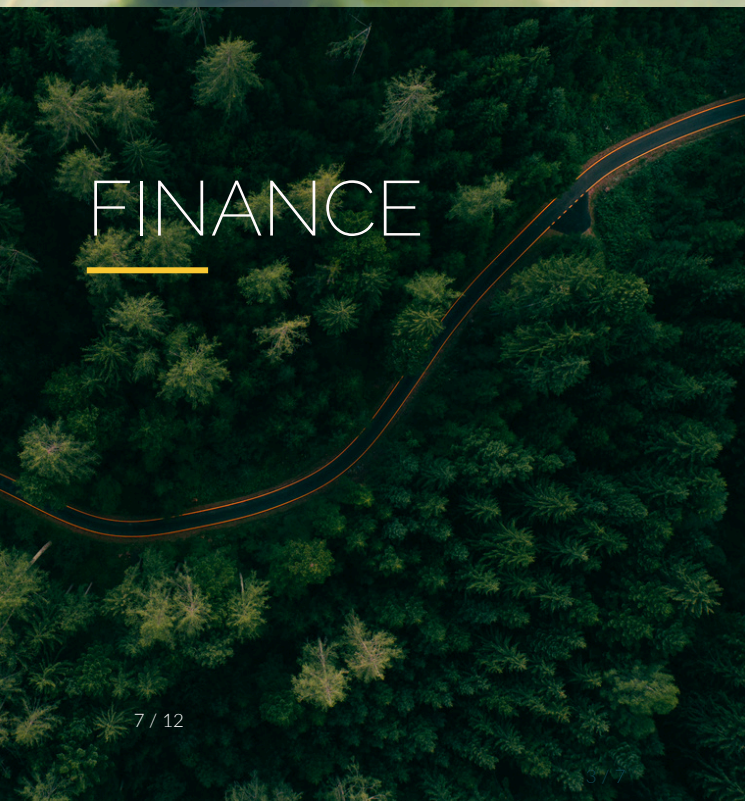
- With the adoption of the pandemic agreement, WHO member states committed to developing and implementing multisectoral One Health strategies to prevent pandemics at source. These strategies must address drivers of disease outbreaks that also drive climate change, such as deforestation, intensive livestock production, and unsafe wildlife trade. Tackling these shared risks can reduce emissions, strengthen adaptation, and protect biodiversity. Involving the Quadripartite and civil society experts who will support countries with the design and implementation of their One Health strategies will help achieve the objectives of the UNFCCC and its instruments.

- The WHO pandemic agreement also includes a decision to set up a coordinating financial mechanism to match financial bodies and funds with activities included in their national One Health strategies. It would be important to monitor which funds are considered, as these activities will cover climate action addressing drivers of disease outbreaks.

Currently, there is no explicit just transition lens for agrifood transformations (terrestrial and aquatic) under the UNFCCC. Yet, a just transition from industrial animal food production to equitable, humane and sustainable food systems is urgent, climate action. The current food systems are significant drivers of emissions and ecosystem degradation, and transforming them is essential for mitigation and adaptation. See **white paper.**

Policy coherence is needed to align food and agriculture with social, environmental, health, and labour goals and commitments. Food system governance should promote fair and transparent markets, encourage environmentally and socially responsible practices, and support sustainable, welfare-conscious food production across terrestrial and aquatic systems.

In this context, the UNFCCC should explore focused cooperation with ILO, FAO, IFAD, UNDP, and UNEP to help Parties implement a just transition within agrifood systems, under their NDCs/NAPs, for example. This could take the form of co-developed guidance to support decent work, reskilling, and social protection in shifts away from destructive fishing, unsustainable aquaculture, and industrial animal agriculture, while centring humane transitions for people and animals.



Subsidies, incentives, and the alignment of financial flows

Enhanced cooperation with the CBD, financial regulators, and MDBs could support Parties in implementing regulations and policies that align financial flows with Paris Agreement Article 2.1(c) and the GBF. This should include meeting GBF Target 18's milestone to identify harmful subsidies by 2025 and reduce them by at least USD 500 billion per year by 2030, starting with the most harmful. At the national level, funds for biodiversity protection, rewilding, and food system transformation can be generated largely by repurposing such subsidies, consistent with GBF Target 14 on integrating biodiversity values into financial and economic decision-making.

Joint UNFCCC–MDB work can make available tools, case studies, policy options, and financing, while ensuring just transition considerations for affected workers, smallholders, and fishers. Such cooperation would complement existing UNFCCC finance and implementation processes, promoting coherence with related efforts under the Rio Conventions.

2. COMPLEMENTARY SETUP
FOR GREATER COLLABORATION

A Joint Work Programme (JWP) between the Rio Conventions

Effective action at the intersection of biodiversity, climate, and land requires integrated implementation and collaboration across conventions at the technical level. The Joint Liaison Group (JLG) of the Rio Conventions has made useful contributions, including through the development of a capacity-building program and knowledge platform, as well as outreach to support alignment of national targets. However, the JLG seems to remain primarily a coordination forum without a mandate for joint implementation.

A JWP between the CBD, UNFCCC, and UNCCD would provide the structured framework needed to build on the JLG's efforts. It would align biodiversity, climate, and land policies with dedicated resources, clear reporting, and measurable outcomes. By focusing on supporting countries to implement the conventions, a JWP will not only help drive policy coherence but also help countries improve the efficiency of delivering against multiple Rio Convention commitments.

WHAT A JWP SHOULD DO

A JWP should establish dedicated workstreams that illustrate the synergies of the Rio Conventions, including:

- **Wild animals and ecosystem integrity** - to promote policies that protect and enhance wildlife-mediated carbon sequestration in land, freshwater, wetland and marine ecosystems, ensuring these contributions are embedded in NBSAPs, NDCs, NAPs, and LD targets. This responds directly to CBD COP16 Decision 16/22, which emphasises that conserving and restoring biodiversity and ecosystems, inclusive of animal populations, are effective options for mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction. The decision further urges Parties to prioritise the protection, restoration and management of ecosystems and species important for the full carbon cycle and contributing to climate adaptation.
- **Food systems transformation** to drive coordinated efforts that address the environmental impacts of current food systems, across both terrestrial and aquatic realms, in ways that advance the objectives of the three Conventions.

Both of these workstreams reflect priorities already recognised by the UN Environment Assembly through Resolution 5/1 on the animal welfare–environment–sustainable development nexus. In addition, all workstreams should integrate cross-cutting priorities, including:

- **One Health** to support mainstreaming it in national climate and biodiversity plans, to reduce climate-linked disease risks, in line with the Global Biodiversity & Health Plan
- **Just transition in agrifood systems**, to guide Parties with best practices to ensure decent work, reskilling, and social protection in transitions away from unsustainable practices.
- **Finance,** working with Parties and MDBs in the needed alignment of financial flows with Paris and GBF goals, including repurposing harmful subsidies and scaling up nature-positive investment.

A JWP should also:

- Facilitate coordination between the scientific and technical bodies of the three Conventions and expert organisations (IPCC, IPBES, ICES) to integrate research on biodiversity-climate-land linkages, including species protection, food systems sustainability (terrestrial & aquatic food), and ecosystem resilience.
- Support Parties to integrate biodiversity, climate, and land targets into a coherent framework, building on JLG's capacity-building work but going further with a formal mandate, resources, and reporting. This should include explicit integration of JWP's dedicated workstreams into national plans.

3. ENSURING INCLUSIVENESS
BEYOND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

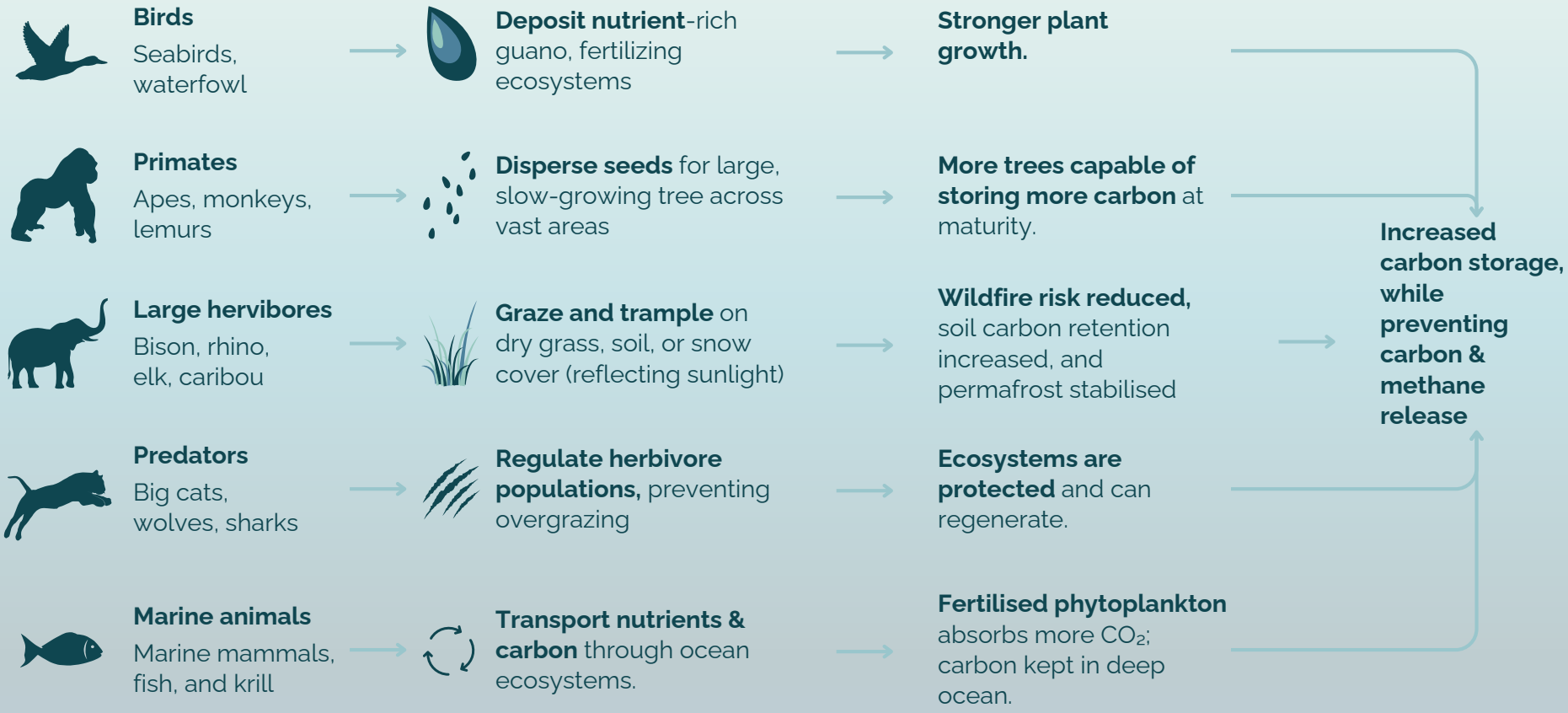
Article 7 of **the Convention states that the COP shall seek and utilize the services and cooperation of**, and information provided by, competent international organizations and intergovernmental and **non-governmental bodies**. In this context, we recommend expanding the cooperative activities agenda item to include cooperation with non-governmental bodies, such as NGOs with substantive technical expertise. This would ensure inclusiveness beyond intergovernmental organisations and make full use of the technical expertise and implementation experience that non-governmental bodies bring to climate action.

While NGO participation is currently addressed under the Arrangements for Intergovernmental Meetings (AIM) agenda item, this is primarily procedural rather than a substantive review of cooperation. Expanding the cooperative activities agenda item would fill this gap in the implementation of the Convention, enabling Parties to consider how to systematically engage non-governmental bodies as partners in delivering climate action.

Other processes, such as UNESCO's NGO partnerships (see, for example, the Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education for All, and partnerships under the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development) or the formalised engagement of NGOs under CMS and IWC, demonstrate how structured cooperation can strengthen implementation. The UNFCCC could benefit in a similar way, particularly in the proposed JWP areas where NGO expertise is critical.

ANNEX 1

ANIMALS CONTRIBUTE TO CLIMATE ACTION



ANNEX 2

A FEW REFERENCES

- Trophic rewilding can expand natural climate solutions | Nature

Birds

- Animals boost tropical forests' carbon absorption by aiding seed dispersal | MIT
- Frugivores enhance potential carbon recovery in fragmented landscapes | Nature Climate Change
- Climate change and migratory species: a review of impacts, conservation actions, indicators and ecosystem services | CMS

Primates

- Synergistic effects of seed disperser & predator loss on recruitment success and long-term consequences for carbon stocks in tropical rainforests | Scientific Reports
- Defaunation of large-bodied frugivores reduces carbon storage in a tropical forest of Southeast Asia | Scientific Reports

Large hervibores

- Financing conservation by valuing carbon services produced by wild animals | PNAS
- A disease-mediated trophic cascade in the Serengeti and its implications for ecosystem C | PubMed
- Large herbivore grazing affects the vegetation structure and greenhouse gas balance in a high arctic mire - IOPscience

Predators

- Predators Shape Sedimentary Organic Carbon Storage in a Coral Reef Ecosystem | Frontiers
- Do trophic cascades affect the storage and flux of atmospheric carbon? An analysis of sea otters & kelp forests - Wilmers 2012 | Esa journals
- Seagrasses in the age of sea turtle conservation and shark overfishing | Frontiers
- Global tiger density linked with forest carbon stock, top-down and bottom-up | Global Change Biology (2025)

Marine animals

- Toward a better understanding of fish-based contribution to ocean carbon flux - Saba - 2021 - Wiley Online Library
- Whales in the carbon cycle: can recovery remove carbon dioxide? | PubMed
- Estimating global biomass and biogeochemical cycling of marine fish with and without fishing | Science Advances